2007

"Shut It Down, Open It Up": A History of the New Left at the University Of Virginia, Charlottesville

Thomas M. Hanna
Virginia Commonwealth University

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“Shut It Down, Open It Up”: A History of the New Left at the University of
Virginia, Charlottesville

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of
Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by
Thomas Matthew Hanna
B.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2005

Dr. Timothy N. Thurber, Director of Graduate Studies, History Department

Virginia Commonwealth University
Richmond, Virginia
December 2007
Acknowledgment

I would like to thank my loving wife Caroline and my incredibly supportive parents. Without them none of this would have been possible. I would also like to thank all of my professors at Virginia Commonwealth University, especially my advisor Dr. Thurber, my thesis committee members Dr. Fronc and Dr. Newmann, Dr. Kneebone and Dr. Herman, and Dr. Deal at the Library of Virginia. Last but not least, I would like to thank Dr. Gaston at the University of Virginia and Thomas Gardner for allowing me to interview them for this thesis.
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**Abbreviations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACLU</td>
<td>American Civil Liberties Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BPP</td>
<td>Black Panther Party for Self Defense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CA-VCHR</td>
<td>Charlottesville-Albemarle Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>Charlottesville Citizen’s Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDC</td>
<td>Citizen’s Democratic Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDCG</td>
<td>Charlottesville Draft Counseling Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>CDO</td>
<td>Charlottesville Draft Opposition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDR</td>
<td>Charlottesville Draft Resistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>CEF</td>
<td>Charlottesville Education Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>CFM</td>
<td>Charlottesville Freedom Movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CO</td>
<td>Conscientious Objector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CP</td>
<td>Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPE</td>
<td>Committee for Public Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CR</td>
<td>Charlottesville Resistance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA (1954)</td>
<td>Council for Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSA (1965)</td>
<td>Churchmen for Social Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defenders</td>
<td>Defenders of State Sovereignty and Individual Liberties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FSM</td>
<td>Free Speech Movement (Berkeley)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GE</td>
<td>General Electric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IFC</td>
<td>Inter-fraternity Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC-VCHR</td>
<td>Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>KKK</td>
<td>Ku Klux Klan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LID</td>
<td>League for Industrial Democracy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIA</td>
<td>Montgomery Improvement Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MFDP</td>
<td>Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mobe</td>
<td>National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAACP</td>
<td>National Association for the Advancement of Colored People</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLF</td>
<td>National Liberation Front (Vietnam)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLG</td>
<td>National Lawyers Guild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOW</td>
<td>National Organization of Women</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSA</td>
<td>National Student Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCES</td>
<td>Parent’s Committee for Emergency Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>Progressive Labor Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>RCP</td>
<td>Revolutionary Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RFU</td>
<td>Radical Feminists Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ROTC</td>
<td>Reserve Officers Training Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RSU</td>
<td>Radical Student Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RYM</td>
<td>Revolutionary Youth Movement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RYM II- Revolutionary Youth Movement Two
SCEF- Southern Conference Education Fund
SCLC- Southern Christian Leadership Conference
SDS- Students for a Democratic Society
SLAM- Southern Labor Action Movement
SLID- Student League for Industrial Democracy
SNCC- Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee
SRC- Southern Regional Council
SSA- Students for Social Action
SSOC- Southern Student Organizing Committee
UCM- University Christian Movement
USA- United Students for Action
UUS- Union of University Students
UVA- University of Virginia
VSCRC- Virginia Students’ Civil Rights Committee
VCHR- Virginia Council on Human Relations
VPI- Virginia Polytechnic Institute
VPP- Virginia Progressive Party
VRI- Virginia Research Institute
VSU- Virginia State University
VUU- Virginia Union University
WITCH- Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell
WSA- Worker-Student Alliance
WUO- Weather Underground Organization
YAF- Young Americans for Freedom
Yippie- Youth International Party
Abstract

“SHUT IT DOWN, OPEN IT UP”: A HISTORY OF THE NEW LEFT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA, CHARLOTTESVILLE

Thomas Matthew Hanna, B.A. Virginia Commonwealth University, 2005

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2007

Dr. Timothy Thurber, Director of Graduate Studies, History Department

This thesis is a history of social and political activism in Charlottesville during the 1960s focusing on new left student organizing at the University of Virginia. It is a work of social history that establishes a community that has been generally ignored in traditional histories of the new left as one of the most influential centers of new left activism in the South and asserts that this prominence was due to years of activism by local liberals, civil rights advocates, and students during the city’s unique experiences on the front lines of the southern desegregation, civil rights, and anti-war struggles. It traces the evolution of social activism in the city and the university from the late 1950s through the early 1970s and demonstrates how local activists and issues interacted with regional, national, and global events during one of the most socially tumultuous decades in American history.
“All tyranny needs to gain a foothold is for people of good conscience to remain silent.”

Thomas Jefferson

As night fell on Monday 4 May 1970, several hundred angry students marched towards a large building on campus which housed the Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps. They had just come from a mass rally to mourn the killing of four protesting students at Kent State in Ohio earlier in the day and when they reached the building their frustration and sorrow boiled over. The students occupied the building and hung signs on the front columns proclaiming it “Freedom Hall.” As radio announcements brought hundreds of supporters, sympathetic students, and frightened administrators to the scene, protest leaders holed up in the wardroom. Surrounded by posters of naval men in full regalia, they drew up a list of demands. The strike was on.¹

If asked where the event just described took place, many people would guess the University of California at Berkeley, Columbia University or a similar iconic campus associated in the public consciousness with sixties anti-war activism. In fact, this occupation of “Maury Hall” occurred on the first day of a three week student strike at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville, Virginia’s premier institution of higher learning. The strike was the penultimate event in more than half a decade of social and political activism by a group of students affiliated with the American new left at the university. The new left ideological movement that emerged, burned white hot, and then imploded in America during the sixties and early seventies has been the subject of hundreds of history books and journal articles ever since it stormed onto the political scene. From Kirkpatrick Sale’s flagship work SDS (1973) to James Miller’s Democracy is in the Streets (1994)

¹ Rob Buford, May Days: Crisis in Confrontation (Richmond: Whittet & Shepperson, 1970), 4-6.
and many in-between, the new left has been studied and written about by participants, scholars, and others alike.

Unfortunately the new left’s greatest ideological gift to the historical profession, social history—or history from the bottom up—has largely been lacking in histories of the new left. According to historian Doug Rossinow, “It could hardly be more ironic that we have no histories from the bottom up of the new left, the political movement that bequeathed this idea to the historical profession.”2 Traditionally, most histories of the new left focus on the movement’s largest and most influential organization, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and its leaders. This top-down approach has immortalized, in both the public and scholarly discourse, SDS power centers such as Ann Arbor, Michigan; Columbia, New York; and Berkeley, California, as well as leaders such as Tom Hayden, Al Haber, Rennie Davis, Todd Gitlin, Paul Booth, Bernadine Dohrn, and Mark Rudd. Thus the South, which provided only a few leaders to SDS and whose local and regional new left organizations could only dream of matching that organization’s national power and prestige, has generally been left out of the historiography. However, in the past decade historians have rediscovered the new left in the South. Examples include recent books, such as *The Politics of Authenticity* by Doug Rossinow (1998), an excellent study of the new left at the University of Texas in Austin and *Struggle for a Better South* (2004) by Gregg Michel, which examines the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC). As well as journal articles like “The Not So Silent Minority” (2007) by John Ernst and Yvonne Baldwin, focusing on the anti-war movement in Louisville, Kentucky and dissertations including *The Forgotten Radicals*, about the new left at

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Florida State University. These studies have demonstrated that there is a wealth of information available about the small, but nevertheless influential, new left movement in the South and its regional and national significance.

As can be expected with any emerging field of historical scholarship, there are large gaps in this contemporary revitalization of southern new left history. The rich history of the new left at the University of Virginia is currently languishing in one such gap. It has been ignored by traditional top-down new left histories and has yet to be tackled in detail by this budding historical movement, which is building a more nuanced and complete understanding of the American new left. Rossinow explains this gap in the scholarship by contending that “existing accounts of the new left, surprisingly, neglect the campus environments where this movement flourished and focus on the national leadership of the movement to the neglect of the rank and file.” By the late 1960s the University of Virginia had become one of the most important centers of new left political activity and thought in the South. It rose to this prominence because of fifteen years of activism by local and university affiliated liberals, civil rights advocates, and new left students during Charlottesville’s unique experience on the front lines of the southern desegregation, civil rights, and anti-war struggles.

Reflective of the changing tide of scholarship on the subject, there is a debate within the historical profession as to the true origins of the new left. Miller, Sale, and Gitlin (The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage), as traditional historians of the new left and a member, observer, and leader of SDS respectively, naturally place the birth of the new left in the context of a break with the old industrial left of the 1930s and 1940s. They argue that the ideology of the new left in America can be traced back to the founding of

\[3\text{Ibid., 9.}\]
SDS and the drafting of the Port Huron Statement in the summer of 1962. Miller goes further to contend that “the notion of the new left as a movement of college activists dedicated to the ideal of democracy was, to a surprising extent, the creation of one man: Robert Alan Haber.” On the other side of the debate, Rossinow, while acknowledging that the new left “broke sharply with the thought and activism of the ‘old left,’” contends that the “new left stemmed from white youth participation in civil rights activism in the late 1950s and early 1960s.”

This debate represents more than just an interpretive conflict within the historical profession. It illustrates that there were considerable differences in the developmental process of new left ideology and activism between the North and South during the sixties. Whereas the new left in the North developed from an ideological and tactical split from the old left, was heavily influenced by the writings of sociologist C. Wright Mills, and took great pains to debate and refine its political ideology, the new left in the South grew out of action, isolation, and political violence. While white students from the North could go home after their experiences with the southern civil rights movement and debate tactics and ideology with supporters and family members, their southern counterparts continued their activism year round, were likely ostracized by their families and society, and were, like their black comrades, under the continuous threat of vicious political violence. This is not to say that either northern or southern new leftists have a greater claim to ideological or tactical legitimacy, only that the regional and societal differences between the North and the South during the sixties have to be taken into account when analyzing the development and evolution of the new left and that histories of the southern

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new left based upon a study of the campuses on which it emerged and grew are essential to building a "bottom up" history of the American new left as a whole.

Despite the aforementioned debate, there are many aspects of the new left that historians can agree upon. First and foremost the new left was, by and large, a white youth movement dominated in its early years by men. Rossinow describes it as "a movement of white, college-educated young people, few of whom had ever known poverty." While some of its main goals were the eradication of racism and poverty, no one can confuse the American new left with a biracial or lower class movement of the physically oppressed. It was, in essence, a reaction against "traditional" American society by "alienated" youths in sympathy with the physically oppressed black and poor populations. Another aspect upon which scholars generally agree is that the new left's primary ideological vehicle was the principle of "participatory democracy," a belief that "the individual share in those social decisions determining the quality and direction of his life, [and] that society be organized to encourage independence in men and provide the media for their common participation." Because of its general and rather vague definition, participatory democracy became the unifying medium of new left ideology and the battle cry of a generation. It was the societal promise inherent in participatory democracy that spread new left activism to campuses across America and brought students, northern and southern, together if only for a short time.

By the late 1960's the University of Virginia in Charlottesville had become one of the four most important centers of new left activism in the South (the others being Austin, Texas; Gainesville, Florida; and Nashville, Tennessee). Its growth from a small

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6 Ibid., 2.
7 Miller, Democracy is in the Streets, 14.
group of liberal students concerned with civil rights to a mass movement against the war in Vietnam and for university and racial reform had an important impact not only on the development of the new left in the South, but also on Virginia and southern history in totality. In the mid-sixties, the University of Virginia became a stronghold of the Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), an organization that originated as the white wing of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in 1964 and had fraternal relations with Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). For three consecutive years—the bulk of SSOC’s existence—the organization’s national chairman came from the University of Virginia and the university’s indigenous new left organization, Students for Social Action (SSA), was the first campus organization to officially affiliate with SSOC. Charlottesville was the de-facto Virginia headquarters of the organization for the majority of the sixties and its students were instrumental in founding the Virginia Students’ Civil Rights Committee (VSCRC), a pioneering biracial civil rights project in the state.

UVA student activists traveled across Virginia and the South, spreading the new left message of racial equality, university reform, and an end to the war in Vietnam to thousands of students at countless universities. Students affiliated with the new left at the University of Virginia went on to run SSOC’s national publication, The New South Student, as well as work with one of the most famous radical publications of the sixties, the Great Speckled Bird in Atlanta, Georgia. The new left at the university was responsible for successfully pressuring the school’s administration to cease and desist racist hiring and recruiting practices and to open the university to equal enrollment of women, ushering in a new era of race and gender diversity which persists to this day. One
of its radical publications, *The Virginia Weekly*, sparked a Supreme Court case (*Bigelow v. Virginia*) which resulted the Court lowering the bar for commercial speech to be considered protected by the first amendment. Finally, as a result of the student strike, University of Virginia president Edgar Shannon found the courage to publicly express his personal objections to the war in Vietnam, much to the furor of Virginia’s entrenched political establishment.

Charlottesville, Virginia was founded in 1762 in Albemarle County between the Southwest and Blue Ridge mountains, approximately sixty miles west of Richmond, the state capitol. The city was named after Queen Charlotte, the wife of King George the Third of England. It was the hometown of the famous American revolutionary and president Thomas Jefferson and during the revolution served as a prison camp for the British Convention Army that had surrendered after the battle of Saratoga. Separated from a major navigable river and relatively isolated until the arrival of railroads in 1850, Charlottesville did not experience much immigration during its first two hundred years and thus the white majority was overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon Protestant, with only two percent being foreign born. By 1960 the city’s population had risen to around 29,400, with a black population of 5,400 representing around nineteen percent. Charlottesville’s geography includes a number of hills, ravines, and ridge lines which led to the “development of several independent and nearly disconnected neighborhoods within close proximity to the downtown area.” One such area, Vinegar Hill, became the commercial center of the black community during the early twentieth century. At the

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9 Ibid.
neighborhood’s base on Preston Avenue lay all-white Lane High School, while Jefferson School—originally the city’s only black school, then a black only elementary school—was located on its western edge at Commerce and Fourth Streets.\textsuperscript{11}

Like the rest of the South following the Civil War and Reconstruction, the city’s white majority fully embraced racial segregation in schools, housing, and public accommodations. In 1960, seventy-one percent of black men in the workforce were employed in unskilled or semi-unskilled labor, as opposed to fifty-seven percent of white men in the workforce employed in white collar jobs (with thirty-seven percent holding professional or managerial positions). For women, sixty-nine percent of working whites were employed in white collar jobs—twenty-seven percent in professional or managerial positions and thirty-four percent in clerical work—compared with seventy-seven percent of the female black workforce employed in unskilled labor (forty-three percent in unstable and unprotected domestic labor).\textsuperscript{12} Median income for whites was $5,584 per year compared with $3,046 per year for black families and the city council, school board, and city planning commission were all-white until the late 1960s.\textsuperscript{13} In the first half of the twentieth century, Charlottesville had some diversified light industry and the regional office of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (until 1970), but the economy was dominated by the University of Virginia, which employed nearly 5,500 non-professional staff by 1970.\textsuperscript{14}

\textsuperscript{11} Vinegar Hill: A Brief Urban History, http://www3.iath.virginia.edu/schwartz/vhill/vhill.history.html (Date Accessed: 11/17/07); Vinegar Hill was mostly destroyed in the mid-sixties when the city began a process of “urban renewal.” The desire for a north-south connection through downtown, and a “very thinly disguised racist agenda of slum clearing...produced the nearly wholesale destruction of a neighborhood that was uncommonly rich in its own heritage, traditions and lore within Charlottesville.”

\textsuperscript{12} Holden, The Bus Stops Here, 10.

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 13.

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 7-8.
In the early 1800s, Thomas Jefferson led a personal crusade to establish a state-run university in Charlottesville. Despite objections from alumni of Virginia’s oldest institution of higher education, the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, the Virginia General Assembly passed a bill to establish the university in 1818. Jefferson was named the university’s first rector and oversaw the construction of its famed buildings and grounds. The University of Virginia opened its doors in March 1825 to an entering class of forty students, a number that rose to 116 by the end of the first year.

During the antebellum years, the university was a solid part of the southern white power structure. With tension growing between the North and South, many white families from across Dixie chose to send their children to UVA instead of institutions north of the Mason-Dixon Line. The only non-whites on campus were black slaves used to clean the white students’ rooms which, “were often in [such] a disordered state that furniture was knocked about [and] tobacco juice stained the walls.” In February 1861, following South Carolina’s secession from the Union, students climbed the roof of the “Rotunda” and flew a Confederate flag from the lightening rod, the first public display of the banner anywhere in Virginia.

Despite austere conditions, the university remained open during the Civil War and approximately 2,500 alumni served in all branches of the Confederate armed forces, with 500 losing their lives. Following the war, many veterans returned to the university to finish their education and others were employed as faculty. The university thus became a bastion of Confederate sympathy and southern pride, as evidenced by the school colors.

16 Ibid., 6.
17 Ibid., 19.
18 Ibid., 25.
(until 1888) of silver grey and cardinal red, "symbolizing the Confederate uniform dyed in blood."\textsuperscript{19} The University of Virginia also remained a bulwark of male privilege, with the faculty and Board of Visitors voting in 1894 to exclude women under any conditions. This did not change until 1920/21, when the Virginia General Assembly voted to allow women into the graduate and professional (but not undergraduate) programs at UVA and William and Mary.\textsuperscript{20} Women were not admitted to the university on an equal basis with men until 1970/71 after years of organizing around the issue—including a successful lawsuit—by students affiliated with the new left.

The University of Virginia remained a stronghold of southern white supremacy throughout the first half of the twentieth century. A short lived university chapter of the Ku Klux Klan was formed by students during the 1920s and a branch of the "Anglo-Saxon Club" at the university helped promote legislation during the 1924 session of the Virginia General Assembly "prohibiting any intermarriage between whites and those with a single drop of Negro blood."\textsuperscript{21} Confederate flags flew proudly at home football games and the band routinely played "Dixie." Blacks remained in a servile role at the university, employed as cooks, janitors, and waiters. In 1935 a black woman, Alice Jackson of Richmond, applied to the graduate school but was rejected by the Board of Visitors on the grounds that "education of white and colored persons in the same schools is contrary to long-established and fixed policy of the commonwealth of Virginia."\textsuperscript{22}

In 1950 Gregory L. Swanson, a practicing black lawyer with a degree from Howard University in Washington D.C., applied to the University of Virginia law school.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 37.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 52.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 146.
Again the Board of Visitors rejected the application with the same justification, adding that “it has been the traditional policy of the University of Virginia to provide for the difference between tuition costs at the University of Virginia and the cost at other comparable institutions for colored applicants who may not be admitted to the University of Virginia Law school by reason of the law of this state.” However, Virginia’s Attorney General James Lindsay Almond, Jr., advised university officials that such a rejection would not hold up in court. Despite the administration proceeding to trial in order to have their objection noted for the record, Swanson won the case and was admitted to the university. He dropped out a year later claiming that “the University students did not care about racial equality or the welfare of the country.” However, another black student admitted in January 1950, Walter N. Ridley, completed a doctorate in philosophy of education three years later, becoming the first black person to receive a doctorate from a major traditionally white southern university. Despite Swanson’s successful integration of the university, it was still almost completely inaccessible to black students and only a handful were enrolled by the beginning of the 1960s.

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24 Dabney, *Mr. Jefferson's University*, 379.
25 Ibid., 380.
Chapter II

Conventional histories of the new left tend to characterize the 1950s as a dead decade for social activism. They argue that the prosperity of post-war and post-depression America combined with a pervasive fear of Soviet communism perpetuated by McCarthyism made the fifties a forgettable decade sandwiched between the old industrial left of the thirties and forties and the new left of the sixties. However, this analysis does not hold true in the South. The fifties in the South were an explosive decade of rapid social change brought about by a renewed struggle by blacks and associated white liberals to affect dramatic changes in the region’s system of institutionalized white supremacy, especially in the realm of desegregating public education. When Gregory Swanson and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) filed suit against the University of Virginia’s initial rejection of his application, it signaled the opening blow in a two decade long struggle by Charlottesville’s oppressed black minority to end segregation and racism in the city and at the University of Virginia. At the time many members of the university faculty, along with their counterparts across the South, favored the integration of graduate and professional schools as a means of granting blacks some access to higher education. In April 1948, a graduate sociology student at the university, James R. Echols, took a poll of the graduate School of Arts and Sciences and found that a majority of students—ninety to seventy-nine with forty-three
indifferent—were in favor of having black students in their classes. And in a poll of 300 students across all graduate schools taken by UVA sociology student C. Lee Parker right before the Swanson case, seventy-three percent of respondents had “no objection” to black students being admitted to the graduate program.

However, many of Charlottesville’s citizens and the city’s political and business elite were not so ready to accept a loosening of Jim Crow. Starting in 1954 with the landmark Supreme Court decision in Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, the city was thrust onto the front lines of the southern desegregation battle, firmly caught between the federal judiciary, which was intent on ending educational segregation, and Virginia’s state government, which was determined to preserve it. In the conflict, which would last from 1954 to 1969, the white population of the city and the university divided itself into three camps whose fortunes fluctuated with the tide of events. On one side were ardent segregationists, including some in the university faculty, who continually and fervently opposed any changes to the status-quo of white supremacy and segregation by race in schools. In the middle, there were a large number of moderates whose sole preoccupation was to protect public education and save the city from racial violence. Aligned against both was a strong white liberal movement, which included many who agitated for immediate desegregation on moral and religious terms. It was these liberals with their strong ties to the university who paved the way—in terms of influencing public opinion and forging ties with the black minority—for the civil rights and new left movements of the sixties at the University of Virginia.

Doug Rossinow asserts that “in the South and in other relatively conservative areas, Christian liberals became the mentors of young Americans who ultimately took the search for community and faith well beyond the confines of liberalism.”\(^{28}\) The relationship between Charlottesville’s liberals and the new left at the University of Virginia is an excellent example of this. White liberals, many of whom were associated with the university, became active in the city during the late 1950s around the issue of school desegregation. Due to Charlottesville’s prominence in the desegregation lawsuits, these individuals were mobilized by statewide and regional liberal organizations and duly developed the city into the strongest center of liberal activism in the state. While not exclusively Christian in their ideology and makeup, throughout the fifties these local and regional liberal groups had a large proportion of Christian members and often discussed racial matters in religious terms. Through the involvement and actions of university faculty members in these local groups, liberal ideas of desegregation and racial equality slowly permeated down to a small group of university students. These students then put those ideas into practice through civil rights activism in Charlottesville and across the South and as a result of local, regional, and national interactions with other activists and organizers, their ideology and tactics evolved and developed into the new left movement which became a powerful force at the University of Virginia during the late 1960s.

Emboldened by the *Brown* decision, on 6 October 1955 forty-four black students, represented by noted civil rights attorney Oliver Hill, petitioned the Charlottesville school board to reorganize city schools in a desegregated manner.\(^{29}\) In accordance with

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directives handed down from the Virginia State Board of Education, the Charlottesville school board rejected the petition and the NAACP filed a lawsuit on behalf of twenty black Charlottesville students before the United States District Court (Western District of Virginia) in Harrisonburg, Virginia on 7 May 1956. The suit sought an injunction that would prevent the city schools from operating on a segregated basis and named the city school board generally and Superintendent Fendall Ragland Ellis as defendants.

Two years earlier, in the immediate aftermath of the *Brown* decision, Virginia Governor Thomas Bahnson Stanley had struck a cautious tone relating to the possibility of school integration, stating that “he saw no hasty action forthcoming from the state government.” However, in the wake of intense anti-integration rhetoric from United States Senator and head of Virginia’s dominant Democratic political faction (The Byrd Organization) Harry Flood Byrd, Sr. and *Richmond News-Leader* editor James Kilpatrick, Stanley changed his position. Little more than five weeks after his initial cautious statements, Stanley announced that “he would use all legal means at his disposal to continue segregated schools in Virginia.” In August 1954 Stanley ordered a group of Virginia legislators to study the implications of integration and devise a state plan to deal with the Supreme Court decision. The Gray Commission, named after its chairman, State Senator Garland Gray, presented its findings to Stanley on 11 November 1955. The Gray Commission advocated setting up a system of tuition grants from state funds to be allocated to children who wished to attend a private school instead of an integrated public

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30 *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 7 May 1956, pg. 1 and 15.

31 Ibid.


33 Ibid.

34 Ibid., 30.
school, establishing a local option pupil placement plan that would allow individual
localities to deal with the integration issue as they saw fit, and amending the state
compulsory school attendance law so that students would not be forced to attend
integrated schools. Stanley initially embraced the plan and called for a referendum to be
held on 9 January 1956 in order to determine whether or not to hold a constitutional
convention to amend Section 141 of the state constitution to allow the tuition grants.
Virginia voters approved the referendum by 304,154 votes to 144,000 and the convention
was set for 5-7 March 1957 (Charlottesville voters approved the referendum by a 2-1
majority). However, by the time the constitutional convention met, the Gray Plan had
been eclipsed by a new strategy for resisting integration: interposition.

Interposition was a doctrine held by southern leaders prior to the Civil War which
asserted a state’s right to “interpose its sovereignty between the federal government and
its people.” It was “rediscovered” and put into pamphlet form by William Olds (a
country lawyer), which then came to the attention of Kilpatrick. The News Leader editor
devoted himself and the paper to interposition and the possibility of applying the doctrine
spread like wildfire across Virginia and the South. In fact, when the constitutional
convention did meet, in addition to approving the Gray Plan, the convention delegates
commended the Governor and the General Assembly for “their invocation [on 11 January
1956] of the historic doctrine of interposition for the preservation of the sovereign rights
of this Commonwealth.” Interposition and the possibility of a united southern front

36 Ibid., 16.
37 Ibid., 19.
40 Ibid., 23.
against integration made the local option clause of the Gray Plan seem dangerous and destabilizing to many ardent segregationists, and it quickly fell out of favor. However, interposition was clearly an untenable concept unless the South was ready to do physical battle with the federal government over integration, which it was not. Although six southern states “interposed their sovereignty,” the court cases continued unabated and by the summer of 1956 a new plan was needed.

On 2 July 1956 Stanley, Gray, and other Byrd Organization leaders met with the senior Virginia senator in Washington D.C. to plot a course of “Massive Resistance.” Upon returning to Richmond, Stanley called for the General Assembly to meet for a special session on 27 August. Responding to calls from Byrd and other political leaders (and spurred on by a race-baiting article of The Virginian), segregationists flocked to Richmond and the General Assembly met in front of a packed house with Confederate flags flying. The legislature debated a package of thirteen anti-integration bills, the centerpiece of which was House Bill No.1, otherwise known as the Governor’s “cut-off-the-funds” proposal. This bill, and another which called for any school which enrolled a child of another race to “[be] closed and removed from the school system,” thrust Virginia’s public schools into a lose-lose situation. On the one hand, if school officials refused federal court orders to integrate they could be fined or imprisoned, but if they obeyed the court orders the state would shut down their schools.

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41 Ibid., 28.
42 The issue, complete with a Confederate soldier on its masthead, featured a page of photographs entitled “integration as it really is” depicting black and white children playing together on a playground and a white woman spread across a bed with a “repulsive” black man.
43 Muse, Virginia’s Massive Resistance, 29.
44 Ibid., 31.
On 7 August 1956, Judge John Paul officially handed down his written decision in the Charlottesville desegregation suit which stated, "The defendants (the city school board and F.R. Ellis, superintendent of schools) and their successors in office and their agents... are restrained and enjoined from any and all action that regulates or affects on the basis of race or color, the admission, enrollment, or education of the infant plaintiffs or any other Negro child similarly situated, to and in any public school operated by the defendants."\(^{45}\) Attorneys for Ellis and the school board appealed the ruling to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals on 22 August 1956, and on 27 August Judge Paul stayed his integration order pending the appeal, essentially postponing the possibility of integration in Charlottesville for another school year.\(^{46}\)

On 31 December 1956, the United States Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in Richmond heard the appeal and unanimously upheld the district court decision ordering integration.\(^{47}\) The court maintained that the lower court decrees were not harsh or unreasonable and that Charlottesville had made no attempts to comply with the Supreme Court ruling outlawing segregation. Attorneys for the school board continued with the course of legal defiance, filing an appeal with the United States Supreme Court and requesting that the Fourth Circuit decision be stayed pending the outcome of that appeal. On 25 March 1957, the Supreme Court refused to hear the appeal in the Charlottesville desegregation case and it appeared that integration would become a reality when the new school year began in September.\(^{48}\)

\(^{45}\) *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 7 August 1956, pg. 1 and 15.

\(^{46}\) *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 22 August 1956, pg. 1; and *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 27 August, 1956, pg. 1 and 13.


\(^{48}\) *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 26 March 1957, pg.1 and 8.
While the Charlottesville desegregation suit was working its way through the courts, the state of Virginia was developing ways to implement its massive resistance legislation. One such way was the creation of the State Pupil Placement Board. The Board was set up to implement the Pupil Placement Act, which was adopted by the General Assembly during the special session to enable massive resistance in August and September of 1956. The purpose of the act was to "[divest] local school boards and division superintendents of all authority now or at any time in the future to determine the school to which any child shall be admitted." Under provisions of the act, all students in the state of Virginia had to fill out a Pupil Placement Board form in their locality and then those forms were forwarded by local school officials to the State Board. The State Pupil Placement Board then determined which school a child would be assigned to for the upcoming school year. No specific mention of race was included on the forms, but Placement Board officials could determine the race of an applicant due to their current school placement (because all schools were still segregated). The Placement Board would then assign all students back into segregated schools for the next school year.

Following their failure to obtain a hearing before the United States Supreme Court, the Charlottesville school board put their faith in averting integration in the State Pupil Placement Board. However, the Pupil Placement Act was not on firm legal footing, having been declared unconstitutional by the United States District Court of Eastern Virginia. That ruling was upheld by the United States Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals on 13 July 1957, throwing Charlottesville school officials into limbo once more. Six days later, NAACP attorney Spottswood W. Robinson, III announced that he would file a

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50 Charlottesville Daily Progress, 13 July 1957, pg. 1.
motion before Judge Paul calling for the immediate desegregation of Charlottesville’s schools for the upcoming school year.\textsuperscript{51} On 26 July 1957, Judge Paul gave Charlottesville another reprieve, staying his integration order pending the outcome of an appeal to the United States Supreme Court on the constitutionality of the Virginia Pupil Placement Act. That appeal would not be heard until after the school year had begun in September, allowing schools in Charlottesville to continue to operate on a segregated basis. Even though the Supreme Court declined to hear the appeal relating to the Pupil Placement Act on 22 October 1957, the State Pupil Placement Board officially remained in existence until 1 July 1966.\textsuperscript{52}

With all legal options exhausted, Charlottesville finally began to face the reality that desegregation of city schools would actually occur, and sooner rather than later. On 10 May 1958, attorneys for the school board and the NAACP met with Judge Paul in Harrisonburg. Paul told them that he saw no need to enter a new desegregation order in the Charlottesville case and that he had no plans to stay the original order again. On 9 July 1958, the Charlottesville school board met and adopted a three-point local pupil assignment plan. The plan created six elementary school districts (one that included most black residents for Jefferson Elementary, and five white), established an achievement test for any student wishing to transfer to another district, and set up an interview by a school official for potential transferees to determine “the educational effects of admittance.”\textsuperscript{53}

The school board resolution adopting the plan also required all students wishing to transfer to a school predominated by a different race to make the request in writing sixty

\textsuperscript{51} Charlottesville Daily Progress, 19 July 1957, pg. 1.
\textsuperscript{52} though mostly toothless following the passage of an act returning responsibility for school assignments to local officials by the General Assembly on 29 April 1959; Guide to Government records at the Library of Virginia, 56-57.
\textsuperscript{53} Charlottesville Daily Progress, 9 July 1958, pg. 1 and 10.
days prior to the start of school. This effectively barred any more black students other than those involved in the desegregation suit from applying to white schools for the 1958/59 school year. School board officials hoped that the plan would prevent all of Charlottesville’s schools from being closed by the state by severely limiting the number of black students allowed to transfer to white schools.

With the final integration order entered and only a dim possibility of a stay pending appeal, school officials had finally run out of options. On 11 September, Ellis and the school board decided to postpone the opening of Venable Elementary and Lane High schools a further two weeks while opening the rest of the city’s schools on 15 September.\(^{54}\) It was but a delay of the inevitable, and on 18 September Virginia Governor J. Lindsay Almond, elected to succeed Governor Stanley in November 1957, removed Lane and Venable from local control and closed them indefinitely.\(^{55}\)

The school closings displaced around 1,700 Charlottesville students and their parents scrambled to find alternative means for education with the majority choosing to enroll their children in private emergency schools set up by Charlottesville citizens.\(^{56}\) Only two months after it had been used to close schools in Charlottesville, Norfolk, and Warren County, massive resistance began to fall apart. With some 12,700 Virginia students locked out of their schools due to a state—not local—decision, many Virginians began to advocate a step back from the brink of educational catastrophe.\(^{57}\) On 27 October, twenty-six white Norfolk residents sued Governor Almond, arguing that closing some Norfolk schools while allowing others to remain open deprived students of equal

\(^{54}\) Charlottesville Daily Progress, 12 September 1958, pg. 1 and 10.
\(^{57}\) Muse, Virginia’s Massive Resistance, 75.
protection under the law. The case of *James v. Almond* became crucial to the legal overthrow of massive resistance legislation, but almost more importantly, because it was the first desegregation suit in the South not brought on behalf of black students, it signaled the beginning of the end of popular support for resisting integration.

On 19 January 1959, the birthday of Confederate General Robert E. Lee, the Virginia Supreme Court of Appeals ruled that both the school closings and the cutting off of funds to public schools to prevent racial integration were in violation of the Virginia Constitution. Later in the same day the United States District Court for Eastern Virginia ruled that all school closing statutes enacted by the state were in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, and thus void. In one day, all of Virginia’s school-closing laws were deemed unconstitutional on both the state and federal level and massive resistance was dead. Governor Almond and other leading segregationist politicians gave one last public cry for defiance, and then crept quietly back into the moderate camp.

In Charlottesville reaction to the court rulings was immediate. Under pressure from local businessmen and citizens, the school board met with the city council to discuss the court rulings on the evening of 19 January 1959. They met again on 23 January with school board attorney, John S. Battle, Jr., and were told that the law required re-opening

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58 Ibid., 95.
59 Ibid.
60 Ibid., 122-125.
61 Ibid., 125.
62 On 20 January 1959 Governor Almond made a speech in which he declared, “We have just begun to fight.” By 28 January 1959 the fight had gone out of him and he addressed a special session of the General Assembly and requested that they pass a tuition grant program that made no reference to race, repeal the compulsory attendance law, and pass a law against bombing threats. All were passed unanimously and, after a last ditch effort by hardcore segregationists in the General Assembly to seize control of public schools under the auspices of the legislature (which were defeated), the special session adjourned.
63 Crowe, “Desegregation of Charlottesville, Virginia Public Schools,” 121.
the closed schools. Three days later the school board unanimously voted on a resolution that would re-open Lane and Venable and empowered the school board attorneys to seek a stay in the desegregation order—until the beginning of the next school year in September 1959—from the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals. On 29 January, Judge Simon E. Sobeloff granted the stay and ordered school officials to present the new assignment plan to Judge Paul within twenty days. Thus, Charlottesville was given one last reprieve and allowed to re-open and operate Lane and Venable for the rest of the school year on a segregated basis. Norfolk and Arlington public schools integrated and re-opened on 2 February 1959, and Lane and Venable resumed operations on 5 February.

On 30 March, attorneys for the black students involved in the lawsuit signed off on a new pupil assignment plan and the stage was set for integration in Charlottesville for the 1959/60 school year. On 8 September 1959, twelve black students integrated two previously all-white public schools in the city of Charlottesville. There was no violence, and after a couple of weeks, according civil rights advocate Sarah Patton Boyle, “a sigh of relief went up from the community that you could almost hear. As tangibly as the dark cloud had settled down in the summer of 1954, I felt it lift. The heavy air became mountain fresh. The sun sparkled on still waters.” However, the majority of Charlottesville’s schools still operated on a segregated basis and only a miniscule percentage of black students attended an integrated school. The school board was determined to limit the scope of integration and keep the number of black students in

65 Charlottesville Daily Progress, 30 January 1959, pp. 1, 16, and 19.
66 Charlottesville Daily Progress, 30 March 1959, pg. 1 and 12; and 31 March 1959, pg. 1 and 8.
previously all-white schools as low as possible. It would be ten more years before city
schools comprehensively desegregated.

At the beginning of the desegregation crisis in Charlottesville in 1955/56, the
segregationist camp was by far the most powerful social force within the city.

Emboldened by the state’s support for segregation, 1,200 people attended a mass meeting
of the local chapter of the pro-segregation organization, the “Defenders of State
Sovereignty and Individual Liberties,” at Lane High School. There was also a chapter of
the Seaboard White Citizen’s Council active in the city, but the militant organization and
its leader John Kasper quickly ran afoul of local authorities. As it seemed that integration
was becoming a serious possibility, segregationists, led by leader of the “Defenders” and
University of Virginia professor E. J. Oglesby, began rallying for private segregated
schools to be set up in Charlottesville. With funds raised from sympathizers across the
South, they set up the Charlottesville Education Foundation (CEF), which organized
private segregated schools during and after the public school closings. With the
successful integration of Charlottesville’s schools and the failure of public schools to
collapse due to integrated education as the “Defenders” had predicted, segregationists’
fortunes changed and they slowly retreated from the city.

Many of Charlottesville’s white citizens who had initially supported a hard-line
stance on segregation moderated their views when they realized the effect that school
closings would have on public education and business. These “moderates” formed a
number of organizations designed to pressure local and state leaders to do everything
possible to preserve public education, even if it meant token desegregation of schools.
One such organization was the Committee for Public Education (CPE), formed on 12
September 1958. The group, whose first meeting was attended by 200 people, maintained that they were “concerned with neither encouraging integration nor perpetuating segregation,” but that they were “determined to pursue every legal means to keep public schools open.” The group was modeled on one formed in Arlington, and eventually both groups would merge with others into a state-wide organization of the same name. Another group was the Parents’ Committee for Emergency Schooling (PCES), which helped educate white Charlottesville students in basements and other temporary sites while public schools were closed, then disbanded when they were re-opened.

Just as Charlottesville’s moderates gained strength during the integration crisis due to the ideological and tactical failures of state and local segregationists, liberals in the city gained strength by drawing from sympathetic and enlightened moderates who were initially reluctant to ostracize themselves by supporting desegregation and racial equality. By the end of the 1950s Charlottesville had the strongest liberal movement in Virginia, and through affiliated university faculty, began to nurture a small group of students who would go on to become active in the civil rights movement and form the new left at the University of Virginia.

The mother of Christian liberalism and grandmother of the new left in Charlottesville was a lifelong resident named Sarah Patton Boyle. Famous across the nation during the fifties and sixties due to her support for integration and racial equality, Boyle wrote three books detailing her experiences: *The Desegregated Heart* (1962), *For

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69 *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 15 September 1958, pg. 1 and 12.
70 For a history of the PCES, see “Emergency Mothers: Basement Schools and the Preservation of Public Education in Charlottesville” by Andrew B. Lewis in *The Moderate’s Dilemma*. 
Human Beings Only (1964), and The Back Together Heart (1966). Boyle was the wife of a University of Virginia professor of dramatic art, Roger Boyle, and became interested in human rights through the Gregory Swanson case at the university in 1950. After initially approaching the subject of “human relations” in a racially elitist way, Boyle came in contact with T. J Sellers, the black newspaper editor of the Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune, and she began to write a column in The Tribune under the pen name “A White Southerner.”71 Boyle attended meetings of the NAACP and in 1954 assumed the presidency of the small Christian liberal “Council for Social Action” in Charlottesville.72 Boyle placed faith at a premium in her decision to fight for equality and human rights, stating, “I believed that if you did what was right to the best of your ability you would receive all help necessary from Above ... [and] I had taken as my motto, and was striving to live by, St. Francis of Assisi’s well known prayer, O Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace ...”73

Sarah Patton Boyle first came to national attention when she wrote a pro-integration article that appeared in The Saturday Evening Post in February 1955. The article, which ran under the title “Southerners Will Like Integration” (although her title was “We are Readier than We Think”), touched off a firestorm of controversy in Charlottesville and across the South. Describing herself as a “faculty wife at the University of Virginia, and I think a pretty typical Southerner,” Boyle went on to recount why she had personally become an advocate of desegregation and gave statistics relating

71 Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune, 13 February 1954.  
73 Boyle, The Desegregated Heart, 121.
to why she believed that southerners were ready for integration.\textsuperscript{74} The article drew a cutting rebuke from university president, and ex-Governor of Virginia, Colgate Whitehead Darden, Jr., who maintained in a letter to Boyle, “I think the caption of the article misleading for I do not believe Virginia will like the abandonment of segregation....[and] I believe that there will be a withdrawal from the public school system of the whites with the resulting impoverishment of the whole structure of education.”\textsuperscript{75} Although critical of the piece and engaged in distancing the University of Virginia from it, Darden recognized the legitimacy of opposing viewpoints on segregation and defended Boyle’s right to write the article.

With the publication of \emph{The Saturday Evening Post} article and countless letters to the editor in various Virginia newspapers, Sarah Patton Boyle came to the attention of regional liberal organizations. One such organization was the Southern Regional Council (SRC), which was founded in 1945 to facilitate the creation of a new South in which “the measure of a man will be his ability, not his race...where segregation will be recognized as a cruel a needless penalty on the human spirit...where, above all, every individual will enjoy a full share of dignity and self-respect, in recognition of his creation in the image of God.”\textsuperscript{76} In early 1955, SRC began a program to create human relations councils with paid staffs across the South using a grant given to the organization in 1954 by the “Fund for the Republic.” The ninety Virginia members of SRC were contacted and approved a nominating committee, which met in Richmond on 1 February. That nominating committee in turn selected forty people to become full members of the new Virginia

\textsuperscript{74} \emph{Saturday Evening Post}, 19 February 1955.
\textsuperscript{75} Colgate Darden to Sarah Patton Boyle, 24 February 1955, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
\textsuperscript{76} SRC Statement of Policy and Aims, 12 December 1951, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 7, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
Council on Human Relations (VCHR). Sarah Patton Boyle became a second vice president in the statewide organization and a field secretary responsible for organizing local chapters of the council.

VCHR was conspicuously religious in its membership and non-political in its tactics. As a condition for receiving funds from SRC, VCHR had to commit to “keep entirely clear of political or legislative activity.” While this would be pragmatic during the mid-fifties, it would come back to limit the organization, especially its local chapters, during the civil rights struggles of the early sixties. Many within the organization’s leadership were ministers and early executive director John H. Marion maintained, “I can’t think of anybody in the Council who isn’t moved in part anyway by his Christian or Jewish convictions.”

Sarah Patton Boyle was also approached by another regional organization, the Southern Conference Education Fund (SCEF). SCEF and two of its leaders, Anne and Carl Braden, would become especially important to the founding generation of the Southern Student Organizing Committee, the pioneering southern new left organization which dominated the activist scene at the University of Virginia during the sixties. In April 1955, SCEF asked Boyle to become vice-chairman of the organization’s “Southwide Conference on Compliance with the Supreme Court Decision

77 W. Carroll Brooke and J.M. Ellison to Sarah Patton Boyle, 10 February 1955, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
78 VCHR Directors report 1955-56, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 27, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
79 W. Carroll Brooke and J.M. Ellison to Sarah Patton Boyle, 10 February 1955, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
80 John H. Marion to Sarah Patton Boyle, 19 Nov 1955, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 4, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
on Segregation in Public Schools." She accepted and this began a long relationship with SCEF organizationally and the Bradens personally.

Following the uproar over *The Saturday Evening Post* article, Sarah Patton Boyle laid low in Charlottesville, contenting herself with attempting to organize local chapters of VCHR outside of the city. However, following Judge Paul’s desegregation order on 12 July 1956, she returned to the city to organize. The first meeting of the Charlottesville-Albemarle chapter of VCHR (CA-VCHR) took place on the night of 27 July 1956 at a Unitarian church in Charlottesville. It was purposefully unadvertised in order to prevent members of the “Defenders” from disrupting the proceedings. Initially there was a problem securing a president for the group, as many of the men contacted were unwilling to affiliate themselves so prominently with an organization dedicated to integration. Boyle wanted the organization’s vice-president elect, Mildred Brown, to become president, but Brown and others at the inaugural meeting felt strongly that a man should lead the group. Boyle disagreed, stating, “I think there’s no foundation for this feeling whatsoever except indoctrination. In fact, insamuch [sic] as the woman can give more time and concentration to such a function, I think its certainly true that as far as performance is concerned they would tend to do better than the men.” In the end, temporary officers were elected as the search for permanent leadership continued, and with that meeting Charlottesville became the first city in Virginia to organize a local chapter of VCHR.

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81 Sarah Patton Boyle Correspondence with SCEF, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 7, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
82 She had organized a group in Waynesboro, but they decided not to affiliate with VCHR.
83 Sarah Patton Boyle to John Marion, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers 8003-a, -b box 4, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
Over ninety people attended a second meeting two weeks later, and thirty-seven of them subsequently joined the organization.\textsuperscript{84} There was concern among some new members about the initial lack of black representation in the group, and about VCHR’s “no political action rule.” Boyle, as a representative of the state organization, successfully argued in terms of the former that, while she hoped members of the black community would join, the group “was a protest of the \textit{white} people of Charlottesville as it is well known that there are approximately 1,300 members of the local NAACP, [and that] we do not need to demonstrate here as we do in some communities that the minority is resolved to throw off its shackles, but rather that a representative number of white citizens believe that they are right.”\textsuperscript{85} In terms of the latter, she contended that the benefits of affiliation with the state organization outweighed the potential negatives of the ban on political action.

From its inception CA-VCHR was closely tied to the University of Virginia community in Charlottesville. The university, with its strong commitment to intellectual debate and discussion, was a natural place for CA-VCHR to recruit from and to hold lectures, its primary tactic. By May 1957, the organization had 178 members with two university faculty members holding leadership positions; Dr. David C. Wilson as president and Dr. Frank Daniel as second vice president (Brown was vice-president).\textsuperscript{86} Ever since the \textit{Brown} decision, faculty members at the University of Virginia had taken an active role in discussing and debating issues relating to desegregation in the city. On 6 April 1954, Dean Frederick D.G. Ribble of the law school gave a speech summarizing

\textsuperscript{84} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} Wilson was the founder and chairman of the Department of Neurology and Psychiatry at UVA; News Releases relating to the CA Chapter of VCHR, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 27, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
the Supreme Court decision and in July 1955, Dr. Lambert Molyneaux, an associate professor of sociology and later a member of CA-VCHR, participated in a public debate about integration against a member of “the Defenders” at the Charlottesville courthouse. By the time massive resistance was struck down early in 1959, 156 members of the University of Virginia faculty had signed a petition asking for the schools to be re-opened and even President Darden had expressed his satisfaction with the re-opening.

Due to the “no political activity” restraint, CA-VCHR’s primary tactic was community education. To this end, the organization sponsored and co-sponsored a series of speeches and panel discussions on matters of race relations, often on university grounds or involving university faculty. These included a number of events co-sponsored by the Department of Sociology and Anthropology held in the auditorium of the University School of Medicine. On 23 October 1957, CA-VCHR sponsored a speech by Thomas T. Hammond, a specialist in Russian history at the university, which focused on the negative foreign policy aspects of segregation. Hammond would go on to become active in CA-VCHR and the civil rights struggles of the early sixties, becoming a mentor and faculty advisor to student civil rights advocates at the university. He, and a young professor of southern history, Paul Gaston, published a study of the effects of desegregation in Charlottesville and were the primary link between the liberal Charlottesville community and the students who would go on to form the new left at the University of Virginia.

89 Ibid., 78.
By 1957 the Charlottesville-Albermarle chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations had become the most powerful and well organized local affiliate of VCHR. Its work caught the attention of SRC, which designated Charlottesville “one of the four most important areas in the South.” However, it had also caught the attention of militant segregationists who were fighting viciously to stem the tide of changing political and public opinion about desegregation. From the very start CA-VCHR and its members had been targeted by white supremacists in Virginia. On 23 August 1956, John Kasper of the Seaboard White Citizen’s Councils, a militant white supremacist organization, attended a meeting of CA-VCHR and vowed “we in the Citizen’s Councils have declared war on you people...we’re going to run you out of town.” During the meeting, a cross was burned outside of the church hall and further cross burnings were directed at CA-VCHR leaders on 30 August (Sarah Patton Boyle’s house), 6 September (Mildred Brown’s house), and 5 December (Dr. Frank Daniel’s house). However, these attempts at intimidation were mild in comparison with the shot that was fired into the house of local NAACP official George R. Ferguson on the night of 25 May 1959, and the violence which would be perpetrated upon civil rights activists in the city during the early sixties.

CA-VCHR was a relatively large organization with upwards of 100-150 members in any given year during the late fifties. With such numbers, there was invariably a wide spectrum in terms of ideology and commitment. While many within the organization were motivated by their Christian faith, there were others, like Gaston, who were

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90 News Releases relating to the CA Chapter of VCHR, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a-b box 27, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
91 Charlottesville Daily Progress, 24 August 1956.
92 Crowe, “Desegregation of Charlottesville, Virginia Public Schools,” 141.
motivated purely by humanism. There were some in the liberal wing of the organization, including Sarah Patton Boyle, who did not believe in diluting their personal ideology or the organization’s goals in the face of local and regional opposition. However, there were others who believed that the organization stood a better chance of achieving its educational goals if it did not provoke and agitate local conservatives and opposition moderates with excessive liberalism. As the school integration crisis progressed, CA-VCHR’s leadership effectively neutralized the liberal wing of the organization contending that, “the Council’s influence [depends] on establishing itself as moderate.”93 Boyle maintained that her suggestions were constantly voted down in board meetings, and she was told that “it was better if [she] did not represent the Council in anyway, since [she] was identified in the public mind with extremism.”94 CA-VCHR also decided that affiliation with the NAACP during the integration crisis would “end their usefulness in the community,” and thus overt relations between the two groups did not begin until after 1959.95 In fact, only two whites registered for the NAACP’s pre-integration workshop for children about to enter newly integrated schools during the summer of 1959. They were Sarah Patton Boyle and her school aged-son.96 Although ostracizing its liberal wing may have been successful for CA-VCHR during the integration crisis, it drove some liberal and committed members, including Boyle, to leave the organization following integration to work with other local and regional groups.

93 Boyle, The Desegregated Heart, 272; Boyle footnotes this sentence with the following: The word “moderate” soon lost its obvious original meaning when Southern liberals began applying it to themselves but in the beginning it was thought to be conciliatory.
94 Ibid., 272.
95 Ibid., 284.
96 Ibid.
With the successful integration of Charlottesville’s schools and the retreat of hardcore segregationists into Albemarle County and their private city schools, CA-VCHR reached the pinnacle of its power and prestige within the community. Without an issue such as school desegregation to set them apart, the organization ideologically drifted back towards the moderate camp. This infuriated many Christian liberals like Sarah Patton Boyle, who wrote in a letter to the Executive Director of VCHR that she was “suffering from the overwhelming weariness of a disillusionment in the South in general, in Virginia in particular, and in our local Council especially [word typed over] .... What I have lost faith is [or in] that there’s anything effective that [the council] or any other group of local people will do.”97 Boyle resigned from VCHR in late January 1960 having severed her ties with CA-VCHR months earlier. She continued to work with the NAACP, taking a position in the Press and Publicity Committee of the State organization and the chairmanship of the Committee on Community Coordination of the Charlottesville chapter.

CA-VCHR continued to organize in Charlottesville during the sixties, but became increasingly irrelevant as the decade progressed. By 1965 they were described by the assistant dean of the university law school Edward A. Mearns, Jr. as primarily “the coffee and doughnut social group, taking little action.”98 Paul Gaston, a member of CA-VCHR for almost a decade, disputes Mearn’s description of the group but acknowledges that they were ineffective in bringing about comprehensive social change to the city.99

97 Sarah Patton Boyle to Daniel Bowers, 12 November 1959, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
98 Interview with Mr. Edward A. Mearns Jr., October 5 and 7 1965, Thomas Gardner and Southern Student Organizing Committee Papers, 11192-a box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
99 Paul M. Gaston (Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Virginia) in discussion with author, September 2007.
However, the organization left an important and lasting legacy on political activism and civil rights in Charlottesville. Many white liberals, including faculty members and students at the University of Virginia, were introduced to the concepts of racial equality, desegregation, and human relations through their involvement with CA-VCHR or attendance at one of its lectures. They would go on to put these concepts into practice during civil rights campaigns in the city and across the South. Perhaps the group’s greatest success was in keeping the issues of racial prejudice before the community and helping to change the terms of how race was discussed within the city. The organization, which had a growing number of black members throughout its existence, also forged strong relationships between the white liberal and black communities which facilitated better communication and white involvement in the civil rights struggle that would soon explode across the South. CA-VCHR also gave members the opportunity to experience first hand the difficulties and obstacles facing liberal and civil rights organizing in the South. These hard fought lessons were then passed down to a new generation of city and university activists who would go on to incorporate them into their developing new left ideology.

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100 Ibid.
Chapter III

For many southern communities, including Charlottesville, the fifties had not been the “dead, dreary” decade condemned in traditional histories of the new left. It was a period of intense social and political activity concerning issues of race and education on the local and regional level. While social activists elsewhere in the country slowly began to rise from the shadows as the sixties was born, white liberal activists in the South prepared for another long decade of struggle on behalf of their oppressed black brothers and sisters. In Charlottesville, liberals—especially those affiliated with the University of Virginia—inspired student participation in the civil rights movement of the mid-sixties through their own involvement with the civil rights movement of the early sixties. Through their program of community education liberals had helped to dramatically change the racial perspectives of many in Charlottesville’s white community by the end of the fifties. Although white supremacy and racism were still in full effect in the city, it is a testament to the relative success of the liberal program that when pressured by the civil rights movement (around 1963), many Charlottesville businesses weighed the relatively peaceful prospect of integration with the potential disruption of sit-ins and pickets, and desegregated voluntarily. However, there were a few notable exceptions, and in the early sixties these became a battleground between a new more activist civil rights movement in the city, and the remnants of Charlottesville’s “Jim Crow” power structure.

On 1 February 1960, the modern sit-in movement was born when four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical School attempted to order from a segregated lunch counter at Woolworth’s in Greensboro, North Carolina. They were refused service, and by the end of the week were joined by hundreds of supporters, including some white students. The sit-in movement spread rapidly across the South and within a few months the students had formed the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, a group which would go on to become one of the most important civil rights organizations in the South and an inspiration to the new left nationally. However, the black student led sit-in movement of 1960 did not occur in Charlottesville. This was primarily because Charlottesville did not have a black college, and the best and brightest of the city’s black community were enrolled at historically black institutions such as Virginia Union University (VUU) in Richmond, Virginia State University (VSU) in Petersburg, and institutions outside of Virginia including Howard University in Washington D.C. The University of Virginia had only a few black students and the very small group of white students who supported civil rights was initially un-organized and intimidated.

Therefore it fell to the adult black community—represented by the NAACP—and their white liberal supporters to carry forward the civil rights movement in Charlottesville. With well over 1,000 members, Charlottesville’s NAACP had been one of the strongest and most active chapters of the organization in Virginia since the desegregation struggles of the late fifties. It also had a strong contingent of white

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103 Sarah Patton Boyle to Gordon R. Carey, 6 February 1961, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
liberals who either joined the organization following the moderation of CA-VCHR, or who had membership in both organizations. In addition to Sarah Patton Boyle, University of Virginia professors Thomas Hammond, Paul Gaston, Frank Daniel, Lambert Molyneaux, and Calvin Kunin were all members of the NAACP by 1962.104 Lacking the impulsiveness of youth, these adults, black and white, bided their time by asking local establishments to desegregate and identifying those that refused for future action.

Charlottesville’s public buses were voluntarily desegregated in the mid fifties and according to a letter that Sarah Patton Boyle sent to William Thalhimer (the department store magnate) on 26 February 1960: 105

The largest and most popular eating place here in Charlottesville started serving Negroes about five years ago. Several protests rolled in the first day. The manager was assured that he would lose all of his white trade and end up serving Negroes only. One passionate Segregationist furiously threatened to have his license revoked. The manager, however, discovered that this couldn’t be done, and having faith in his fellow Virginians continued to serve Negroes, and didn’t even lose the customer who threatened.106

By November 1960, five Charlottesville lunch counters had been desegregated.

Trainway’s, McCrory’s Woolworth’s, and People’s all voluntarily desegregated, while Rose’s opened its services to black customers after a brief picketing.107

Students at the University of Virginia had mostly ignored the desegregation crisis going on around them in Charlottesville during the late fifties. A few students had joined CA-VCHR, but the university was generally isolated from the larger community. For the

104 NAACP membership list, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b, box 26, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
105 Sarah Patton Boyle Correspondences with SRC, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 7, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; An effort to convince him to desegregate Charlottesville’s Thalhimer lunch counters.
106 Sarah Patton Boyle to Mr. William Thalhimer, 26 February 1960, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
107 Sarah Patton Boyle to Gordon R. Carey, 10 November 1960, Sarah Patton Boyle Papers, 8003-a,-b box 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
majority of white students, the university was a fortress, an insulated place of fraternity parties, football games, and social organizations protected from the controversies of desegregation by an erstwhile administration. For the few black students, the university grounds were a prison. They were generally treated with a cordial disdain by fellow students and were unable to even patronize establishments at "the corner"—an area of restaurants and shops a few feet off campus catering to university students—due to its segregated facilities. According to Bryan Kay, a student who wrote *The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia: 1950-1969* in 1979, when Edgar Shannon replaced Colgate Darden as president of the university in 1959, "an air of racial tension, of subdued hostility, still hung over the University like a suffocating fog, but a few blacks mustered the will to brave the loneliness and the icy chill of resentment. They came, knowing the University's reputation for racism, depending on their mental toughness and ambition to subdue the despair of rejection."\(^{108}\)

From 1959 to 1960 three such ambitious and "mentally tough" black students entered the university. By the time they left, they had helped set in motion events that would lead to the establishment of new left organizations on campus, and fundamentally change the social and racial makeup of the University of Virginia. Wesley Harris came to the University from Richmond and enrolled in the undergraduate engineering program. He spent four years in undergraduate housing without a roommate because no white students would live with him. He was deliberately ignored by other students in class and was the subject of racial taunts and slurs.\(^{109}\) However, within a few years he would become a leader of the university's first indigenous civil rights organization, the Jefferson

\(^{108}\) Kay, "The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia," 62.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 63.
Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations (JC-VCHR), and an inspiration to white liberal students. In 1959 Leroy Willis became the first black student admitted to the undergraduate School of Arts and Sciences when he transferred from Virginia State University to study chemistry. He was on the overall Dean’s List and was awarded the Distinguished Military Science Award in the Army R.O.T.C., but felt “tolerated, not accepted” at the university by both students and administrators.\(^{110}\) Willis was outraged at the lack of student and administration concern over the barring of black students from “the corner,” and became vice president of JC-VCHR in 1961.

However, the black student with the most immediate and resounding impact on race relations at the university was Virginius Thornton. In 1960 he entered the doctoral program in history, becoming the first black student to be enrolled in the graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Thornton was a natural leader and already an established civil rights activist, having led 140 students in a sit-down strike at the segregated Petersburg public library whiles an undergraduate at Virginia State University.\(^{111}\) Immediately upon his arrival at the University of Virginia in September 1960, Thornton attended a meeting of CA-VCHR and advocated sit-ins as a powerful civil rights tool.\(^{112}\) Thornton quickly identified his first target for direct action, the segregated university theatre at “the corner,” holding a one man protest in front of it during the winter of 1960/61.\(^{113}\)

The university theatre campaign would become a turning point in the Charlottesville civil rights struggle. For the first time, it brought black students and activists together with established white liberals in a direct action targeting a segregated

\(^{110}\) Plume and Sword (UVA), December 1962.
\(^{111}\) Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 63.
\(^{112}\) Cavalier Daily (UVA), 27 Sept 1960.
\(^{113}\) Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 63.
establishment in the city. The campaign led directly to the formation of the Jefferson Chapter of VCHR, an organization that would recruit and train a core of white activists who would go on to form the new left at the University of Virginia.

On 1 March 1961, four black students, supported by twenty-five white students, faculty members, and faculty wives—including Allison L. Burnett, an assistant professor of biology—attempted to buy tickets from the university theatre. They were denied entrance by theatre manager, John W. Kase, who told the group that he could not admit them under state law because the theatre had no balcony to allow for segregation. The attempted integration of the theatre outraged the then editor-in-chief of the Cavalier Daily—the University of Virginia’s student newspaper—Junius R. Fishburne, who attacked it vigorously in the paper’s editorial column. However, the editorial only served to publicize the event and the paper was inundated with a series of letters for and against segregation. With public opinion now piqued, the student-faculty group began a petition calling for a boycott of the university theatre until it opened its doors to black students. Spurred on by Burnett, the petition garnered over 600 signatures by 14 April and was headed by Professor Dumas Malone, the Jefferson Scholar at the university. The petition was even sent to United States Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, an alumnus of the university law school, for his signature, but it is unclear if he ever received or responded to it.

Beginning on 25 March, Thornton led a series of pickets of the theatre. Typically, Thornton would attempt to buy a ticket to the theatre, and after being rejected by Kase, would return with seven or eight white students and circle the entrance with signs for a

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114 Charlottesville Daily Progress, 2 March 1961.
115 Gaston, “Sitting In” in the Sixties, 2.
few hours. On 27 March a picture of Thornton carrying a sign reading, “I am an American. A Virginian- ADMIT ME!” being followed by several white students was captured by a *Daily Progress* cameraman outside the theatre.\textsuperscript{116} It would become an iconic picture of the theatre campaign. As it became clear that the theatre management would not acquiesce to the demands for integration, the campaign began to languish. According to Kay, “The University theatre boycott drifted into obscurity as student interest declined—support for the boycott had come mainly from the faculty—and the spirited but unorganized efforts of the protestors ground to a halt. So that the underlying spark would not fade, concerned students and faculty members sought to form, and gain University recognition of, a Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations.”\textsuperscript{117} In addition to leading to the formation of JC-VCHR, the university theatre campaign gave faculty civil rights advocates in Charlottesville their first taste of the type of direct action that had been sweeping through other parts of the South since 1960. During the next two years, these activists joined with their black and white counterparts in the city to begin a campaign for comprehensive desegregation of Charlottesville’s businesses and public accommodations.

Following the university theatre campaign, some students at the University of Virginia attempted to use momentum from the demonstrations to form a civil rights organization on campus. With the support of liberal faculty members with ties to CA-VCHR, the students founded the Jefferson Chapter of the Virginia Council on Human Relations. The students chose history professors, Paul Gaston and Thomas Hammond,

\textsuperscript{116} *Charlottesville Daily Progress*, 28 March 1961.
\textsuperscript{117} Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 71.
members of both CA-VCHR and the NAACP, as faculty advisors and began the process of becoming recognized by the university as an official student group.

In April 1961, pro-tem chapter president Ed Lovern and another student, Buzz Ringle, represented the group at a meeting of the Student Council and presented its members with the organization’s constitution. The Council, fearful that the group would conduct sit-ins and demonstrations around racial issues, rejected the constitution outright. While upset over the decision, the students continued to organize with the goal of reapplying in the fall. They met jointly with CA-VCHR at local churches and less than a week after being rejected by the Student Council, the group sponsored a talk by noted school desegregation attorney, Samuel Tucker. The Charlottesville liberal community played an integral role in sustaining the organization during its first few months of existence. Without the ability to organize on campus, the Jefferson Chapter relied upon the Charlottesville-Albemarle chapter and their established contacts with churches off-campus to meet. City liberals also gave the students—who knew they were about to embark upon a course that would likely ostracize them from the rest of the student body—moral support and encouragement.

In October 1961, JC-VCHR again sought official recognition from the Student Council and again was met with hostility and suspicion. Anticipating another rejection, the group—now led by Jack Jolly and Leroy Willis—brought Gaston and Hammond to the meeting to argue in their defense. Initially the Council fixated their opposition on a clause in the group’s constitution that would allow the president or executive committee to confer honorary membership upon persons not affiliated with the university.

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118 Ibid.
119 Ibid., 72.
Reportedly they "feared that the clause might be exploited to place the chapter in the hands of radicals, or the NAACP." After Jolly accused the Council of overstepping its authority, Hammond rose and spoke, stating:

American tradition, and the spirit in which Thomas Jefferson had created the University, [forbids] Council from considering the views of a group, as long as the group [does] not violate the laws of society. Council [does] not exist to act as a censor of free discussion, but to give permission to any group to meet and discuss peaceably. There have been rumors of administration pressure. I don't know how true these tales are, but it is not beyond the power of the Student Council to remind the administration of the principles of free speech.

The Student Council altered tactics and inquired as to why the organization did not have a specific clause prohibiting picketing. Jolly replied that while some members of the organization refused to yield the right to picket, the group's constitution specifically required tactics that would not inspire animosity or bring discredit to the university.

Unswayed by the arguments from Hammond and Jolly, the Council voted to postpone a decision for two weeks in order for the Jefferson Chapter to refine its constitution. The group did as it was asked and returned with a constitution that limited its function "to three areas: the collection and dissemination of information; the sponsoring of discussions and lectures; and support for ideas that encouraged no animosity, and did no damage to the University's reputation." However, at the meeting the Council continued to demand a no-picketing clause and encouraged Jolly and the nine other JC-VCHR members present to caucus and discuss the matter. Realizing the futility of continued resistance on the subject, JC-VCHR relented and reluctantly added the desired clause
promising no picketing or boycotts, and the Student Council subsequently approved the group by a vote of seventeen to one.

Despite success in forcing JC-VCHR to adopt a no-picketing clause, the Student Council emerged from the affair with a tarnished reputation. It was obvious to most that the Council was acting as an agent of the administration by attempting to limit student involvement in direct actions relating to segregation and racism at the university and in the community. This became abundantly clear two weeks later when the Council gave immediate and unanimous approval to the John Randolph Chapter of the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF) without requesting a no-demonstration clause in their constitution. The YAF, which was “dedicated to an all-out war against communism at home and abroad,” was a group known for actively picketing in cities across the country. In response to the affair, the Student Council was blasted in an editorial in Plume and Sword, a university literary publication. The writer, Stephen A. Barney, accused the Council of complicity stating that:

The powers that be in the state agree with the aims of YAF, and the administration of the University agrees with the powers that be, and the Student Council agrees with the administration, all through bonds of fear. It is not that the Student Council particularly likes the aims of the YAF, although it probably does, but that the courageous nineteen have been told that they do not like the Virginia Council on Human Relations... I am disgusted with you, Student Council.

Prohibited from taking part in direct actions against segregation, JC-VCHR’s primary civil rights tactic became community education through bringing speakers to campus and disseminating information. In this regard, they closely followed the early strategy of the Charlottesville-Albemarle chapter. The group faced an uphill struggle in trying to convince many white students to join the struggle for civil rights and for the first

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124 Ibid., 77.
125 Plume and Sword (UVA), vol. ii, No. ix, 14 December 1961.
few years younger faculty members and black students made up the majority of those
who advocated for racial equality at the university. Early in 1963, JC-VCHR, under the
leadership of Wesley Harris, invited Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to speak at the
university. The presence of the famed leader of the Montgomery Bus Boycott at the
university frightened the administration, and they decreed that tickets could only be sold
to students, faculty, and administrators.

On the night of 25 March 1963, King spoke to a predominantly white audience of
over 900 people in the Cabell Hall auditorium at the University of Virginia. The
administration sent one token representative, Dean of Admissions, Marvin Perry, to
represent the university, and because of its ticketing regulations the 100 or so black
attendees all had to be personally invited by JC-VCHR. King told the audience, “the
system of segregation is on its death bed,” and that “if democracy is to live, segregation
must die.” King also defended the tactic of non-violent protest, telling the group that
they must love those who show violence towards them and stating “you must hate
segregation, but love the segregationist, and we must maintain faith in the future.” He
urged white southern liberals to become more active in the movement and rejected the
message of the growing Black Muslim movement. The speech was met with a
“thunderous applause” and a standing ovation from the crowd. Afterwards JC-VCHR
held a reception for King at Newcomb Hall which was attended by many of his
supporters, including faculty member, Paul Gaston. Following the reception, King
walked the grounds of the university and, according to Gaston, “a car backfired ... [a]

126 Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 81.
127 Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune, 28 March 1968.
128 Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 87.
129 Charlottesville-Albemarle Tribune, 28 March 1968.
black man who was with us immediately pinned King to the wall; he instantly thought it was a shot. And I thought, ‘hey I could have done that’ but I didn’t think about it being a gunshot... we talked later about that in King’s motel room, where King said, ‘yeah it is going to happen to me sometime’, which of course it did.”\(^{130}\)

Shortly after he spoke at the University of Virginia, King traveled back to Birmingham, Alabama to organize a major confrontation against segregation. He led thousands of black residents and activists in a series of demonstrations, marches, and sit-ins in the city. They were met with incredible brutality from the white establishment and pictures and video of non-violent demonstrators being beaten and arrested, attacked by police dogs, and knocked down with fire hoses and dominated the evening news around the country. On 12 April 1963, King was arrested and from jail wrote his famous “letter from Birmingham jail.” The events in Birmingham, the arrest of King, and the letter were a major shock to blacks and liberals in the Charlottesville community who had so recently seen and heard him speak. According to Gaston, “Birmingham had shock waves. ‘Little Berminghams’ occurred all over the South in response both to the indignation and to the sense that something was possible.”\(^{131}\)

In Charlottesville events began to move rapidly following Birmingham. On Saturday 25 May a group of black ministers—including Reverend Floyd Johnson, president of the Charlottesville NAACP—sat-in at the segregated “La Paree” restaurant inside the city’s Holiday Inn.\(^{132}\) They were refused service and sat in a booth silently for most of the day. By mid-afternoon they struck an agreement with the Holiday Inn and it

\(^{130}\) Gaston, “Sitting In” in the Sixties, 8.
\(^{131}\) Ibid., 7.
was agreed that the restaurant would desegregate within ten days. The following day, Johnson attended a picnic held by CA-VCHR and told the group that they were embarking on a sit-in campaign and whoever wanted to join should meet at his church on Monday afternoon. Approximately thirteen white liberals, including Gaston, heeded the call and met at Johnson’s church the next day for instructions. They were told that several restaurants and drug stores had been contacted and agreed to desegregate rather than face the possibility of sit-ins, but “Buddy’s” restaurant next to the university had refused.

A group of sixty demonstrators then marched to “Buddy’s,” and thus began Charlottesville’s “little Birmingham.” The first two nights of the sit-in passed peacefully, but by Wednesday Buddy (the owner of Buddy’s) had put a man on the door to prevent demonstrators from entering. The sit-in then turned into a picket with demonstrators standing single-file along the side-walk outside of the restaurant. On Thursday, Memorial Day, events turned violent outside “Buddy’s.” In an interesting quirk of history, Paul Gaston, a white liberal, became one of the first activists to have his blood spilled during a civil rights demonstration in Virginia. By late afternoon Floyd Johnson, who was leading the picket line, needed to get some lunch. He asked Gaston to try and contact other black leaders to replace him, but Gaston could not find anyone. At this point Johnson asked Gaston to take his place at the head of the picket while he went for lunch. Shortly thereafter a group of inebriated local segregationists drove past the picket—which consisted of around a dozen people, about half white—and entered “Buddy’s.” A few minutes later, they emerged and began pushing picketers off the sidewalk. Gaston, as head of the line, crossed the street to a pay phone to call the police. Two of the

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133 Paul M. Gaston to his parents, unpublished letter in author’s possession, 1.
134 Ibid.
segregationists followed him and before he could place the call punched him in the face and kicked him. They dragged a bleeding Gaston back to the picket line and went off down the road to another bar.

By this time, the police had arrived and Gaston was taken to the precinct by a law student, John Mascotte, to swear out an arrest warrant for the two assailants. Shortly after Gaston left, Floyd Johnson returned, and so did the two segregationists, Thomas Walker Henley (an ex-prize fighter who weighed 335 lbs) and James Franklin Cowgill.\textsuperscript{135} They badly beat Johnson, sending him to the hospital for two nights, as well as another black demonstrator William Johnson. Amazingly, Henley and Cowgill also swore out arrest warrants for Gaston, Floyd Johnson, and William Johnson, accusing them of cursing, abusing, and threatening them. At a mass meeting on Thursday night, the demonstrators voted to suspend the sit-in to avoid further bloodshed.\textsuperscript{136}

On Friday 7 June 1963, the trial of Henley, Cowgill, Gaston, Floyd Johnson, and William Johnson began in Charlottesville Municipal Court. Over the course of the weekend, countless witnesses testified that they saw Henley and Cowgill beat Gaston and the Johnsons. Floyd Johnson also alleged that as he was being beaten a policeman at the scene watched and was asked by Henley “how much will it cost me to hit that nigger once more,” to which the trooper replied “maybe a jail sentence.”\textsuperscript{137} Then Henley hit Johnson again in full view of the officer. The officer, State Trooper John S. Pannell, vigorously denied Johnson’s allegations on the stand, and was not convicted or censured for his alleged inaction. However, the evidence against Henley and Cowgill was far too strong for even the most racist court to ignore. Both were convicted of five counts of

\textsuperscript{135} \textit{Charlottesville Daily Progress}, 7 June 1963.
\textsuperscript{136} \textit{Charlottesville Daily Progress}, 4 June 1963.
\textsuperscript{137} \textit{Charlottesville Daily Progress}, 7 June 1963.
assault and battery and the charges against Gaston, Floyd Johnson, and William Johnson were dismissed. Despite the abundance of evidence testifying to the unprovoked nature of the attack, Henley and Cowgill were only given a 10 dollar fine and a 30 day suspended jail sentence.\textsuperscript{138}

The "little Birmingham" incident in Charlottesville was the main turning point for the civil rights struggle in the city. Some citizens, business owners, and city leaders were shocked at the violence and made a concerted effort to prevent such incidents from happening again. The university theatre, which was the focus of pickets two years earlier agreed to desegregate, as well as many other businesses in the city. However, Buddy's still refused to serve blacks and closed its doors forever on 2 July 1964 when the federal Civil Rights Bill was signed into law.\textsuperscript{139} The incident also marked a tactical crossroads for the civil rights movement in the city. Adult activists who had dominated the direct action struggles of the university theatre campaign and the sit-in movement, returned to a more structural approach to changing the systems of racism and segregation in the city. On 7 January 1965, white liberals and black citizens formed the Citizen's Democratic Council (CDC) whose purpose was to "to identify with the policies of the national Democratic Party and to influence local politicians who remained loyal to the conservative view of the State democratic leadership."\textsuperscript{140} The goal of the group was to organize locally for the realignment of the state Democratic Party away from the racism and conservatism of the Byrd Organization, towards the racial inclusion policies of the Lyndon Baines Johnson administration. On 21 January, Charlottesville's Democrats met to elect a new Democratic Committee for the city. The CDC dominated and for the first

\textsuperscript{138} Charlottesville Daily Progress, 10 June 1963.
\textsuperscript{139} Charlottesville Daily Progress, 3 July 1964 and 6 July 1964.
\textsuperscript{140} Crowe, "Desegregation of Charlottesville, Virginia Public Schools," 209.
time in history, black representatives were elected to the Charlottesville Democratic Committee. In the black community, the NAACP announced that it would be shifting its strategy away from education to focus upon equal employment under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Other black organizations, such as the Charlottesville Citizen’s Committee (CCC) and the Churchmen for Social Action (CSA) focused their activism on the appointment of black representatives to city government positions. Their first major success occurred on 21 June 1965, when Raymond L. Bell became the first black citizen appointed to the School Board by the City Council.

With adult civil rights activists focused on altering traditional city politics, the impetus for direct action passed to the youth in Charlottesville. In the black community, groups of high school students at newly integrated Lane High School began organizing to demand respect, black studies classes, and the hiring of black teachers and administrators. Their campaign would culminate in 1968 with a series of walkouts and nights of violent racial unrest in the city. The mantle for white involvement in the activist civil rights movement was handed down to a small group of liberal students at the University of Virginia. Inspired by their professors involvement in the university theatre campaign and the sit-in movement, and encouraged by liberals within the Charlottesville community, these students would become active in the regional and national civil rights struggle before becoming instrumental in building a mass movement at the university against the war in Vietnam, for university reform, and for a revolutionary form of participatory democracy.

141 Ibid.
142 Ibid., 221.
Chapter IV

According to John Patrick Diggins (The Rise and Fall of the American Left), the new left, which “started in a spirit of moderation and ended calling for nothing less than revolution... was one of the great political surprises of the midtwentieth century.” It occurred at a time when the political left in America was supposedly dead and buried due to the sectarian infighting which destroyed the old industrial left of the 1930s and 40s. Many young activists who came to identify with the new left were generally well educated middle class whites, who had grown up in the relative affluence of the 1950s. However, for various personal reasons they began to look through the cracks of Eisenhower’s America and saw the dark underbelly of a society in which poverty and racism were prevalent. Initially, they identified with liberalism and “found some hope for change in the John F. Kennedy administration.” However, Kennedy’s “New Frontier” turned out to be a hollow promise, and his assassination in 1963 caused many young liberals to seek out more radical solutions to domestic problems. For many in the founding generation of the new left, that solution was to “go south,” and volunteer on the front lines of the continuing southern civil rights movement.

Unlike the remnants of the old left, whose survival in the McCarthyist fifties was dependent on their anti-Communism, the new left did not feel bound by any such ideological restraints. Having grown up under the dark specter of nuclear annihilation,

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144 Ibid., 221.
young activists began to connect the dots of cold war American foreign policy and came to realize that around the world America was not the shining beacon of democracy they had been taught to believe it was. Intrigued by Fidel Castro’s 1959 revolution in Cuba, many young activists were concerned when Kennedy authorized the “Bay of Pigs” invasion of the island in April 1961. This event, and the resulting Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, caused many young radicals, “to identify with the political and economic destiny of the third world, [and to embrace] Cuba as the embodiment of a ‘new humanist socialism.’” As the sixties progressed, foreign matters would supersede domestic issues for many new left activists, and opposition to the Vietnam War would propel the movement onto the national political scene.

By the late 1960’s, the new left had grown into a mass-movement of hundreds of thousands of students and allies devoted to ending the war in Vietnam and supporting revolutionary movements at home (including the Black Panther Party for Self Defense) and abroad (such as the National Liberation Front in Vietnam). It agitated against liberalism, against the corporate controlled university, and against the draft. Radicalized by events of the decade, many new left leaders openly identified as Marxists and by 1969 the movement devolved into rampant sectarianism, just as the old left had done thirty years before. In the early seventies, the new left splintered apart as a result of internal conflicts and external pressure from the state. Its most militant elements went underground and began a violent campaign to overthrow the United States government, while many of the rank-and-file drifted off into the hippie counterculture. As a result of the revolutionary zeal of the new left in America during the sixties, there was an intense counter-revolution by the conservative establishment. This “new right” propelled

145 Ibid.
California Governor Ronald Reagan into the White House in 1980, and set the ideological foundations for the anti-homosexual, anti-abortion, anti-welfare, anti-affirmative action policies of modern day social conservatism.

In the North, young activists formed the most famous new left organization, Students for a Democratic Society. SDS was originally called the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID), and was the youth wing of an old left socialist group, the League for Industrial Democracy (LID). By the late fifties, LID was a fiercely anti-Communist tax-exempt organization which was essentially "a kind of dignified retirement home for aging social democrats." In 1960 SLID changed its name to SDS and sponsored a conference in Ann Arbor, Michigan, which brought 150 students to hear speeches by civil rights activist James Farmer and the four students who had started the Greensboro sit-ins. At SDS’s first official convention later in the year, the Ann Arbor group dominated and elected Al Haber as the organization’s first president (1960-1962). Apart from assuming this national role, Haber worked tirelessly to organize and expand the Ann Arbor chapter. His early recruits included Sharon Jeffrey, Bob Ross, and most importantly Thomas Hayden, the incoming editor of the Michigan Daily. Together these four students would become the ideological and physical core of SDS and the northern new left in the early 1960s.

After initially organizing around the issue of civil rights, especially in support of the student sit-ins in the South, SDS began to develop the foundations of new left ideology. In dealing with the administration of the University of Michigan, Hayden started to stress "the democratization of decision making," which corresponded with Haber’s "views on democracy as the key to developing a multi-issue organ of radical

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146 Miller, Democracy is in the Streets, 29.
education.” Shortly after Hayden officially joined SDS in 1961, he and his first wife, Sandra Cason (a SNCC activist) were sent to Atlanta to establish an SDS field office. While reporting on the continuing direct action activities of SNCC and traveling across the South, Hayden began to develop the ideological basis of new left.

Looking for inspiration, Hayden turned to the sociologist C. Wright Mills, already a spiritual and intellectual hero of the emerging student left. Hayden borrowed from Mills, among other things, ideas that the individual had become subjugated to the centralization of modern society, and that “politics had become a spectator sport.” Mills’ desire for “democratic relevance” was taken to heart by the new student left, and his assertion that “personal frustration and powerlessness ought to be connected to public issues was reiterated and developed by Hayden, becoming one basis for the characteristic assertion by the New Left that ‘the personal’ is ‘political.’” Mills championed students and intellectuals as the vanguard of the new left, and his death on 20 March 1962 at the age of forty-five shocked many people in the new movement into action.

Drawing upon the works of C. Wright Mills and other intellectuals, Hayden developed a draft that would become one of the most famous documents produced by the new left. *The Port Huron Statement* (named after the location of SDS’s 1962 convention where the document was adopted) became the ideological framework within which SDS operated until 1969. One of the main pillars of new left ideology presented by Hayden in the document was the now famous concept of ‘participatory democracy.’ Hayden initially proposed participatory democracy as “a form of civic education that uniquely developed

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147 Ibid., 54.
148 Ibid., 85.
149 Ibid., 87.
the human potential, [and] as a precondition of social justice.” In other words participatory democracy was considered, at this point, personal participation and initiative concerning social decisions, and independence and common participation in society.

Despite its commitment to civil rights, SDS initially made little effort to organize white students in the South. The new left in the South developed independently of SDS, but in time its activists came to share many of that organization’s ideological and tactical goals, including university reform, an end to the war in Vietnam, labor organizing, and ultimately, political revolution. The primary organization which drew many southern students into the national new left was the Southern Student Organizing Committee, a group which “grew out of both SNCC’s effort to reach out to white southern students as well as the involvement of white students in the long–lasting campaign to desegregate public accommodations in Nashville, Tennessee.”

According to historian Gregg Michel, “SSOC initially focused on civil rights, [but] before long it transformed itself into a multi-issue organization, which, in addition to advocating black equality, organized opposition to the Vietnam War and the draft, encouraged challenges to restrictive in loco parentis policies on southern campuses, supported the women’s liberation movement, and drew students into interracial organizing campaigns among southern industrial workers.” In 1961, SCEF provided SNCC with the first of three $5,000 grants for the purpose of hiring someone to begin organizing white students and bring them into the movement. This “White Southern

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150 Ibid., 95.
152 Ibid., 1.
Student Project" was the brainchild of Anne Braden, the long time SCEF organizer in the South. The first field secretary for the project was Bob Zellner, a student from Alabama who had come to the attention of Braden when he attended meetings of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) and the Highlander Folk School. However, Zellner preferred to operate within the black community alongside SNCC organizers rather than work in isolation amongst hostile white students. In 1963 he was replaced by another Alabaman, Sam Shirah, who was much more comfortable organizing within the white community.

As Shirah was visiting universities across the South in an attempt to organize white students into SNCC, students in Nashville were concluding a long-running campaign to desegregate local restaurants and other businesses. By early 1964, the students had resolved to form a "southwide" organization that would "put white southern activists from across the South in contact with one another and provide a vehicle by which liberal students could participate in the civil rights movement." The Nashville group met with Shirah, Myles Horton (Highlander School), Ella Baker (Southern Christian Leadership Conference, SNCC, and SCEF), Anne Braden, Jane Stembridge (a white SNCC activist), Todd Gitlin (SDS), and Robb Burlage (SDS), and began inviting white students to a meeting in Nashville over Easter weekend. On the first weekend of April, forty-five young activists representing fifteen white universities in ten southern states met in Nashville and formed the Southern Student Organizing Committee, a group which "would exist as a decentralized organization in which ultimate authority belonged

153 Ibid., 16.
154 Ibid., 30.
155 Ibid.
to local groups, whether they were SSOC chapters or independent local formations. Soon after its creation SSOC became a fraternal organization of SDS, allowing the group’s representatives to vote at SDS meetings and pass out SDS literature. SDS initially saw SSOC as a recruiting tool from which SDS would be able to draw in southern students, but by the late sixties relations had soured between the two groups, eventually leading to the hostile takeover and dissolution of SSOC by SDS in 1969.

As SSOC was a decentralized organization which acted primarily as a coordinating body for white southern student activists, the university organizations which associated with the group became its primary tactical vehicle. Despite not being actively involved in the organization’s founding, the student movement at the University of Virginia went on to play a dominant role in SSOC throughout the sixties. It provided a number of leaders to SSOC specifically and the southern civil rights and anti-war movements generally. Leaders who then returned to Charlottesville towards the end of the decade and helped organize a powerful, indigenous, and independent new left movement at the university.

Nineteen sixty-four was a turning point for white student involvement in the national civil rights movement. That summer, hundreds of white students from northern universities descended on Mississippi for SNCC’s “Freedom Summer” campaign. A small number of white students from southern universities also traveled to the state to participate in SSOC’s “White Folks Project.” Michel contends that although, “the black Mississippians who lived, died, struggled and eventually triumphed were the true heroes of the Mississippi movement, and although the presence of large numbers of young white northerners gave the story of Freedom Summer its dramatic edge and national spotlight,

\[156\] Ibid., 49.
the small number of white southern students who went to Mississippi to work in the White Folks Project were the only volunteers to reach out to local whites." Howard Romaine—a Louisiana native who had attended Southwestern University in Memphis and had been active in civil rights struggles in the city—was one of the southern white students who participated in Freedom Summer, although not with the White Folks Project. After leaving Mississippi, he traveled to Charlottesville to attend graduate school at the University of Virginia.

Since becoming a bona-fide student organization in 1961, JC-VCHR had become the primary civil rights organization at the university. Although its numbers were always relatively small, it had an impressive record of bringing big name speakers, including Martin Luther King Jr., and socialist Norman Thomas, to campus. In the spring of 1963, the organization embarked upon an ambitious program to poll students as to their opinion of blacks at the university, in order to determine the future course of action JC-VCHR would embark upon. Constructed by JC-VCHR members William “Bill” Leary, Jerry Coffey, and Gene Blumenreich, and funded by the organization with assistance from the Student Activities Committee, the questionnaire was mailed to 1,450 students, approximately one-fourth of the student body. The results, published in 9 April 1964’s edition of *Plume & Sword*, found that while the vast majority did not oppose black students from attending the university (eighty-five percent), and believed that they should be treated as any other student (seventy-two percent), they did not agree with desegregated housing (fifty-six percent against). Another sign that students attitudes towards race were slowly changing was a letter which appeared in the *Cavalier Daily* on

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157 Ibid., 65.
158 *Plume and Sword* (UVA), vol. iv, no. iv, 9 April 1964.
159 Ibid.
3 March 1964, announcing that a boycott of Buddy’s had been started until the restaurant agreed to desegregate. The letter was signed by an informal committee of ten students and faculty, representing a larger group that had circulated a petition the previous week and had gathered over 200 signatures. The boycott was an important development not only because it kept up the pressure on Buddy’s following the previous year’s sit-ins, but also because it marked the first time that university students had initiated a campaign targeting segregation under the auspices of an organized group other than JC-VCHR.

Throughout JC-VCHR’s existence, faculty advisors Hammond and Gaston played an integral role in drawing students into the group. Most students who were active in the group—and with new left organizations at the university later in the decade—credit the two professors with inspiring them to put their civil rights convictions into action. Thomas Gardner, a member of JC-VCHR and future new left activist, remembers Gaston speaking about the Buddy’s sit-in during an American history class, and being “fortified” in his decision to join the civil rights movement. Michel writes of Gaston, that “[the] warm and affable Alabaman especially fired the students’ interest in civil rights,” and moderate JC-VCHR president Bill Leary (1964) stated that Gaston was, “the embodiment of the Virginia Gentleman [with] polished mannerisms...And the fact that somebody like Paul Gaston also supported civil rights showed that people who were not alienated from normal convention nevertheless could be committed to this kind of activity.” Gaston himself recalls one interaction with a student immediately after the Buddy’s sit-in in 1963. He was in the library when the student, noticing the bandage on his head, jokingly

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160 Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 93.
162 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 100.
asked him if he had been down at Buddy’s. When Gaston answered in the affirmative, the student’s “jaw dropped; He couldn’t believe that someone he knew and liked, one of his teachers, had actually been beaten up ... To [actually] see somebody [who had been beaten] was the first step in his transformation to become a man of extraordinary social conscience ... His change dates from that conversation.”

As school began again in the fall of 1964, the excitement from Freedom Summer still lingered in the minds of many student civil rights activists across the region. At the University of Virginia, Howard Romaine’s arrival immediately stirred up the pro-civil rights students associated with JC-VCHR. Students active in the group, such as first semester freshman Thomas Gardner, remember being impressed by Romaine’s stories of Freedom Summer and rooming with Mario Savio (who had gone on to lead the Free Speech Movement at Berkeley) as well as his graduate student status. According to David Nolan, another student who would become active in the university new left, “Romaine’s appearance at [JC-VCHR] meetings was a real shot in the arm.” Romaine’s energy was contagious and his activist approach to civil rights organizing quickly caused a rift within JC-VCHR’s ranks. He wanted JC-VCHR to take a more proactive role in civil rights organizing on campus and principled action over traditional forms of community education, such as bringing speakers and holding lectures. A group of like-minded students coalesced around him—including Roger Hickey and David Nolan (who had been a part of the Buddy’s boycott committee the previous semester), and graduate student Anne Cooke (one of the only women in the organization)—and began to agitate

164 Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007; Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 100.
for “bold confrontational tactics... [which] would bring lasting change to the university, Charlottesville, and the South.”

These students, and others including Gardner and Steve Wise, would go on to become the first generation of new leftists at the university during the late sixties. Anne Cooke and Steve Wise were both southerners who came from racially progressive families. Cooke was born in Atlanta and grew up in Gastonia, North Carolina. Originally she was deeply religious and attended Queens College before becoming a missionary in Mexico in 1962. While overseas, Cooke became disillusioned with religion and moved to Washington D.C., where she became interested in civil rights. She then returned to Queens and entered the University of Virginia as a graduate student in history. On her first day she met her future husband, Howard Romaine. Steve Wise, from Newport News, Virginia, grew up in an Episcopal family. His father frequently wrote letters to the newspaper protesting segregation as “unchristian,” and he remembers always being sensitive to civil rights.

David Nolan and Thomas Gardner, both prominent first generation new leftists at UVA and second generation leaders of SSOC, had experience with desegregation and civil rights prior to their arrival in Charlottesville. Nolan grew up in Queens, New York and was raised Catholic. He was introduced to civil rights at Bayside High School when he took a class called “Problems in American Democracy” taught by an avowed socialist and subsequently joined a student organization which brought representatives from the NAACP to school. When he was accepted into the University of Virginia, the

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165 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 100.
166 Ibid., 54-57.
167 Ibid., 54.
168 Ibid., 137.
temptation to “go south” at the height of the civil rights struggle was too appealing and from the beginning he knew “that [he] was going to ‘major’ in civil rights.”

Thomas Gardner was born in New Orleans, Louisiana into a Navy family. He lived in Norfolk, Virginia, Washington D.C., Panama, and Florida before moving to New Jersey during his high school years. Unlike some of the places in which he lived, the Navy had a high degree of desegregation and Gardner grew up around black children. His high school was one third black, and he recalls that “I found myself more drawn to the black kids than the white because they seemed more southern, which I identified with.”

After souring on plans to attend the Naval Academy and becoming interested in a diplomatic career, Gardner decided to attend the University of Virginia because it had a large number of graduates working with the State Department. Soon after he arrived in Charlottesville, Gardner realized for the first time that there were “just six black students at the university, and I knew them all.” He joined JC-VCHR just as the organization was reaching a crisis point between the “action” faction, led by Romaine, and the more moderate leadership of Bill Leary.

In October 1964, Archie Allen, a native Virginian who was serving as SSOC’s campus traveler, visited the University of Virginia to bolster and encourage the action oriented students within JC-VCHR. The following month, the faction sent a delegation to SSOC’s first “Southwide Conference” in Atlanta. The conference was a defining moment in the history of both SSOC and the new left at the University of Virginia. The

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169 Ibid.
171 Ibid., 2.
172 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 100; The campus traveler program was initiated as a joint SDS-SSOC program to identify and recruit southern students into the movement. In his first two months on the job, Allen visited twenty-nine schools in six southern states.
UVA group met with 144 students from forty-three schools in eleven southern states and heard speakers including James Forman (SNCC’s executive Secretary), Ed King (committeeman of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party), and Don West (co-founder of the Highlander School). According to Michel, “the most important development at the Southwide conference was SSOC’s decision to transform itself into a biracial student organization.” This decision had an enormous impact on the UVA students, as by 1965 they would become the driving force behind SSOC’s attempt to put biracial community organizing into practice.

The UVA delegation to the Southwide conference returned even more committed to pressuring JC-VCHR to alter its tactics and goals. They were frustrated by JC-VCHR’s moderate ideology and non-confrontational tactics and “when they failed to persuade [JC-VCHR] to develop a community action program to challenge segregation both at the university and in Charlottesville, they spontaneously organized a new student organization dedicated to developing action-oriented programs in support of progressive causes.” The new group was called Students for Social Action (SSA) and elected Howard Romaine as its first president.

SSA would soon become the first indigenous new left organization at the University of Virginia, but at the time of its founding was purely an action oriented civil rights group. Most of SSA’s original members were part of the “action” faction which split from JC-VCHR, but there were some, including Gardner, who worked with both

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173 Ibid., 81-82.
174 Ibid., 82; As the result of deciding to organize on both black and white campuses, SSOC formally dropped both its emblem (of a white and black hand clasped over a confederate battle flag), and the name of its newsletter (The New Rebel).
175 Ibid., 100-101; Some JC-VCHR members did not even support the 1964 Civil Rights Act.
organizations. In the winter of 1964/65, SSA formally affiliated with SSOC, becoming that organization’s first ever university chapter and embarked upon its inaugural civil rights action project in support of SSOC’s “Mississippi Christmas Project.” The Christmas project was a reflection of SSOC’s new biracial focus as it brought an interracial group of southern students into the black communities of three Mississippi towns—Laurel, Hattiesburg, and Meridian—to rebuild burned out community centers and help with voter registration. At the University of Virginia, SSA and JC-VCHR worked together to collect food and clothing to send to Mississippi. They parked a trailer on the main road through campus and although it was vandalized with the letters “KKK,” it was still sent to Mississippi full. In addition, SSA members Sidney Kamerman, Leo Bowden, Anne Cooke, and Howard Romaine all traveled to Mississippi to participate in the rebuilding of a community center in Meridian.

On 7 March 1965, six hundred civil rights demonstrators led by John Lewis of SNCC attempted to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama to protest the violence being directed at blacks trying to vote in the state. Alabama Governor George Wallace called the march a “threat to public safety,” and the demonstrators were brutally attacked by police as they tried to cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge. Like with Birmingham in 1963, images of peaceful demonstrators being beaten, gassed, and whipped dominated the nightly news and again shocked many Americans into action in support of civil rights. In Charlottesville, “bloody Sunday” inspired the black community, white liberals, and civil rights students to come together in a mass protest for the first time. At the university,

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176 Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
177 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 86.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid., 101.
JC-VCHR and SSA organized a “Sympathy for Selma” march from Cabell Hall to the Rotunda. JC-VCHR, in keeping with its moderate tactical approach, requested permission for the march from the administration and advised the Charlottesville police of their intentions. In order to organize the white liberal community, Paul Gaston personally sent a letter to all members of the faculty and other sympathizers urging them to join the demonstrations. In the black community, demonstrators under the auspices of the NAACP met at the Baptist Church on Main Street and marched to the university. The two groups met on the steps of the Rotunda, and the three hundred demonstrators held hands and sang “We Shall Overcome,” easily drowning out the few student counter-demonstrators, one of whom was holding a sign which read “the asinine march for niggers at Selma.” JC-VCHR president Bill Leary spoke at the demonstration and called for the university to join with the rest of the nation in honoring the civil rights demonstrators at Selma. He also criticized the administration for its token integration and poor treatment of black employees.

Following the highly successful “Sympathy for Selma” demonstration, several SSA members, including Gardner, Alan Ogden, and Bob Fisher, organized a group to go down to the next Selma to Montgomery march. They persuaded the “Freedom Train” that was traveling to Alabama from Boston to stop in Charlottesville, and were accompanied on the trip by math professor Jim England, a faculty member who would become very important to the new left at the university in the coming months and years. Gardner

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180 Bill Leary to B.F.D. Runk, 16 March 1965, http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~hius316/desegregation/leary.html (Date Accessed: 02/16/07)

181 Kay, “The History of Desegregation at the University of Virginia,” 96; He was later criticized by University president Shannon for signing the letters with his professorial title.

182 Ibid.

183 Ibid.
brought a sign to the demonstration which bore the Thomas Jefferson quote, “All eyes are
opened or opening to the rights of man,” and wrote UVA at the bottom, an action which
earned him a stern rebuke from the administration.\textsuperscript{184}

The spring of 1965 was an incredibly important semester to the emerging student
movement at the University of Virginia for reasons other than the successful “Sympathy
for Selma” demonstration. Over the course of the semester, “the action-orientated SSA
[eclipsed JC-VCHR] as the most dynamic student organization on campus.”\textsuperscript{185} Part of the
reason for this development was that Thomas Gardner became president of JC-VCHR.
Early in the semester David Nolan asked Gardner to run for president of JC-VCHR,
apparently in an attempt to install an SSA sympathizer at the head of that organization.
Gardner was duly elected, and now speculates that perhaps his identification with SSA
while president of JC-VCHR contributed to the latter organization’s demise in standing
vis-à-vis SSA.\textsuperscript{186}

The second important development was that Howard Romaine was elected
national chairman of SSOC at the organization’s spring conference. He replaced Gene
Guerrero, and joined Ron Money (treasurer from Vanderbilt) and black students Howard
Spencer (vice-chairman from Rust College), and Herman Carter (secretary from Southern
University) in SSOC’s first integrated cabinet.\textsuperscript{187} Romaine’s election to the highest
position within SSOC, and with SSA being the only officially affiliated campus chapter,
immediately made the University of Virginia one of SSOC’s emerging centers of power.

\textsuperscript{184} Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20
November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special
Collections Library, 3.
\textsuperscript{185} Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 101.
\textsuperscript{186} Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
\textsuperscript{187} Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 98.
After Romaine, the next two national chairmen of SSOC also emerged from the ranks of SSA at the university.

The third and arguably most important development that occurred during the spring of 1965 was the emergence of the Virginia Students’ Civil Rights Committee. The organization had been formed by a group of black and white students in December 1964 during the aftermath of a SNCC sponsored conference in Hampton, Virginia.\(^{188}\) The white students were overwhelmingly members of SSA and included Romaine, Cooke, Nolan, and Carey Stronach. The goal of VSCRC was to develop a “mini freedom summer” in Virginia because, according to the organization’s chairman Ben Montgomery, “we decided we didn’t need to go to Mississippi to find work that needed doing. We had problems right here.”\(^{189}\)

The group met again at the University of Virginia from 2-4 April 1965 to formalize their plans for the coming summer, and two important events subsequently occurred that helped to embolden and fortify the commitment of UVA’s white organizers in SSA. First, John Lewis, who was chairman of SNCC at the time, was scheduled to speak at the conference. However, he had just been badly beaten during the Selma to Montgomery march, and most of the organizers thought that he would justifiably cancel his appearance. He did not, and with a bandage over his wound, addressed the assembled black and white students of VSCRC. For Gardner, Lewis’ dedication, bravery, and zeal convinced him that “I could no longer let my fears minimize my involvement.”\(^{190}\) That

\(^{188}\) Ibid., 102.

\(^{189}\) VSCRC Staff, *The Story of VSCRC*, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 1.

\(^{190}\) Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20 November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 3.
new found commitment was immediately put to the test when the VSCRC students adjourned to a Charlottesville apartment following the conference. The group, which was integrated by sex and race, was surrounded inside the apartment by a group of racist fraternity students who threatened to lynch the VSCRC organizers. Without a phone to call out for help, and unaware of the strength of the mob outside, the students spent a sleepless night inside of the apartment.\textsuperscript{191} It was just a taste of what was in store for VSCRC.

On 1 June 1965, fifteen white and five black students from seven Virginia universities moved into Southside, Virginia, the heart of white supremacy and support for massive resistance to school integration during the fifties. They were aided by support teams who remained behind on campuses, including UVA, to generate funds, publicity, and legal aid. The summer campaign was directed and run by VSCRC independent of outside groups, but was aided by both SNCC and SSOC, the latter seeing the project as an excellent example of its new focus on biracial student organizing. In the six Southside counties, VSCRC organizers convinced local residents to agitate for better city services, organized integrated groups to attempt to desegregate local businesses, and embarked upon an ambitious, yet highly successful voter registration drive.\textsuperscript{192}

By the end of the summer, the campaign was becoming so successful that the Ku Klux Klan moved into Southside to attack the VSCRC organizers and intimidate the local black population into abandoning the movement for equality. The Klan distributed a pamphlet stating that they would “make Virginia a hell-on-wheels to the New York, Commununistic, racial agitators who seek to use our peaceful Negroes in their filthy ‘Black

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\item[191] Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
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However, it was not the VSCRC organizers who were outsiders (they were all Virginia students, and most southerners), but Klan members who drove from all over the South, especially North Carolina, to agitate racial violence in Southside Virginia.

After the summer ended, many of the VSCRC volunteers chose to continue organizing in Southside, and some, like David Nolan, dropped out of school to do so. During the fall of 1965, VSCRC helped organize a black boycott of white businesses in Lunenburg and Brunswick counties due to discriminatory hiring practices. The boycotts were highly successful and not only seriously hurt the white business community, but also won VSCRC the support of the black community. The Klan attempted to break the boycotts through vicious racial violence and there were numerous beatings, property damage and three shootings, the most serious of which occurred on 18 November when a young black volunteer was shot in the head while sitting in front of the VSCRC headquarters. He barely survived, and while the perpetrators were well known in the community, they were not arrested or charged.

While some VSCRC organizers remained in Southside after the summer ended, most returned to school for the fall semester of 1965 and visited on weekends. At the University of Virginia, SSA was preparing for another semester of campus organizing. However, even on the heels of the most successful student civil rights project in Virginia's history, SSA was slowly evolving away from a primary focus on civil rights. At SSOC's spring conference there had been a heavy emphasis placed upon university

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193 VSCRC Staff, The Story of VSCRC, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 3.
194 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 102-103.
195 VSCRC Staff, The Story of VSCRC, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 3.
196 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 103.
reform as a result of 1964's "Free Speech Movement" (FSM) at Berkeley and a failed attempt by the "Freedom Party" at the University of Florida to win control of their student government in 1965. With SSOC becoming interested in university reform, SSA, due to its connections to SSOC's leadership, also became involved in the issue and how it applied to the unique conditions at the University of Virginia. It is at this point—when SSOC and SSA broaden their agendas to include issues other than civil rights and race—that they become new left organizations for the first time.

University reform was directly connected to the new left's conviction that students could be a powerful instrument for social change. However, students could not become such a force within society as a whole without first agitating for and winning their rights on campus. Universities in the early 1960s were highly controlled places of study where adult students forfeited many of their rights as citizens upon enrolling. Michel contends that, "to student activists in the 1960s, university reform was a broad and flexible term that encompassed everything from calls for a relaxation of the rules governing student life—the hated in loco parentis policies—to demands that the university change its image as a subsidiary of the federal government and big business." University reform was an issue that dramatically aided the growth of the new left because, unlike civil rights, it was an issue that directly impacted white students and allowed the movement to reach out to mainstream youths.

At the University of Virginia, university reform became a primary concern of the emerging new left because of the unique system of governing student life at the university, and the potential for reaching a larger base of students through agitation on the subject. During the sixties, the university "Honor System" was considered by many

197 Ibid., 96.
alumni and administrators to be one of the most hallowed and sacred university institutions. The Honor System (or Honor Spirit) began in 1842 with an innocent pledge taken by a student declaring that he had received no outside help on an examination. In 1909 rules for enforcing the Honor System were first established. Suspected violators were first asked to explain their actions and then if the response was unsatisfactory, made to appear before an Honor Committee of six members. There was only one punishment for being found guilty by five of the six, expulsion. In 1932, the university began the policy of giving "Honor Cards" to all first-year men, requiring them to sign as to their acceptance of the system. During the 1930s, exactly what was considered a violation of the Honor System was expanded dramatically due to vague language in the 1935 guidelines which stated, "the Honor System shall concern itself solely with those offenses which are classified as dishonorable by the public opinion of the student generation involved." Under the new regulations, students were expelled for actions such as cheating at cards, evading payment of just debts, sexual crimes against younger students, and for violent or insulting behavior towards ladies. By the sixties, many students believed that the Honor System was overextended and law students voiced fears over the inability of a student to appeal a guilty verdict. However, the Honor Committee felt just the opposite and in 1964 further expanded the system's reach, declaring "a student is considered a representative of the university no matter where he may be and no matter what the time of year."

198 Dabney, Mr. Jefferson's University, 530.
199 Ibid., 534.
200 Ibid.
201 Ibid., 537.
Besides the Honor System, the new left at the University of Virginia targeted co-education during their campaign for university reform. In SSA's early years, this was limited to agitating for female visitation hours in the all-male dorms, but by the end of the sixties the new left was demanding that women be allowed to enter the university on an equal basis with men. Along with reforming the Honor System, the issue of allowing women to visit with men in university dorms was popular with the larger student body. In 1964 the Student Council unanimously passed a resolution requesting permission for such visits on weekends for limited hours. The administration rejected that request and a similar one made in 1966. After intense organizing by the new left, and much debate amongst the student body as a whole, the administration finally granted limited visitation hours in 1967/68.

SSA was able to seamlessly add university reform to their civil rights agenda because the broadness of the organization's charter allowed it to do so. SSA officially identified itself as, "an organization [that] shall be dedicated to the perpetuation of liberties to which all Americans are entitled. Furthermore, we affirm our belief in and dedication to those principles of American liberalism, both in domestic and foreign policy, which are in conformity with the needs of contemporary America. The perpetuation of these aims shall be carried out in a non-violent, orderly manner." In the fall of 1965, SSA launched their program for university reform with a scathing letter to entering freshmen. In it they attacked orientation as the first step towards indoctrinating students into the "traditional ways of doing things." The flyer singled out the Honor

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202 UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
203 Students for Social Action, A Letter to Entering Freshman, http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~hius316/protest/freshlet.html (Date Accessed: 02/14/07)
System for criticism as well as the traditional practice of wearing coats and ties on the
grounds. However, the most telling critique was that of compulsory R.O.T.C. at the
University. In a foreshadowing of the new left’s focus on the Vietnam War during the
second half of the decade, SSA ridiculed the R.O.T.C. as having “classes [with] the least
intellectual content of any courses offered at the University of Virginia.” The flyer
closed by urging new students to think for themselves and to consider joining SSA, a
group made up of students who “want more out of our education... [and who] are here in
search of knowledge not sheepskins.” With an agenda including active involvement in
civil rights and broad university reform, SSA began to grow in both membership and
ideology. By the end of 1965, it had become the first new left organization at the
University of Virginia and a training ground for activists who would go on to become
important leaders in the southern civil rights and anti-war movements of the mid-sixties.

The emergence and growing strength of SSA worried the university
administration and the Student Council. Previously they had effectively been able to
curtail pro-civil rights demonstrations on the grounds by forcing JC-VCHR to include a
no-picketing clause in its constitution, and although the clause was struck in October
1963, it had the desired effect as JC-VCHR was always very conscious of applying for
and receiving administration approval for civil rights actions. The Student Council
attempted to exert the same sort of control over SSA. They denied them official
recognition in 1965, and during the spring of 1966, as a condition for official recognition,
SSA was forced to agree to the following regulations:

SSA in its actions will properly and faithfully comply with administrative
rulings and procedures, 2) SSA in its actions will faithfully abide by the normal

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204 Ibid.
205 Ibid.
rules of parliamentary procedure, and that actions taken by the organization be voted on and approved by a majority of members, the number which meets a quorum at officially sponsored meeting. 3) The minutes of each official meeting of the SSA will be sent to the Student Council not later than one week after the meeting.\footnote{UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791.}

The administration also kept a close eye on SSA through Dean B.F.D Runk, who was appointed in 1959. Runk, who served as Dean until 1968, was responsible for monitoring all student activity, not just that of civil rights advocates.\footnote{Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's University}, 471.} The extent of Runk’s control is illuminated by an incident concerning the \textit{Cavalier Daily} in 1966/67. According to Richard Dyas, who was managing editor at the time, “the paper was focusing more and more on matters of university reform ... the term \textit{in loco parentis} was used constantly—and derisively—in our editorials.”\footnote{Richard W. Dyas, \textit{Censorship and Dean Runk, 1963-1967}, \texttt{http://www.cdalumni.org/} (Date Accessed: 09/27/07), 2.} Runk secretly had the manager of the University Press, which published the newspaper, read all of the copy before publication and call him at home. Runk would then telephone the paper’s editors demanding changes in content (which the editors usually ignored), and eventually appointed an Editorial Consulting Board, consisting of his own hand picked students, to monitor the paper.\footnote{Ibid.}

Matters came to a head when the editors chose a picture for the cover which depicted a mural in the Memorial Gym of a nude reclining. The cover was censored and the picture removed, leaving only a cutline on the Friday edition of the paper. After a series of blistering editorials the next week, Runk informed the editors that the University Press would no longer publish the \textit{Cavalier Daily}. The editors scrambled for a new publisher and finally settled on the \textit{Star-Exponent} in Culpeper. The editor, a university alumnus, was angry at Runk’s actions and charged the paper half of what the University
Press had been charging for publication. According to Dyas, "it was with this final separation from the University’s administrative arm that the [Cavalier Daily] began to really improve."\(^{210}\)

Although the Cavalier Daily gradually became more independent and liberal as the sixties progressed, at the beginning of the 1966 spring semester it was still a relatively conservative publication. SSA realized that if the organization was ever going to reach out to ordinary students at the university, it could not rely upon established media institutions such as the Cavalier Daily to accurately convey their message. Thus, SSA members decided to publish their own newspaper, the first such alternative new left publication at the University of Virginia. The Iconoclast, UVA’s first “insurgent newspaper,” contributed to the growth of the new left at the university because it provided a forum for students to discuss and debate a range of issues relevant to students.\(^ {211}\) It also established the use of alternative media as one of the hallmarks of the new left at UVA throughout the rest of the sixties and into the seventies. The Iconoclast was initially run by Robert “Bob” Dewart, and:

grew out of general dissatisfaction with the other publications at the University, primarily the Cavalier Daily... [which] virtually ignores issues which arouse lively debate elsewhere: the undeclared war in Vietnam, racial discrimination in all phases of life, academic freedom at American universities, lack of responsible student government, the collateral existence of poverty and the affluent society, sub-standard public education, lack of justice in our legal system, and as [sic] many others.\(^ {212}\)

The topics addressed in the first issue of The Iconoclast demonstrate that activists within SSA had dramatically diversified their program in a very short time, and were evolving

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\(^{210}\) Ibid.

\(^{211}\) Bob Dewart to Tom Gardner, Fall 1966, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a, Box 1, folder 1, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

\(^{212}\) The Iconoclast (UVA), issue no. 1, 1
ideologically as both individuals and as a group. Articles such as “Tokenism at UVA” (by Steve Wise), addressing the lack of recruiting in black high schools and the responsibility of the university to address the historical legacy of segregation; “Student Council: A Serious Critique (by Tom Gardner), discussing the undemocratic nature of Student Council elections;213 “Who Made That Decision?” (by David Nolan), about the free-speech movement at Berkeley and the need to construct a university where a person’s education is more important than the degree conferred; and “Direct Democracy in Action” (by Robert Dewart), focusing on the Vietnam War, show that SSA was in step with the ideology of the new left movement that was emerging nationally.214

Dewart’s article “Direct Democracy in Action,” was specifically about the first ever protest against the Vietnam War at the University of Virginia. On 12 February 1966, twenty-three members of SSA held an hour long demonstration on the steps of Alderman Library in protest of the escalating conflict in Southeast Asia.215 The group was surrounded by a crowd of 300 hostile students some of whom, according to Dewart, “found it necessary to manifest their opposition in the form of snowballs thrown at the demonstrators...[and] other members of the ‘academic community’ restrained themselves to the extent of shouting profanity at the women in the demonstration and taunting others with racial slurs.”216

SSA had been interested in the growing conflict in Vietnam for a full year before this first protest at Alderman Library. Some within the group, including Gardner, had

213 Candidacy was limited to third year students in their second semester or higher which, according to Gardner, eliminated seventy-two percent of the student body from running. The article also condemned the “fraternity machine” which, like the Byrd Organization, controlled who could run for the Council.
214 The Iconoclast (UVA), issue no. 1, 1.
215 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 105.
216 Bob Dewart, Direct Democracy in Action, in The Iconoclast (UVA), issue no. 1.
initially defended U.S. policy in Vietnam when it was first debated at SSA meetings in 1964/65. Gardner admits that, “I didn’t fare too well in the debates, [and] I did a lot of reading and discovered that the reason I hadn’t done too well is that I had been wrong, and that U.S. policy there was bankrupt.” By the end of the 1965 spring semester, Gardner was among a group of students conducting Vietnam teach-ins at the university. As a result of SSA’s interest and eventual focus on the Vietnam War, their relationship with professors Paul Gaston and Thomas Hammond suffered. Gaston and Hammond, as faculty advisors for JC-VCHR, remained focused on civil rights and initially did not oppose the Vietnam War. Although Gaston eventually opposed the war, SSA turned to Richard Coughlin (former U.S. vice-counsel in Vietnam) and East Asia historian Maurice Meisner as “faculty mentors.”

As the summer of 1966 approached, VSCRC was preparing for its second SSOC and SNCC supported civil rights project in Southside Virginia. However, the issue of organizing against the Vietnam War was pulling the organization apart at the seams. In March several VSCRC organizers, including Nolan and Dewart, signed a flyer calling for a protest against the detention of three conscientious objectors (CO’s), and participated in the subsequent demonstration at the Federal Youth Reformatory in Petersburg, Virginia. That summer, seven UVA students: Gardner, Wise, Dewart, Hickey, Bob Fisher, James Gay, and Alan Ogden, travelled to Southside to volunteer with VSCRC. However, this Southside project was not nearly as successful as the first and was plagued

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218 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 105.
219 Flyer, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 105.
220 Fundraising Letter, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
with financial, organizational, and personnel problems. Gardner attests to this, stating that staff meetings became contentious as personal problems arose between the new volunteers and those who had been there since 1965.221 According to Michel, the students were “frustrated by the petty disputes that were undermining VSCRC... [and] believing that the war had become the most salient national issue, wanted to return to campus to help organize student opposition.”222

In April 1965, SDS organized the first national protest against the Vietnam War in Washington D.C. SSOC had voted at its spring conference not to send an official delegation to the demonstration, but as the year progressed many activists within the southern group began to openly advocate organizing against the war.223 The leadership of SSOC, under the chairmanship of UVA student Howard Romaine, was initially wary of broadening the organization’s civil rights agenda. Romaine argued that while he was personally opposed to the war, he was afraid that SSOC would lose organizational focus, as well as activists within its ranks who supported the war.224 However, by the beginning of 1966, SSOC’s leadership decided to officially begin organizing against the war. On 12 February, SSOC co-sponsored the “Southern Days of Protest,” with the Southern Committee to End the War in Vietnam. In addition to the SSA protest at the University of Virginia, over 500 people attended a speech by SDS leader Tom Hayden at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee and more than 125 heard anti-war speakers in Richmond, Virginia.225

221 Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
222 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 105.
223 Ibid., 112.
224 Ibid., 112.
225 Ibid., 113.
The decision to involve SSOC in anti-war work was solidified at the spring Southwide conference in Atlanta. At the conference, several SNCC leaders spoke to SSOC activists about the growing movement towards “Black Power.” Led by Stokely Carmichael, the “Black Power” faction within SNCC argued for racial separatism on the grounds that blacks needed to foster racial pride by building a movement to work in the black community independent of white involvement. According to Carmichael, Black Power was a response to the need of blacks “to reclaim our history and our identity from the cultural terrorism and depredation of self-justifying white guilt.”

At the April 1966 conference, SNCC activists attempted to explain to their counterparts in SSOC the reasons for their new focus on racial separatism. SSOC organizers were initially very concerned with the new developments, but unwilling to break with such a close ally and face accusations of not supporting the integrity of the black movement, quickly accepted their new role as exclusively white community organizers. For the white students of SSOC, organizing within the white community in 1966 meant organizing against the war in Vietnam.

The SSOC spring conference—and events immediately preceding and following it—was especially important to the SSA delegation from the University of Virginia for a number of reasons. First, they experienced the heated passions that SNCC’s move towards racial separatism stirred up first hand. On the first night of the conference, Robert Dewart was assaulted by some of the separatists for sleeping with a black woman,

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227 Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 120.
his wife Janet Dewart. The next day he gave a passionate speech to the assembled
students at the conference, which “added to the reflective gravity of the deliberations.”
Second, Steve Wise was elected to succeed Howard Romaine as chairman of SSOC.
Unlike Romaine, who had left Charlottesville during his tenure as chairman, Wise
remained a University of Virginia student, solidifying the university as an SSOC center
of power. With Dewart also joining the SSOC staff and becoming editor of the New
South Student (SSOC’s newsletter), UVA students held two of the most powerful
positions within SSOC by the fall semester of 1966. Lastly, during the spring of 1966
SSOC’s last biracial project began, directed by UVA student Anne Cooke Romaine. The
Southern Folk Festival began as a way for SSOC to reach out to students, white and
black, across the South through music. Anne Cooke Romaine, a talented musician
herself, saw the Festival not only as a way to expose southerners to activist music, but
also as a way to “create an identity for herself within SSOC apart from that as [Howard’s]
wife.” Along with Bernice Reagon, a veteran of the Albany, Georgia civil rights
movement and member of the SNCC Freedom Singers, Cooke Romaine organized the
Festival into arguably the most successful SSOC project in its history. On 31 March
1966, the Festival held its inaugural concert in Richmond, Virginia before departing on
an eighteen stop tour of the South which included a visit to the University of Virginia in
Charlottesville. After its second tour in 1967, Cooke Romaine and Reagon separated
the Festival from SSOC, and by the end of the decade it had grown into a wildly popular

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228 Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20
November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special
Collections Library, 11.
229 Ibid.
230 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 144.
231 Ibid., 111.
232 Ibid., 117.
233 Ibid., 118.
southern music tradition, hosting acts such as Pete Seeger, Johnny Cash, and Bill Monroe.234

The 1966 fall semester was one of change and consolidation for the new left at the University of Virginia. Some important activists, especially Gardner, had left the university over the summer, while others, including Anne and Howard Romaine returned.235 This repeated cycle of leading activists from the new left at UVA leaving Charlottesville to take up regional and national leadership positions in the civil rights and anti-war movements and then returning with experience and ideas garnered from this exposure to the wider movement, kept the new left at UVA on the cutting edge of national ideological and tactical developments and ensured that there were always fresh (or refreshed) leaders available on campus. Early in September, SSA decided to change its name to SSOC, becoming the first official campus chapter of the organization.236 They did so primarily because at an early June meeting at Buckeye Cove, North Carolina, SSOC decided to change from a staff organization consisting of affiliated university student groups into a membership organization with official campus chapters.237 With SSOC chairman Steve Wise leading the organization from Charlottesville, it was only natural for SSA, the first new left organization at the University of Virginia, to become the first official SSOC campus chapter.

The SSOC chapter at UVA continued SSA's primary focus on organizing against the Vietnam War, holding long debates on the subject throughout the fall of 1966. The

234 Ibid., 115.
235 Ibid., 134; Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
236 David S. Lubs to Thomas Gardner, 13 September 1966, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a, Box 5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Bob Dewart to Thomas Gardner, 20 September 1966, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a, Box5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 132.
237 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 127.
university administration saw SSA’s change of name as an opportunity and in late September ejected the group from Newcomb Hall for passing out flyers from an information table, contending that the organization was not officially approved by the Student Council. Steve Wise countered, stating that SSA had simply changed its name to SSOC, and that because the name SSA officially existed until 15 October, the expulsion was unlawful. In the fall of 1966, SSOC demonstrated how diverse the agenda of the new left at UVA had become when they began a campaign against apartheid in South Africa at the university. In early November, the group wrote an open letter to David Rockefeller, president of Chase Manhattan Bank, criticizing his continuing investment in South Africa and announcing that it would be holding a discussion on apartheid at Newcomb Hall on 21 November. However, despite becoming interested in apartheid and continuing their agitation for civil rights in America, the new left at UVA’s primary focus during the fall of 1966 remained the war in Vietnam.

Specifically, they began to focus on organizing against the draft as a way to reach out to moderate students who were concerned about their potential deployment to Southeast Asia, and to support their comrades who were facing conscription. The new left at the University of Virginia began organizing against the draft in the spring of 1966 when David Nolan published “Power Politics on Campus” in the second issue of The Iconoclast (14 March 1966). In the article, he argued that the buildup of U.S. forces in Vietnam was causing draft boards to deny some graduate students 2-S (student) deferments and to reclassify others who had previously been deemed 1-Y (undesirable).

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238 Cavalier Daily (UVA) clipping, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
239 Letter from SSOC to Rockefeller, November 1966, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 13:16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
Therefore, Nolan concluded, "fewer students are willing to risk honorable expulsion than were willing to do so in the days when the only outside power likely to be invoked against them was that of U.S. civil court." SSA/SSOC—as well as other new left organizations around the country—was very worried that this "threat of conscription" would be used by university administrators and local draft boards to stifle student protest against the war.

On 14 September 1966, John Buenfil, a Charlottesville resident and close friend of the UVA new left, refused induction into the military on religious grounds, asserting that he was a member of the Episcopal Church’s Peace Fellowship. He sent a letter to the Daily Progress announcing his refusal and was subsequently arrested and charged with evading the draft. Buenfil’s courageous stance and arrest had a tremendous impact on those students affiliated with the new left at UVA, especially Gardner and Nolan, who had both lost their student deferments by dropping out to work with VSCRC. In November 1965, Nolan began his long trip through the draft process when he reported to a draft board physical and refused to sign the Armed Forces Security Questionnaire. He reported his occupation as "civil rights worker" and applied for conscientious objector (CO) status (form 150), which was rejected in January 1966. Throughout 1966 Nolan was interviewed four times by Army intelligence officials at the VSCRC headquarters in Lawrenceville, Virginia, and on 18 April 1967, was ordered to report for an interview on his CO status. After the interview, he was classified 1-A (eligible for induction), but appealed to be reclassified as a conscientious objector. Nolan maintained his freedom.

240 The Iconoclast (UVA), issue no. 2, 1.
241 Thomas Gardner and SSA/SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 1, folder 7, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
during the war, and consequently his ability to organize for civil rights and against the war, by co-operating with the system and using legal provisions within it to prolong the process.

Thomas Gardner initially took a different route when presented with the probability of conscription, that of non-cooperation. At first he became “delinquent,” not informing the draft board of his current address or work status. Then after attending the October 1966 Noncooperator’s Conference in New York in, he signed the “Saying No to Military Conscription” statement which refused induction and accepted the possibility of a jail sentence (of up to five years). However, in December 1966 an event occurred which would alter his course of non-cooperation. Gardner was in Greensboro, North Carolina helping a young man who was refusing the draft find a lawyer when he met two other men who were on trial for avoiding the draft. After one of the young men was sentenced to two years in prison for refusing the draft, Gardner refused to stand when the judge entered the courtroom. He was immediately found guilty of disrupting the order and decorum of the court and sentenced to thirty days in jail. According to Gardner, the arrest made him feel “pretty stupid. I was in the movement and I was used to people being arrested, but usually you do it for the publicity and you’re not alone, and I was there alone in Greensboro, North Carolina. There was nobody else there.” While sitting in jail it dawned on him that being imprisoned for five years at the height of the movement against the war was a serious waste of his abilities and experience. Gardner applied for CO status which allowed him to remain active in the movement while

244 Ibid.
working his way through the system. Upon receiving it, he was ordered to report for alternative service.\(^{246}\) His conscience appeased by the granting of CO status, Gardner chose to return to the University of Virginia in 1968 and get a 2-S deferment.\(^{247}\)

Other students from the new left at the University of Virginia were not so fortunate in their attempts to resist the draft. Early in 1967, Bob Dewart reluctantly resigned his position as editor of the *New South Student* and returned to his hometown of Eire, Pennsylvania after being classified 1-A. He spent a year arguing about his status with the local draft board before fleeing to Canada, permanently separating him from both SSOC and the new left at UVA.\(^{248}\) At the University of Virginia, the new left embarked upon a program to both help their comrades who were facing the draft and to inform new students at the university about the draft. They set up the Charlottesville Draft Counseling Group (CDCG) in 1967 with the help of the Charlottesville liberal community which was just beginning to organize against the war. The Draft Counseling Group’s stated purpose was to “help men best fulfill their personal and national obligations by providing information and counseling on the draft and alternatives to it,” and by 1968/69 it had twenty-five full time counselors and over 400 counselees.\(^{249}\) However, as the war continued and their ideology evolved, counseling students on draft issues was not enough for the new left at UVA.

In 1968 a new group called Charlottesville Draft Opposition (CDO) was formed by a group of university students. Unlike the Draft Counseling Group, CDO was

\(^{246}\) Alternative service was government mandated “volunteerism” in some state funded program, such as the Peace Corps, forced upon CO’s.


\(^{248}\) Michel, *Struggle for a Better South*, 147.

\(^{249}\) UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791 box 3, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
“concerned with the personal crisis of every young man who faces conscription into a war that deeply offends his conscience. Its aim is to organize support and sympathy for, and publicize the existence of, a number of young men in Charlottesville who may be called to serve in the armed forces in the near future and who, for reasons of conscience, will refuse to comply.”250 In turn, CDO was eclipsed in 1969 by the Charlottesville Draft Resistance (CDR) which “was established to organize and advocate resistance and non-compliance with the selective service laws.”251 Thus, within three years the new left at UVA had moved from counseling students on draft issues, to supporting students who wished to resist the draft, to organizing against the draft in totality. The issue of the draft not only helped the new left recruit new students and grow exponentially, but it also injected a deadly seriousness into the organizing activities. Unlike with their involvement in the civil rights movement, white students were not given some form of protection from the draft by their skin color. Because of the draft and its potential to send young men in their late teens and early twenties into the horrors of the Vietnam War, many new left activists developed ideologically at a rapid rate. Throughout the late sixties, national, regional, and local events moved at a frantic pace as the war escalated, the anti-war movement grew, and civil rights evolved into black power. Amidst this dramatically changing world, the new left at UVA, drawing on its long history of supporting civil rights and anti-war organizing, grew from a small group of students to a mass movement on campus.

The process of the new left becoming a mass movement at the University of Virginia began in 1967 with two important developments. In March 1967 a new

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250 Ibid.
251 Ibid.
alternative publication was established on campus called the *Virginia Weekly*. The *Virginia Weekly* was the brainchild of Howard Romaine and was "designed [to] transform the staid University of Virginia into the Berkeley of the South within two years."\(^{252}\) Although it is debatable whether or not it succeeded in its lofty goal, the *Virginia Weekly* did become the most successful alternative publication at the university, and was a major factor in the growth of the new left into a mass movement. The publication began as a self-described "liberal intellectual journal," but by 1969 had shifted ideologically, along with the new left nationally, to espouse "the struggle from a working-class point of view."\(^{253}\) The publication existed throughout the late sixties, but its greatest contribution to American history, other than helping the new left at UVA become a mass movement, began in 1971. That year, the paper's editor, Jeffrey C. Bigelow, was sued by a number of anti-abortion groups after the paper ran an advertisement for the "Women's Pavilion," a New York abortion services group.\(^{254}\) Under Virginia law at the time it was illegal to "encourage or prompt the procuring of abortion," and Bigelow was found guilty. His lawyers argued that the Virginia statute was a violation of the United States' constitutional right to a freedom of the press, and appealed to the United States Supreme Court. On 16 June 1975, long after the Virginia statute had been removed and the *Virginia Weekly* had disbanded, the court overturned Bigelow's conviction by a 7-2 majority, arguing that in some cases advertisements are entitled to First Amendment protection if they are of more value than just commercial speech.

\(^{252}\) SSOC minutes, February 1967, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 12:43, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

\(^{253}\) *Cavalier Daily* (UVA), 10 July 1974.

The second development of 1967 that contributed to the rise of the new left at UVA was the emergence of an SDS chapter on campus. Until this point the University of Virginia had one new left organization, SSA then SSOC, controlled by a small group of regional civil rights and anti-war leaders. With the amicable relations between SSOC and SDS nationally during the mid-sixties there was no reason to form an SDS chapter on campus, as many within the national leadership of that organization saw SSOC as their southern wing. In 1966 Steve Wise and Thomas Gardner had attended the SDS convention in Clearlake, Iowa, and Gardner was listed as one of only three southern SDS organizers in an October newsletter (under SSOC and NSA). However, beginning when SSOC changed from a staff organization to a membership organization, relations between the two groups became strained. SDS chapters began appearing at universities across the South, and many within SSOC believed that this was an indication that SDS intended to organize the southern group out of existence.

In the spring of 1966, when SSOC changed to a membership organization, students affiliated with SSA were considering forming an SDS chapter at the University of Virginia. Anxious to preserve the University of Virginia as an SSOC stronghold, Romaine (at that time still chairman of SSOC) wrote to the UVA students “all but [insisting] that they remain committed to the southern group.” They did, but that would not prevent SDS from gaining a foothold at the university for long. In 1967/68, a new generation of activists entered the University of Virginia. This “second generation” of new leftists entered a much different university than their predecessors. Years of organizing by Charlottesville’s liberals, civil rights advocates, and new leftists had left a

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255 Convention contact sheet, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 2, S (general), University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

256 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 128.
lasting mark on the university, which was now a much more accessible place for students with dissenting political and societal opinions. The presence of these new students, some of whom were already committed new leftists due to their exposure to the expanding civil rights and anti-war movements during their high school years, immediately began to strengthen the new left at UVA. Their first act was to establish a chapter of SDS at the university, which was led in its first years by important second generation new leftists, Thurman Wenzl and Charles Patrick Finn. However, these new students in the SDS chapter at UVA were very much in awe of the older students in SSOC and collaborated with them at every possible occasion. SDS remained small in comparison to SSOC and there was little inter-organization conflict between the two groups. Despite its small membership and supportive role, the emergence of SDS at the University of Virginia was important to the new left because it diversified the movement and provided an organizational vehicle for second generation students to become active on campus.

By early 1967, more than 6,000 U.S. soldiers had already been killed in Vietnam and President Johnson’s decision to escalate the bombing of North Vietnam was having little effect. Hundreds of bridges, power stations, and fuel depots had been destroyed, costing America ten dollars for every dollar in damage and killing thousands of Vietnamese.257 At home the anti-war movement was picking up steam and Robert Kennedy’s potential presidential bid in 1968 was putting immense pressure on Johnson. At the University of Virginia, the war was becoming the predominant issue on campus and from 25-26 February, SSOC sponsored a Vietnam teach-in which was filmed by National Education Television for a program entitled “The Effects of the War in

Charlottesville, Virginia.\textsuperscript{258} Around this time Gardner and Nolan embarked upon SSOC's most successful and enduring anti-war project, the Peace Tours program.

Gardner and Nolan had thought up the Peace Tours late in 1966 while Gardner was working as a southern organizer for the National Student Association (NSA), and Nolan was living in Charlottesville. The Peace Tours would send experienced SSOC organizers to universities throughout the South to engage students in a discussion about the Vietnam War. Conceived of and put into practice by UVA activists, the Tours were responsible for spreading the new left message of anti-war organizing, university reform, and freedom of speech to thousands of students across the South, many of whom subsequently joined the movement or started organizing on their own campuses.

The first Peace Tour set off for Florida in late February 1967 and consisted of Gardner, who would speak about American foreign policy, Nolan, who would address U.S. policy in Vietnam, and SCEF worker Nancy Hodes, who would talk about the Chinese Cultural Revolution.\textsuperscript{259} The tour stopped at nine college campuses and two high schools, stirring up controversy and incident wherever it went. Gardner, Nolan, and Hodes joined local demonstrations, including the "Florida Days of Judgment on the War in Vietnam," and the "Love, Sun, and Peace in Vietnam" march in Gainesville and were interviewed on Larry King's radio show in Miami.\textsuperscript{260} The Peace Tour was often met with considerable opposition from students and administrators alike. In Gainesville, students set fire to a car decorated with Peace Tour flyers, and on 29 March at the North Campus of Miami-Dade Junior College, Gardner, Nolan, and Hodes were all arrested after trying

\textsuperscript{258}SSOC minutes, February 1967, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 12:43, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

\textsuperscript{259}Michel, \textit{Struggle for a Better South}, 149.

\textsuperscript{260} Ibid.
to speak to students. A picture of Gardner being dragged away by a helmeted policeman became an iconic image of the Peace Tour, and Miami-Dade administrators were forced to allow the group back to speak after students and faculty reacted angrily to the arrests. However, the most serious incident occurred when anti-communist terrorists within the Cuban exile community bombed the room in a peace center where Gardner, Nolan, and Hodes had stayed while in Miami, after the activists had left. The first Peace Tour was a resounding success and SSOC was eager to replicate it in other states. Over the next ten months, the Peace Tours visited dozens of universities across the South. When the organizers were met with hostility from students and administrators, they engaged them in discussions on free speech issues as a way to begin a dialogue on the merits of the war. For instance Gardner would ask, “What are these people [the South Vietnamese] fighting for?... You say they are fighting for freedom? What freedom? [They’d say], ‘freedom of speech’. Well, let’s talk about freedom of speech for a minute. I want to talk about our policy in Vietnam and you want to hang me for it.”

From 5-7 May 1967, SSOC held its spring conference in North Carolina to “determine the role of the southern radical in the American New Left.” The activists heard speakers from SDS, SNCC, the Progressive Labor Party (PL), the Dubois Clubs, and the University Christian Movement (UCM), before debating the future of SSOC organizing. While the Virginia activists, including Nolan, Gardner, and Wise, had been

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262 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 152.
263 SSOC newsletter, May 1967, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 12:38, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
264 PL was a Maoist organization which systematically gained a foothold within SDS. The split between PL and another faction within SDS, the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM) eventually led to the destruction of both SDS and SSOC.
concentrating on the Vietnam War and organizing the Peace Tours program, others within SSOC had turned towards labor organizing as a way to reach out to working class whites. These predominantly Atlanta based activists had recently created the Southern Labor Action Movement (SLAM) under the direction of veteran SSOC organizer Sam Shirah. At the conference, Gardner and Nolan presented a paper entitled “Towards a Southern Student Organizing Committee,” which argued that SSOC should become more relevant on southern campuses by making anti-war work a top priority, reforming the New South Student, and spending more time on university reform issues. They were countered by SLAM’s prospectus which called for SSOC to focus on labor organizing amongst southern white workers. Gardner, Nolan, and their supporters viewed SLAM as a risky diversion away from the revolutionary potential of university campuses into relatively racist and conservative white working class communities. In the end, SSOC voted (by a sixty percent majority) to give SLAM the $2,600 it had requested, but elected Gardner chairman, Alan Levin (an anti-war organizer from Florida) vice-chairman, and Nolan editor of the New South Student, ensuring that anti-war work would remain a priority for the organization.

Shortly after their electoral victories during the spring conference, Gardner and Nolan returned to Charlottesville to begin working with the Vietnam Summer Campaign in Virginia. Vietnam Summer was a national grass roots campaign of five hundred paid staffers and over 26,000 local volunteers organizing local anti-war actions. The southern coordinator for the campaign was Sue Thrasher, part of SSOC’s founding

265 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 160.
266 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 164.
generation, and Charlottesville was one of a number of Virginia communities which held anti-war activities affiliated with the campaign. On 28 May, Gardner and John Buenfil attended services at the Unitarian Church in Charlottesville and passed out Vietnam Summer literature in an effort to generate community involvement in the campaign.268 Nolan coordinated Vietnam Summer actions in the city and helped organize a “Professors against the War” petition at the University of Virginia. Vietnam Summer had mixed results both nationally and in Charlottesville. While successfully spreading anti-war organizing across the nation, the campaign did not effectively coordinate anti-war activities as its organizers had planned. However, the lessons learned and networks created during Vietnam Summer were very important in the highly successful Vietnam Moratorium campaign of 1969/70.

Following Vietnam Summer, Gardner and Nolan resumed their activities as regional SSOC leaders. In September, Gardner travelled to Czechoslovakia with forty other representatives of the American anti-war movement, including Tom Hayden (SDS), to represent SSOC during a meeting with representatives of the Vietnamese National Liberation Front (NLF) in Bratislava.269 Upon his return, Gardner met with and assisted a group of mostly high school students in Richmond who wanted to start up an SSOC chapter. Within a year Richmond had become a second center of SSOC power in Virginia, and the only location outside Charlottesville to have a physical SSOC office. Led by SSOC veteran and former Lynchburg College student Bruce Smith, Richmond established itself as a growing new left power center in the state, complete with its own

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269 Also known as the Vietcong; Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 145; Unpublished interview with Thomas Gardner by Tom Weiner, Northampton, MA, August 2007, 9.
head shop, the “Liberated Area”—which stayed open until 1970 despite continuous police interference—a newsletter, and an eight-person staff. Throughout early fall, the new left at UVA had been planning for a Virginia contingent to be sent to the October national demonstration against the war sponsored by the National Mobilization Committee to end the War in Vietnam, informally known as the “Mobe.” On 21 October 1967, two busloads of university students traveled to Washington D.C. and participated in a demonstration at the Lincoln Memorial and a march to the Pentagon. When the protestors, led by Abbie Hoffman, arrived at the Pentagon they symbolically attempted to exorcise the building of its “evil spirits,” leading to clashes with rifle-wielding national guardsmen which became symbolic of the increasing radicalization of the anti-war movement.

Nationally by the beginning of 1968, students affiliated with the new left were becoming increasingly frustrated with their inability to end the war in Vietnam and alter the systems of racism and oppression at home. Students at UVA were no exception and they began to plan a dramatic escalation of anti-war activities on campus for the spring semester. For the first time, they were aided in their anti-war organizing by a large number of faculty members, many of whom had slowly been turning against the war over the past few years. By 14 February 1968, the “Professors against the War” petition—which had started to circulate on the grounds during Vietnam Summer—had gained over 300 signatures from the UVA faculty. In late February a joint student-faculty group began organizing a “Vietnam Commencement” to coincide with spring graduation.

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270 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 141; SSOC 1968-69 prospectus, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 12:42, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
271 Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 507.
272 Virginia SSOC newsletter, February 1968, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 13:15, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
ceremonies. The “Commencement” was a response by the new left, allied faculty, and community members to the fact that the class of 1968 was “the nation’s first 1-A class,” and the expectation that “approximately three-fifths of men graduating this June will be inducted before the fall term begins.”\textsuperscript{273} The campaign included passing out pledge cards to students and faculty and then publicizing the pledge drive at a counter-graduation ceremony. The pledge cards were simple, yet dramatically provocative. Students signed a card which read, “Our war in Vietnam is unjust and immoral. As long as the United States is involved in this war, I will not serve in the Armed Forces,” while faculty members signed a longer card which stated, “Although I am not subject to the draft, my opposition to our government’s policy in Vietnam compels me to support those draft-eligible Americans who have pledged to refuse induction.”\textsuperscript{274}

In addition to the “Vietnam Commencement,” new left students, especially those affiliated with SSOC, spent much of the semester preparing a program for the international “Ten Days of Resistance,” scheduled for the last ten days of April 1968. SSOC’s national leadership had decided to coordinate southern involvement in the protest under the heading “Southern Days of Secession” (otherwise known as the “Ten Days of Secession”) in order to “give the South cohesiveness and a chance to bring out southern theme.”\textsuperscript{275} SSOC at UVA organized an ambitious agenda for the Ten Days of Secession including: a speech entitled “Black Power in Charlottesville” by local SNCC leaders James “Rat” Brown and James Fisher (Monday, 22 April), involvement in a “Fast for World Peace” (24-26 April), a call for students and faculty to join the “International

\textsuperscript{273} Vietnam Commencement, 26 Feb 1968, \url{http://cti.ite.virginia.edu/~hsi316/protest/studaf06.html} (Date Accessed: 02/15/07)  
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{275} Michel, \textit{Struggle for a Better South}, 194.
Student-Faculty Strike against the War, Racial Oppression and the Draft (with a rally on Friday, 26 April), a discussion group on “The Resistance and legal alternatives to the draft” with John McAuliff of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington D.C. and Brian Paddock, a draft case lawyer from Washington D.C (Friday 26, April), and various other speeches by university faculty and students.276

However, in the immediate buildup to the “Ten Days,” a single national event rocked the southern new left. On 4 April 1968, Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tennessee. One night earlier, Gardner had been sitting in the audience when King delivered his “I’ve been to the mountaintop” speech, and the civil rights leader’s death profoundly impacted him and many others within SSOC. The assassination also had an immediate effect at the University of Virginia and in the Charlottesville community. The university administration, which only five years earlier had shunned King when he spoke on campus, organized a memorial service on Sunday 7 April in the Cabell Hall Auditorium which included reflections by President Shannon. The Jefferson Chapter of VCHR renamed itself the Martin Luther King Chapter of VCHR in honor of King and the Student Council requested an increase in the recruitment of black students, the appointment of a black admissions officer, and money to start a Martin Luther King Memorial Scholarship.277

276 The Ten Days, April 1968, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
277 Martin F. Evans to President Shannon, 8 May 1968, http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~hius316/protest/stuco04.html (Date Accessed: 02/16/07); The administration responded that “the recruitment of Negro students in somewhat complex, and the objective is not necessarily accomplished simply by having a Negro admissions officer...you are familiar with a part of the problem regarding official University contributions to a specific scholarship fund, including such a worthy one as the Martin Luther King Memorial Scholarship...as to an official contribution, the University rarely has uncommitted monies that can be given to a particular scholarship fund.” Shannon to Evans, 13 May 1968, http://cti.itc.virginia.edu/~hius316/protest/stuco01.html (Date Accessed: 02/16/07)
However shocking King’s assassination was to the white new left and university faculty and administrators, it was much more so to Charlottesville’s black community, especially youths who had been struggling hard for respect in the city’s newly integrated schools. There had been considerable racial tension inside Lane High School all spring as black students felt that their needs—black history classes, black professors, and new textbooks—were being ignored by white administrators and teachers. In early March, eleven bomb threats had been phoned into Lane and a series of arrests had been made. On 7 April, 1,500 Charlottesville citizens held a memorial march honoring King in an attempt to ward off the racial violence which was sweeping through other black communities in the wake of the assassination. It did not work. On 22 April, James “Rat” Brown gave a speech during SSOC’s “Ten Days of Secession” at UVA directed at black students inside Lane High School. He ended the speech by stating, “I don’t teach violence, but I don’t teach turning the other cheek either. And if it should come down to the question of living or dying, make it ‘even Steven.’ I say. If you are going to be killed, take a white with you.” On 13 May, 200 predominantly black students at Lane (although joined by the white president-elect of the student body) walked out of classes in protest. Although they were quickly persuaded to end their strike by school officials—who acquiesced to their demands for an increase in black studies and black teachers—racial discontent continued all summer. It culminated in the fall of 1968 with a week of rioting during which “windows were broken by rocks thrown as young blacks marched through black neighborhoods. The homes of two black policemen were attacked, apparently by black youths... [and] a fire-bomb was thrown into one white-owned

278 Crowe, “Desegregation of Charlottesville, Virginia Public Schools,” 277-278.
279 Ibid., 280-281.
business establishment located in a black neighborhood.” State police were called into Charlottesville to restore order after dark and racial discord was once again confined to the halls of Lane High School. On 13 October 1968, six fire-bombs were thrown into the school causing minor damage, and on 4 November black students again walked out of classes.

While the new left at the University of Virginia was not highly involved with the black youth rebellion in Charlottesville, it retained ties to some of its leaders and to the Charlottesville Freedom Movement (CFM), an ad-hoc group of activist black adults. While the assassination of King marked an important milestone for the development of militancy in black communities across the nation, two other events during the summer and fall of 1968 convinced many white students within the new left that only a political revolution could achieve their goals of ending the war in Vietnam and restructuring race and class relations domestically. The first was the 6 June assassination of Robert F. Kennedy, who was running for president on an anti-war, anti-poverty platform. For many in the new left, Kennedy’s assassination severed the last strands of their belief in the possibility of the electoral system to bring about comprehensive social change.

Kennedy’s assassination “proved to [Tom] Hayden that his analysis of society did not go far enough and that our society was even worse in terms of opportunities for peaceful change than I had thought,” and with this crack of an assassin’s bullet the new left “cast aside the last shriveled hopes for peaceable reform.” This belief was dramatically and physically reinforced two months later when demonstrators were given a brutal reception by the Chicago Police Department at the 1968 Democratic Convention. Scenes of riot

280 Ibid., 292; Charlottesville Daily Progress, 9 September 1968.
282 Gitlin, The Sixties, 311.
police beating and arresting anti-war protestors outraged the nation and caused an uproar on the convention floor, but for the new left it was final proof that the liberal political establishment was its enemy. According to Todd Gitlin, "the movement emerged [from Chicago] committed to an impossible revolution; the Right emerged armed for power and a more possible counter-revolution; [and] liberals barely emerged at all."283

Influenced by national events such as the assassinations of Kennedy and King and the Democratic Convention police riot, as well as local events including the racial unrest in Charlottesville’s black community, the new left at the University of Virginia also began to radicalize ideologically. On the application to have SSOC recognized as a legitimate student organization in the fall of 1968, leaders Al Long and Don Fleck wrote that the goal of the organization for the next year was, "the destruction of the University as a perpetuator of traditional social values and creation of a University that can lead to a revolutionary movement in Virginia."284 To coordinate the growing number of students and organizations comprising the new left at UVA, a new student organization called the Radical Student Union (RSU) was formed in the fall of 1968.285 It consisted of SSOC, SDS, and smaller ad-hoc groups including the United Students for Action (USA), which was "dedicated to achieving true equality at the University and gaining freedom, democracy, equality, and HUMANITY in the University community."286 Initially RSU functioned as a coordinating committee for new left groups on campus which retained their organizational autonomy. However, when SDS and SSOC disintegrated in the

283 Ibid., 326.
284 UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791 box 9, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
285 Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
286 UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791 box 10, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
summer of 1969, RSU became the new left organization on campus, and the primary vehicle through which students built a mass-movement at the university that culminated in the student strike of 1970.

The new left at UVA received a major boost when Thomas Gardner returned for the spring semester (1969) to complete his degree. A distinguished national anti-war and civil rights leader, Gardner easily bridged the gap between first and second generation new leftists at the university and quickly reasserted himself as a campus leader. Gardner returned just as RSU was planning a spring campaign targeting the university’s Board of Visitors. For years the university administration had been telling students that it was committed to racial equality on campus, yet by 1969, only eighty-six of the university’s 9,000 students were black. After many years of organizing around the issue, the new left came to the conclusion that the lack of comprehensive racial reform on campus was a result of the university’s ties to the conservative Virginia political establishment and control over the university by corporate interests. In early February, RSU launched their campaign by demanding “that the Board of Visitors at its meeting on Feb. 13-15 send Governor Mills E. Godwin a letter requesting that appointments to the Board henceforth be made as to create a Board that is proportionally representative of all of the people of Virginia in regard to ethnic background, sex, age, and income level.” They also demanded that C. Stuart Wheatley, a former state leader and proponent of massive resistance, resign from the board, and board member William Samuel Potter—a business partner and in-law of the powerful DuPont family—publically state his opposition to the nine-month National Guard occupation of Wilmington, Delaware’s (DuPont’s

\[288\] SDS-SSOC, On the Board of Visitors, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 13, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
headquarters) black community. Their last demand was in response to, "the hardship and injustice suffered by the black population of Charlottesville [as] a direct result of the University's hiring practices," and called for the Board of Visitors to state its desire to raise the wage scale for non-academic employees of the university and to forward a request for such an increase to the state government.

On 15 February 1969, more than 150 students from the new left at the University of Virginia protested outside the Board of Visitors meeting on the grounds. However, for the first time since civil rights, university reform, and anti-war demonstrations began in the mid-sixties, the new left was physically supported in their campaign by traditional student leaders. Like the new leftists, moderate students were becoming very concerned about the lack of racial progress at the university. According to Gardner, these student leaders, including:

- the president of the Interfraternity Council [Ed Hayes],
- the publisher and editors of the Cavalier Daily,
- other Lawn residents,
- graduate students,
- and moderate Student Council members...

...didn't like the way the [new left was] proceeding, and with some prodding, organized a coalition of student leaders that took over and legitimized the protests. Student Council resolutions and meetings with administrators replaced picket lines for a time.

On 17 February and 18 February, 300 and 700 students respectively heeded a call by this new "Coalition Committee" and rallied at the Rotunda. The "Coalition" was initially determined to demonstrate their moderation and dubbed the campaign the "Coat and Tie" demonstrations, referring to their insistence that the protestors demonstrate their seriousness in dress. Its leaders, including Hayes and Robert Rosen, released a statement

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289 Ibid.
290 Ibid.
which read, “Student leaders feel the time has passed when rational and compassionate
men can afford to accept apologies as sufficient for the toleration of bigotry ... [and] we
must end racism, we must end bigotry in this school, in Virginia, and in the country.”\textsuperscript{292}
The Coalition proposed an eleven point program which included the new left’s demands
for higher wages and a diversification of the Board of Visitors and added the right of
workers to unionize, the addition of more black students, a full-time black Assistant Dean
of Admissions, and a Black Studies Program.\textsuperscript{293}

The university administration was shocked that a campaign by the still relatively
small new left had spiraled out of their control and evolved into a mass protest led by
traditional student leaders. They attempted to placate the students, but President
Shannon’s response—accepting the need for more black students and faculty, but
refusing higher wages and the right of workers to unionize—was rejected by the
Coalition.\textsuperscript{294} The student leaders in the Coalition then took their campaign to the state
government in an attempt to have Governor Godwin override the university
administration’s rejection of their demands. However, unlike the new leftists, these
moderate leaders were not used to the entrenched racism of university administrators and
state officials and “as patience with the bureaucratic pace wore thin, the moderates
became activists.”\textsuperscript{295} On 13 March, a caravan of university students travelled to
Richmond and held a demonstration on the steps of the Capitol. Robert Rosen’s speech
that day indicates the “moderate” leaders rising level of frustration and also how

\textsuperscript{292} Washington Post, Times Herald, 18 February 1969.
\textsuperscript{293} Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 510.
\textsuperscript{294} Holden, The Bus Stops Here, 9; Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 510.
\textsuperscript{295} Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20
November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special
Collections Library, 13.
radicalized those leaders had become in such a short time. Rosen declared that, “we are calling for an end to institutional racism, calling peacefully and persistently ... [however] protest upon protest will burden [the university’s] grounds until the State shows signs of ending institutional segregation at school.”

He went on to warn that if Governor Godwin did not respond to their demands, then disruptions that had happened at other universities across the country (most famously at Columbia University in 1968) could happen in Charlottesville.

Dismayed by Governor Godwin’s lack of response to their campaign, the Coalition began making plans, along with RSU, to disrupt the university’s 150th anniversary celebrations. A flyer for the protest describes the student’s general frustrations with the university establishment. It read:

The University of Virginia is today celebrating its 150th year, and the birthday of its founder, Thomas Jefferson. Some of us are walking out of the ceremonies at Cabell Hall. We will do so in profound sorrow and anger over the priorities and policies of our University. Our University is paying its employees salaries that start near $3000 a year—well below the poverty level. In a state that is 20% black, our University is 99+% white. We are part of a system of higher education that is clearly separate and unequal. Our University has two black faculty members. It has no black coaches or athletes. It has one black admissions officer, hired this fall after prolonged student pressure. De Facto, this is a racist institution... Our University is spending thousands of dollars on self-congratulation at a time when the fate of a summer transition program for culturally deprived students hangs on the fund-raising efforts of faculty and students. We have a ten year, 110 million dollar plan for physical expansion. We have no plans for integration. America threatens to burst at the seams from racial prejudice and hatred, from ancient injustice and new rebellion against it. The University of Virginia, founded by the author of the revolutionary credo ‘all men are created equal’ is content to present a prize. We find this a degrading and intolerable spectacle. Led by several members of the Student Council, the Student Coalition, Phi Beta Kappa, and the Raven Society, we intend to demonstrate our feelings by walking out in dignified silence. Thomas Jefferson, a radical

297 Ibid.
On 14 April, 300 hundred university students holding signs protesting UVA's racism formed a “human corridor” on the grounds through which a procession of dignitaries, including President Edgar Shannon, Esmond Wright (a member of the British House of Commons), and U.S. Senator William B. Spong, Jr., had to walk. Later in the day, several hundred students walked out of the official “Founder’s Day” exercises at Cabell Hall.  

The “coat-and-tie” demonstrations, which began with a new left action to reform the Board of Visitors and evolved into a broad based student campaign against institutional racism at the university, marked the beginnings of a mass movement that would culminate a year later with the student strike of 1970. The radicalization of formerly moderate student leaders and the involvement of thousands of students in the protests contributed to a large-scale increase in the strength of the new left at the University of Virginia. The Daily Progress reported that “the 1969 student demonstrations marked a turning point in University of Virginia campus politics and a willingness on the part of students to involve themselves in both community and other popular student protest issues,” and Anna Holden, author of a study of Charlottesville’s desegregation history, claims:

In addition to uncorking the bottle of student protest, the 1969 150th demonstrations resulted in an official student-faculty review of University admission and employment practices that called for recruitment and welcome of black students, two black admissions officers at the professional level, creation of a new dean to develop and retain a more broadly based student body, and more economic aid opportunities for students. A black dean of admissions was appointed in the fall of 1969, and black enrollment at the undergraduate level increased slightly for the 1969-70 school year.

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298 Flyer, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
300 Holden, The Bus Stops Here, 9.
Another event which occurred during the spring of 1969 also greatly contributed to the rising power of the new left on campus and its development into a mass movement of students. This was the Student Council elections for seats to be occupied for the fall semester of 1969. The previous year, two students affiliated with the new left, Walker Chandler and Charles Murdock, had run for the Council on an “Anarchist” ticket. They were not ideological anarchists, but “selected the title Anarchist because we intend to destroy the present style of student government.”301 Chandler received the largest total number of votes in Student Council history up until that point, and Murdock was a close second. Their success shocked both the administration and the new left, with the latter realizing that they could quite conceivably seize control of the student government through democratic elections. In the wake of the successful and unifying “coat-and-tie” demonstrations, timing for Student Council elections was perfect for the new left. Together with other students involved in the spring campaign, they formed the Virginia Progressive Party (VPP) and nominated a full slate of delegates headed by Thomas Gardner. The VPP won an incredible victory, with their entire ticket winning election by the largest vote margins in Student Council history.302 When the VPP delegates took office in the fall of 1969, the Student Council became a dramatically changed body. It worked on forcing the university to desegregate, organized statewide recruiting trips to

301 Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 508.
black high schools, and joined with the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) in filing a successful lawsuit which opened the university to equal admission of women.\textsuperscript{303}

However, just as the new left at the University of Virginia was developing into a mass movement, the national standard bearer new left organizations SDS and SSOC were beginning to fall apart. Since 1966, relations between SSOC and SDS had become increasingly strained. SSOC believed that SDS reneged on its pledge to not organize in the South when SDS chapters began forming across the region and SDS believed that they were not to blame because southern students had formed SDS chapters voluntarily. The disagreement was exacerbated by the growing factional conflict within SDS for control of the organization. By 1969 SDS was split between three factions: the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM)—which was essentially Marxist, advocated alliances with third world revolutions and domestic groups such as the Black Panthers and identified working class youths as the revolutionary vanguard; the Progressive Labor Party (PL), a Maoist group which stressed that the revolution would be led by the working class with students only as an ally; and everybody else who were unaffiliated with either group and bewildered at the growing sectarianism of the organization. PL had been a growing force in SDS since 1965, and “in the spring of 1969, the southern movement emerged as the new battleground for the fight for control of SDS.”\textsuperscript{304}

According to Michel, PL moved against SSOC first by attempting to convince SDS to step up its organizing activities in the South. In 1967, PL leader Ed Clark ran against Gardner for the chairmanship of SSOC and lost badly. Unable to seize control of the group from the inside, PL committed itself to destroying SSOC in an effort to ensure

\textsuperscript{303} Ibid; Dabney claims that all of VPP’s candidates except one were elected; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s University}, 509.

\textsuperscript{304} Michel, \textit{Struggle for a Better South}, 202.
that RYM could not gain a foothold in the South and to “rid the movement of an
organization whose politics and tactics it despised.”305 On 30 March 1969, the SDS
National Council met in Austin, Texas. During the meeting, PL representatives brought a
resolution to the floor condemning SSOC for stressing southern distinctiveness in its
organizing and for its supposed “liberal” ideology. Thinking that they had support from
RYM, SSOC did not adequately prepare its own defense. As the delegates at conference
began to turn against SSOC, RYM leader Mike Klonsky withdrew his support for the
group and in the end SDS decided to sever relations with SSOC. Klonsky not only sold
out SSOC during the conference, but afterwards led the SDS attack on the organization,
accusing it of taking money from “CIA conduits” and offering an “ahistorical and racist”
analysis of the South “for wrongly asserting that the South was a northern colony and for
inappropriately focusing on only southern whites.”306 SSOC members were furious at the
double-cross and Gardner lambasted Klonsky, stating “your cop-baiting of SSOC is not
very funny— nor are your pseudo-revolutionary sand-box ‘politics.’”307 The SDS attack
split SSOC’s national leadership between those who accepted the critiques leveled at the
organization and urged it to dissolve and join SDS and those who defended SSOC and its
right to organize independently of SDS. Gardner and the Virginia SSOC group
vehemently opposed SDS’s attack on SSOC and wanted to continue the organization, but
strained relations with SSOC executive secretary Mike Welch kept them from actively
supporting the anti-SDS faction.308

305 Ibid., 203.
306 Ibid., 209.
307 Ibid., 208.
308 Ibid., 213; Thomas Gardner (former SSOC National Chairman) in discussion with author, August 2007.
At a staff meeting on 20 April, the pro-SDS faction within SSOC passed a motion that opened SSOC scheduled membership conference in June to anybody interested in the southern movement. This ensured that members of PL and RYM would attend and as both now opposed SSOC’s existence, signaled the beginning of the end of the organization. From 5-8 June 1969, activists from SDS, SSOC, PL, RYM, the Dubois Clubs, SCLC, SCEF, and the Communist Party (CP) met at Mt. Beulah, Mississippi to discuss the future of the southern movement. After two contentious days of debate, the future of SSOC was put to a vote and “five years and two months after its creation amid great hopes for the future, a divided and dispirited SSOC ceased to exist.”

SDS did not survive much longer itself. By 1969, SDS was hopelessly locked in a vicious sectarian struggle not seen in the American left since the Stalinist-Trotskyite splits of the 1930s. The growing strength of the PL and the intense radicalization of many new left activists during the late sixties led to SDS’s ideological devolution of back into factional communism. According to Gitlin, “PL helped Marxize SDS, and PL fattened, parasitically, as Marxism and the Marxism-Leninism became SDS’s unofficial language.” To counter the growing power of PL’s Maoism, opposing factions such as RYM and then the Weathermen began advocating alternative forms of Marxism, each with a different segment of society considered the revolutionary vanguard. For PL it was the working class, for RYM it was working class youths, and for the Weathermen it was third world and indigenous revolutionary movements.

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309 Michel, Struggle for a Better South, 219; This is a very abridged history of the attack on SSOC by SDS and the dissolving of the group. For a full history, please refer to Gregg Michel’s Struggle for a Better South, pages 189-226.  
310 Gitlin, The Sixties, 383.  
311 Ibid., 384.
On 18 June 1969, approximately 1,500 SDS delegates met at the Chicago Coliseum for the organization's national conference. At the First Congregational Church of Chicago, the RYM faction met and elected Columbia strike leader Mark Rudd as their leader. The losing candidate, Robert Avakian, then joined with several other dissidents and formed RYM II. On the convention floor, the delegates were split between those who supported PL (under the banner of a Worker-Student Alliance), those who backed the Weathermen (formerly RYM I, led by Rudd and Bernadine Dohrn) and their allies (for a short time) in RYM II (led by Avakian and Klonsky), and those who were neutral or had no idea as to what was actually going on. As the convention progressed, the sectarianism grew more and more pronounced with each faction attempting to seize control of the organization. Finally, after a disastrous series of events—which included Black Panther representatives, speaking on behalf of RYM, advocating “penis power” and the subordination of women in the movement—Weathermen and RYM II delegates under the direction of Dohrn and Rudd caucused and decided to forcibly expel PL from SDS. After the Panthers declared PL “counterrevolutionary,” the RYM factions seized control of the podium and Dohrn declared:

In the last 24 hours we in the next room have been discussing principles. We support the national liberation struggles of the Vietnamese, the American Blacks and all other colonials. We support all who take up gun [sic] against U.S. imperialism. We support the governments of China, Albania, North Viet Nam and North Korea. We support Women's Liberation. All members of the Progressive Labor Party-Worker-Student Alliance and all who do not support these principles are objective racists and counterrevolutionaries. They are no longer members of SDS.\(^{312}\)

\(^{312}\) *SDS: The Last Hurrah*, excerpts from a report by an undercover federal agent, [http://martinrealm.org/documents/radical/sixties1.html](http://martinrealm.org/documents/radical/sixties1.html) (Date Accessed: 10/15/07)
Dohrn then led several hundred delegates out of the Coliseum chanting “Ho, Ho, Ho Chi Minh,” and SDS was essentially finished as a national organization. The Weathermen and RYM II seized control of SDS’ mailing lists and national headquarters and for a brief time there were two organizations within SDS. PL chose John Pennington as national chairman and the Weathermen selected Mark Rudd (with Rudd’s election, RYM II split from their former allies).

Within a year, the most radical elements of the Weathermen began a guerrilla war against the United States government, becoming known as the Weather Underground Organization (WUO). After three of their members were killed by a bomb they were preparing on 6 March 1970, they carried out a series of symbolic bombings and other actions (including breaking LSD guru Timothy Leary out of prison) before fading out towards the end of the seventies. By the mid-seventies RYM II became the small Revolutionary Communist Party (RCP), a Maoist sect, and they and PL still operate to this day.

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313 Gitlin, The Sixties, 388.
Chapter V

For many students and young people affiliated with the national new left, the sectarian implosion of SSOC and SDS was stunning. Almost overnight the new left had changed from a strong physical movement of hundreds of thousands of activists, to an idea kept alive solely in the minds of tens of thousands of radicalized organizers who rejected the rigidity of the Marxist and Maoist ideologies espoused by PL, RYM, the Weathermen, and other post-SDS groups. For many students and campus organizations, especially those which were not affiliated with any of the major factions within SDS and those which lay on the geographical periphery, the collapse of SSOC and SDS was confusing and somewhat incomprehensible. In some places SDS chapters continued to function because students had no other new left groups through which they could organize. In others, experienced student activists created vibrant new organizations which put new left ideas into practice on their campuses and in their local communities.

More so than at most campuses traditionally considered peripheral to new left centers of power, organizers at the University of Virginia were uniquely prepared for the collapse SSOC and SDS. The UVA group had been integral to the southern new left throughout the latter half of the sixties and although the South is still considered to be on the margins of the national new left by many historians, their prominence in the region was a distinct advantage. Leaders of the new left at UVA understood the confusing sectarian conflict which was tearing apart the national new left better than most because of their intimate involvement with SSOC and their agitation in defense of that
organization when it fell victim to SDS's factionalism. With this knowledge, the new left at UVA was able to preserve its unity and push forward with a campaign of bringing the student body together into a mass movement against the war, and for university and racial reform.

Another reason that the new left at UVA was able to grow stronger even after the collapse of SSOC and SDS was because indigenous organizations were already in place and operating effectively long before the summer of 1969. The most important such organization was the Radical Student Union, which had served as a coordinating body for the various new left groups (including SSOC and SDS) at the university since 1968. When students returned to school for the fall semester of 1969, RSU changed from a coordinating group to the primary new left organization on campus. The campus chapter of SSOC was abandoned and while SDS remained (mostly in name only until 1971), its activists primarily worked through RSU. Capitalizing on the newfound interest and involvement of hundreds of students following the previous semester's "coat-and-tie" demonstrations as well as their domination of the Student Council through the VPP, RSU began consolidating its power and started building a mass movement of university students, faculty, and other allies.

RSU's ideology was a highly radicalized version of the new left ideology that had been developing nationally and locally throughout the sixties. Like its predecessor organizations SSA and SSOC, RSU continued to identify issues such as the Honor System, R.O.T.C, the war in Vietnam, the corporate controlled university, the Board of Visitors, and the draft, as targets for activism. However, unlike previous new left organizations on campus, RSU did not consider these subjects separate and approached
them with a distinctively Marxian class based analysis. In the fall of 1969, RSU published a sweeping treatise entitled “A Radical View of the University.” Written by Gardner and Al Long (a former member of SSOC), the pamphlet concisely articulated the interconnectedness of social ills that the activists perceived were plaguing the university, Charlottesville, Virginia, the United States, and the world. The main thrust of this radicalized new left ideology was a belief that the university was an integral part of the corporate capitalist system, a system which directly benefited the American upper class at the expense of the lower class domestically and internationally. According to this theory, corporations invested heavily in the university to produce technicians and teachers of technicians (the production goal) out of students with human concerns (the raw material). Corporations then guaranteed their investment by dominating the university’s Board of Visitors, which in turn used the school administration to protect against any movement to alter the status-quo (such as the civil rights movement and the new left). In addition to private business, RSU identified the federal government as the largest investors in the university, maintaining that more than two-thirds of university research funds came from the Department of Defense, the Atomic Energy Commission, and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. In return, the university’s research facilities were utilized to develop counterinsurgency tactics and new weapons systems which, in turn, were used to preserve the western capitalist domination of third world markets and raw materials which was, at the time, under intense threat from national liberation movements.

315 Ibid.
According to RSU’s interconnected analysis, the military was the ultimate tool used to protect American based capitalist “imperialism” around the world, and because federal grants accounted for thirty-eight and a half percent of the total income of the University of Virginia, military recruiters, the R.O.T.C., and the Judge Advocate General’s School occupied a privileged position on campus. It also identified the Honor System and the grading system as the “sacred cows” which ensured that students did not challenge their position in the corporate controlled university. While some components of this new ideology were ultimately flawed—especially its belief that the international corporate capitalist system had been gravely weakened by the student, black, and third world rebellions of the sixties—the vast majority was based upon sound research and personal experience. The pamphlet is well documented and provides the results of research highlighting the connections between the stocks owned by the University of Virginia endowment fund and the corporate affiliations of Board of Visitors members. It also effectively used the words of university officials against them. For instance, in relation to the role of the university as a training ground for corporate capitalism, RSU quoted a 1963 speech by President Shannon to the Richmond Chamber of Commerce in which he stated that, “expenditure for higher education is not an expenditure for consumption, but is actually investment for capital development.”

The main difference between RSU’s interconnected critique and the ideology of previous new left organizations at the University of Virginia was its emphasis on class

316 Ibid., 5.
317 Ibid; Connections include the fact that the largest investment in the endowment fund portfolio was in DuPont; a corporation which invested heavily in the University and annually sent recruiters to campus. A member of the DuPont family sat on the Board of Visitors. The University also invested heavily in Texaco, Freeport Sulphur, Phillip Morris, Richmond Newspapers, United Virginia Bankshares, First & Merchants Bank, Commonwealth Natural Gas, Reynolds Metals, Ethyl, and State Planters Bank; all of which had affiliated businessmen on the Board of Visitors.
318 Ibid., 4.
based analysis. RSU emphatically rejected elitist control of the university and tied their struggle against it to the national struggle to break upper-class domination of “every major institution in this country.” According to RSU, students affiliated with the new left grew up “believing in the ideals of American democracy, freedom, and justice for all,” but through their experiences with the civil rights and anti-war movements, came to realize that “any economic system which allows a certain small class of people not only to ignore but in most cases profit from [racism, poverty, and hypocritical foreign policy] is a pretty rotten system.” Although highly radicalized and embryonically Marxist, RSU’s ideology is still connected to the new left because, unlike post-SDS Marxist and communist groups which argued that the working class and/or working youths were the revolutionary vanguard, it maintained that students still had the power to radically change both the university and society. RSU contended that by democratizing the university and bringing it closer to the needs of students, the university could be transformed from an institution which contributed oppression in society, to a mechanism through which a movement could be built “in alliance with working people, black and white, against the racist corporate elite that controls decisions affecting not only our lives but the lives of all the people in Virginia and the rest of the world.”

RSU’s analysis of the pressing domestic and international issues of the late sixties and how they related to students at the University of Virginia was more than just an unsubstantiated theory of a few radical students. The new left at the university had learned throughout the sixties that if they were going to spread their message to initially hostile students, faculty, and administrators, they would have to generate solid research to

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319 Ibid., 10.
320 Ibid.
321 Ibid., 11.
back it up. The literature disseminated by RSU is reflective of this learned lesson and in most cases holds up to the highest academic standards (footnotes, primary sources, economic and political data, etc.). The primary reason that there was such a dramatic leap in the academic legitimacy of new left literature at the University of Virginia between the organizations of the mid-sixties and RSU was because of a new organization established in the fall of 1969.

The Virginia Research Institute (VRI) was a non-profit corporation formed by the new left during the fall semester and incorporated in the State of Virginia on 30 April 1970. VRI was set up to coordinate the research of all social justice groups in the Charlottesville area as well as to utilize the research capabilities of the university and university students for the betterment of the community at large. The organization’s agenda was four-fold; first, it was primarily focused upon research because the University of Virginia has “an abundance of people... who are connected to a particular research agency, or who have gained expertise in one area or another and are more than happy to assist our research work... with proper stimulation and guidance, the research possibilities are almost unlimited.” Second, it was concerned with education because “all of that knowledge-gathering does little good unless you share it with folks who can use it.” To accomplish this goal, VRI disseminated the results of its research through the Virginia Weekly (the new left’s newspaper) and the Cavalier Daily (which was essentially a new left ally by 1969). Third, it stressed organizing because “all this information [does the people] no good unless they are able to use it to change the

323 Ibid., 3.
324 Ibid.
conditions around them." To do this, VRI acted as an organizational tool for local and regional groups which needed specific research to help them with campaigns as varied as setting up a daycare to organizing a union. Lastly, reflecting the growing governmental repression of the late sixties, the organization coordinated defense activities. This included recruiting progressive lawyers from the university law school, assisting lawyers who were working on defending activists and activist organizations, organizing bail money, and coordinating with other agencies working on legal defense (including the ACLU and the National Lawyers Guild).

VRI was established and run by the leaders of the new left at the university. Thomas Gardner was the initial registered agent on the articles of incorporation and the fifteen member Board of Directors included, among others, student leaders Al Long, Thurman Wenzl, Dianne Mathiowetz, Arthur Ogle and Cathy Sims, and professor John Israel. For some of the more radical students, including Gardner, Long, and Wenzl, VRI was more than just a tool to coordinate social justice research in the region. They believed that there was "no place for us within the normal fabric of this society [and that] we will have to create whatever it is we will live with." For them VRI was, in essence, a trial run for the establishment of "para-governmental and counter institutions which began as a movement tactic and strategy [and now] must now be institutionalized before all of our strength is dissipated."

As the 1969 fall semester progressed, the new left at the University of Virginia was entering its final stages of evolution into a mass student movement. Its primary

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325 Ibid., 4.
326 Ibid., 5.
327 Discussion Paper, 2 November 1969, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 5, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
328 Ibid.
organization, the Radical Student Union, was well organized and ideologically advanced. It had a research wing, the Virginia Research Institute, as well as a widely read newspaper, the Virginia Weekly. It controlled the Student Council through the Virginia Progressive Party and had built a coalition of moderate student leaders now dedicated to university and racial reform. In essence, the new left controlled what social justice research was done on campus, how that research was disseminated to the student body, and to what organizing purpose that research was used. With a large base of student support, allies within the faculty, and an ambitious agenda to reshape the university, the new left was ready for a showdown with the University of Virginia’s still relatively conservative administration.

Throughout the fall semester, tensions between the new left and the university administration had been rising. As soon as school began, RSU began organizing for the upcoming National Vietnam Moratorium, another attempt (following Vietnam Summer) to coordinate anti-war actions on a nationwide scale. The goal of the Moratorium was for all persons opposed to the war in Vietnam to observe a one-day strike on 15 October and for all students and faculty to halt research and classroom work on that day.\(^{329}\) If this failed to convince President Richard M. Nixon to end the war, then it would be followed by a two day strike in November, a three day strike in December and so on. The Student Council formally asked President Shannon to either cancel classes the day of the Moratorium or put the issue to a general faculty vote (which the new left believed they could win).\(^{330}\) Shannon refused to consider either option, stating that “the University has an obligation to maintain an atmosphere in which all views can be expressed...for the

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\(^{329}\) *Cavalier Daily* (UVA), 22 September 1969.

\(^{330}\) *Cavalier Daily* (UVA), 30 September 1969.
University to suspend classes or to encourage its faculty to suspend classes in support of a position on these issues would be inconsistent with this obligation." The new left had anticipated Shannon's rejection of the Moratorium request and used it to publicize the event. Professor John Israel stated that "the President's decision doesn't bother me" and that the "University [has] already surrendered its neutrality by sponsoring an R.O.T.C. program. The University has as much right to prepare for freedom as for war." By 14 October, 163 faculty members had signed a petition supporting the Moratorium and a full day of events had been planned for the fifteenth. These included Vietnam videos, a candlelight march that drew over 300 people, and Vietnam teach-ins on Tuesday night as well as teach-ins, debates (including one between Gardner and John Kwapsiz of the Young Americans for Freedom), and a candlelight vigil on Wednesday. However, the highlight of the Moratorium in Charlottesville was a noon rally on the steps of the Rotunda. Over 1,000 people heard Karl Hess, a speech writer for Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign turned anti-war activist, laud the success of the Moratorium campaign and call on President Nixon to end the war. By all accounts, a large proportion of students and faculty, perhaps even the majority, observed the call to stay out of classes on 15 October in protest of the war.

Following the successful Moratorium protests, the new left continued on its collision course with the university administration. In November, RSU began a campaign in solidarity with workers at General Electric (GE) who had launched their first nationwide strike in twenty-three years. The 132,000 strikers included 700 in nearby Waynesboro and were joined on the picket line by students from the new left at the

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331 Cavalier Daily (UVA), 7 October 1969.
332 Ibid.
333 Dubney, Mr. Jefferson's University, 514.
University of Virginia (who also solicited financial contributions for the strike fund).\textsuperscript{334} This support of the strike, the attendance of seventy-five university students at a mid-November march on the Capitol in Washington D.C., and the disruption of a speech on campus by Deputy U.S. Attorney General Richard M. Kleindienst in December, considerably raised the ire of the university’s Board of Visitors, administrators, and the Virginia political establishment. Upon his retirement from the Board of Visitors in February 1970, Rector Frank W. Rogers expressed the opinion of that generally conservative body stating, “eight years ago you couldn’t conceive of that terrible bunch of thugs that now make themselves so articulate at the University.”\textsuperscript{335} President Shannon, it seems, was caught between his own personal concern over the war in Vietnam and its effects on the student body, and a conservative Board, concerned alumni, and hawkish state officials who demanded that he control and quiet the growing student movement. In most of his official statements and private letters to student leaders during the latter part of the sixties, Shannon did his best to remain firmly opposed to any and all disruptions of the educational environment at the university while still sympathizing with the concerns of the student body.

This “concern” did not sway the new left, who viewed Shannon as “the big chief of the lower-level functionaries” in their interconnected analysis of who controlled the university and for what purpose.\textsuperscript{336} They believed that his sympathy was just a “liberal façade” and that he, like past university presidents, was “in total agreement with the

\textsuperscript{334} Six, Five, Four, Three. Organize to Smash G.E., 17 November 1969, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.

\textsuperscript{335} Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 516.

world outlook of international-minded corporate executives." However, within a matter of months, the student movement’s view of Shannon was about to be turned upside down.

The spring semester of 1970 began slowly for the mass student movement dominated by the new left at the University of Virginia. Nationally, the anti-war movement was still trying to re-organize following Eugene McCarthy and George McGovern’s (both anti-war Presidential candidates) loss to Hubert Humphrey for the 1968 Democratic nomination. This, followed by Humphrey’s defeat to Republican Richard Nixon—who famously promised that he had a plan to end the war in Vietnam that he could not divulge during the election—in the general election, had considerably weakened the movement. However, with the nation a year into the Nixon presidency and no end to the Vietnam War in sight, the anti-war movement once again began to grow in strength. That strength was solidified when, on 30 April 1970, President Nixon appeared on all three major news networks and announced that he had authorized the invasion of Cambodia to seek out and destroy NLF supply and communications bases. He stated, “If, when the chips are down, the world’s most powerful nation, the United States of America, acts like a pitiful helpless giant, the forces of totalitarianism and anarchy will threaten free nations and free institutions throughout the world.”

The country was stunned and “the antiwar movement at home, which [Nixon] had skillfully subdued, suddenly erupted again in the biggest protests to date.” At Kent State University in Ohio, student protestors burned down an empty ROTC building on campus and Governor James Rhodes ordered in the National Guard to put down the

337 Ibid.
338 Karnow, Vietnam, 624.
339 Ibid., 625.
protests. On Monday 4 May 1970, guardsmen opened fire into a crowd of demonstrators at the university, killing four students and wounding nine. Fanning the flames, Nixon’s press secretary Ron Ziegler infamously responded to the killings by icily commenting that “when dissent turns to violence, it invites tragedy.”

On Sunday 3 May, moderate student leaders met with the Radical Student Union to discuss the possibility of a one-day strike at the University of Virginia to protest the invasion of Cambodia. After discussing whether or not the boycott should also address issues such as the R.O.T.C and the ongoing repression of the Black Panthers and subsequently deciding to focus solely on Cambodia, a rally was planned for Tuesday and a walk-out for Wednesday. On Monday, news of the shootings at Kent State reached the University of Virginia and new left and moderate students alike reacted with shock and “a deep sense of frustration.” A telegram to President Nixon was quickly drafted expressing horror with recent national developments and a spontaneous rally of over 1,500 students occurred later that night at the Rotunda. The crowd then marched to Carr’s Hill, President Shannon’s residence, and read him the telegram. Shannon told the students that he shared their “grave and deep concern,” but refused to sign the telegram or comment further until morning. For many students, especially those associated with the new left, this response was unsatisfactory and several hundred students then marched to Maury Hall, the Naval R.O.T.C. building on the grounds. By midnight the building had been occupied and student leaders were holding meetings in the wardroom in order to

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340 Ibid., 626.
341 “How the Strike Started,” Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
342 Ibid.
343 Ibid; Buford, May Days, 4; Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 517.
344 “How the Strike Started,” Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Buford, May Days, 4; Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 517.
gauge student opinion and draw up a list of demands. By this point, radio announcements had brought hundreds more students and faculty to the scene and the hallways and entranceway of the building were packed wall to wall with people. Administrators gathered in Pavilion V, “determined to clear the building preferably without calling in police.” They sought out and received a court injunction against the occupation from Circuit Court Judge Lyttleton Waddell and, at 5am, ordered the students to leave the building. Some students had initially been willing to risk arrest in order to defend the occupation, but by 2am they had been swayed by others, including Gardner, who argued that “getting busted was no way to win.” When the injunction was delivered, the 250 students still occupying the wardroom peaceably left the building. However, the strike was only just beginning.

The next day 900 students attended a university sponsored memorial service for the victims at Kent State which was followed by the first Strike Committee meeting on the Lawn. The new left was eager to preserve the broad-based unity of the preceding years “coat-and-tie” demonstrations and realized that in order to legitimize the strike they had to involve the Student Council. On Tuesday evening strike supporters met at Newcomb Hall and formalized their list of demands drawn up the previous night in Maury Hall. They then proceeded en masse to an open Student Council meeting called to discuss the strike. The demands included: immediately revoking the injunction, prohibiting university police from carrying firearms for the duration of the strike, not allowing outside law enforcement agencies onto the grounds, convening a meeting of the

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345 Buford, May Days, 6.
346 Ibid.
347 Ibid.
348 Ibid. 9.
general faculty in order to commence proceedings to remove Army, Navy, and Air Force R.O.T.C. from campus, severing university connections with the Judge Advocate General Corps., terminating all research sponsored by the Department of Defense, having President Shannon sign a statement by College presidents opposed to the invasion of Cambodia, publically committing the university to accepting a goal of twenty percent black enrollment and $100,000 dollars for the establishment of a black admissions program, accepting women on an equal basis with men in both recruitment and hiring, and allowing university employees to strike and bargain collectively.\textsuperscript{349} By an eleven-to-ten vote, the Student Council endorsed all of the demands and called for students to support the strike. Student Council President James Roebuck then presented President Shannon with the “legitimized” demands on the steps of Alderman Library.

The Virginia Strike Committee quickly became highly organized with a “number of action groups [whose] activities [were] coordinated and publicized through central offices.”\textsuperscript{350} Reflective of the anti-authoritarianism permeating through the new left at the end of the sixties, there was no “outstanding, controlling leadership ... [and] all policy decisions [were] reached at general meetings of the entire Committee.”\textsuperscript{351} They took as their slogan “Shut it down, open it up,” which essentially advocated shutting down the usual functions of the university and creating an “Open University” in which students were “freed to work personally on national and community concerns.”\textsuperscript{352} The action groups included: Grade Options (to determine ways for striking students to pass the

\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{350} "How the Virginia Strike Committee Functions," Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
\textsuperscript{351} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{352} "Shut it down, open it up," Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
semester), Community Organizing, Political Action Committee (to develop a list of peace candidates for statewide election in Virginia), Vote 18 (to support lowering the voting age to eighteen), Virginia Organizing and Speaking (to send strike representatives to other Virginia universities, Lobbying, Counter-Graduation, The Five Non-Military Demands, Anatomy of Military Research and Defense Contracts, Liberation Classes and Seminars, Draft Resistance, and Campaign Organizing.353

Wednesday 6 May was dubbed “Freedom Day,” as students picketed outside classrooms and attendance figures dropped by as much as eighty percent.354 At an 11am rally at the Rotunda, a large crowd of more than 3,000 people heard assistant law professor Charles Whitebread prophetically call the Nixon administration “the most insidious in the history of the country” and history professor William Harbaugh suggest that the United States should “shift its role from an illegitimate Far Eastern power to a legitimate Pacific power.”355 However, a day of remarkable protest events at the University of Virginia was not even close to being over. Weeks before the strike, VPP and the ACLU had scheduled radical attorney William Kunstler to speak on campus. Kunstler had famously defended the “Chicago Eight” (Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin, Dave Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Rennie Davis, John Froines, Lee Weiner, and Bobby Seale) following the 1968 Democratic Convention protests. In late April, YIPPIE (Youth International Party) co-founder Jerry Rubin was added to the event and it was an amazing coincidence that the presence of these two famous sixties radicals in Charlottesville coincided with the student strike at the University of Virginia. According to Virginius

353 Strike Bulletin, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16:14, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
354 Buford, May Days, 11.
355 Ibid.
Dabney, "The arrival of these men only two days after the Kent State shooting could not have happened at a worse time for the cause of law and order at Virginia."\(^{356}\)

The conservative Virginia political establishment and angry citizens called on university officials to cancel the event, but the administration knew that this would be a disaster. Instead they called in the State Police and braced for the worst.\(^{357}\) 9,000 people, mostly students, turned out to see Kunstler and Rubin speak at the University Hall and they were not disappointed. Kunstler spoke first and electrified the crowd. He called on the students to “shut down the University in order to stop the war,” and declared that “we must now resist to the hilt. These fists have to be clenched, and they have to be in the air. When they’re opened we hope it’s in friendship, not around the trigger guard of a rifle. But if we’re not listened to, or if the issue is forced, they may well open around trigger guards.”

Rubin followed Kunstler on stage and gave a vague, rambling, hour-long speech which diluted some of the crowd’s energy that had been built up by Kunstler. Some observers speculated that had Kunstler gone last, the night’s events may have taken a much more violent turn.

As Rubin’s speech ended, someone grabbed the microphone and yelled “on to Carr’s Hill” and a crowd of 2,000 strong, some waving Vietcong (NLF) flags, marched to President Shannon’s house.\(^{359}\) Thirty marshals from the Strike Committee formed a line in front of the crowd and flashed peace signs in an effort to deter the students from storming the building. At 11:10pm Kunstler arrived and urged on the crowd over a

\(^{356}\) Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s University}, 519.
\(^{357}\) Buford, \textit{May Days}, 18.
\(^{358}\) Ibid; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s University}, 519.
\(^{359}\) Buford, \textit{May Days}, 22; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s University}, 519.
megaphone stating, "If they ignore you, they do so at their own peril." However, instead of battering down the door of Carr's Hill, the crowd shifted gears and marched again on Maury Hall. Several hundred students occupied the building and once again declared it "Freedom Hall." A teach-in was started in the auditorium, but by 1:30am most students left the trashed building after a third unsuccessful arson attempt in the basement sent smoke drifting through the halls.

On Thursday, picketing of classes continued and a mass-meeting of over 1,000 students on the Lawn resulted in the Strike Committee scheduling events for the upcoming week. Conservative students had been circulating a petition calling for the strike demands to be put to a student wide referendum and the Student Council duly set up the vote for Monday 11 May.\(^{362}\) The Strike Committee set about preparing for the referendum by copying information sheets on the demands and by establishing a headquarters on the Lawn. At 10:30pm, several hundred students began massing along University Avenue in front of the Rotunda holding signs urging motorists to "honk for peace."\(^{363}\) When they reached a critical mass, the crowd moved down the hill to the intersection of Routes 250 and 29, at which police were called. 189 police in full riot gear and with loaded side arms pushed the students down Route 29 towards the Memorial Gym. There they clashed with the police and one officer and one reporter were injured by rocks. The protestors continued to retreat until they reached the slope below the Monroe Hill dormitories. There they closed ranks and sat down with handkerchiefs and rags over their faces to protect from tear gas. Dean Alan Williams and other administrators arrived

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\(^{360}\) Buford, \textit{May Days}, 22.  
\(^{361}\) Ibid., 24; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's University}, 519.  
\(^{362}\) Buford, \textit{May}, 25.  
\(^{363}\) Ibid., 26.
on the scene and after convincing the police to fall back thirty yards, also convinced the
protestors to disperse.364

On Friday night, after another day of picketing and liberation classes, students
once again assembled on University Avenue and once again moved down to the 250 &
29 intersection. However, this time the police, under orders from President Shannon,
were waiting for them. Charlottesville’s Commonwealth’s Attorney invoked the Virginia
“Riot Act” (which made groups of three or more person subject to arrest) and police
moved in from three directions. The protestors quickly retreated back to their previous
positions along University Avenue and regrouped. At 1:25am Dean Williams addressed
the crowd with a bullhorn and ordered them to disperse. The students believed that the
police would never enter the university and held firm.365 They were wrong and the police
charged the crowd, sending approximately 400 students and bystanders running towards
the Lawn. Students rushed to hide themselves in unlocked rooms, but “troopers entered
private quarters, dragging students outside and into custody.”366 The police also swept
into the fraternity areas of Rugby Road and Madison Lane arresting students who had no
connection with the strike. Sixty-eight people were arrested including Kevin Mannix
(president-elect of the Student Council), Arthur “Bud” Ogle (outgoing president), Strike
Committee members Bruce Wine, Carroll Ladt, and Bob Collector (all of whom were
acting as marshals or aiding the marshals), legal marshal Neil McBride, executive
director of Madison Hall Sam Manly, former editor of the Cavalier Daily Richard
Gwathmey (arrested at his fraternity house), the president of a fraternity house and his

364 Ibid., 27; Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 520.
365 Buford, May Days, 29.
366 Ibid., 31.
father (it was the fraternity’s alumni weekend), and a pizza delivery man.\textsuperscript{367} The arrests did little to break the strike and “virtually radicalized the houses overnight.”\textsuperscript{368} By the next day, white banners urging a “yes” vote on the strike hung from the balconies of almost every major fraternity house.\textsuperscript{369}

Saturday was a day of rest and reflection for the striking students, administrators, and the police. President Shannon persuaded the State Police to withdraw from the central grounds and they returned to their encampments in surrounding motels. A large group of students caravanned to Washington D.C. for a mass protest against President Nixon, while others attended an afternoon rally on the Lawn which had been specially authorized by President Shannon.\textsuperscript{370} One liberation class was held and that night a small group of twenty to thirty students attempted another “honk-for-peace” without much success. Sunday 10 May, known as Edgar Shannon’s day, saw 4,000 students, faculty members, and observers congregate on the Lawn to hear the university’s president speak about the “unprecedented alienation of youth.” Shannon’s forty-five minute speech was poorly received until near the end when he admitted, “the police acted to a degree I did not expect and hope to avoid in the future.”\textsuperscript{371} He closed by telling the crowd, “I know your anguish over the military involvement in Southeast Asia. I want promptly to end the war. I feel furthermore it is urgent that the national administration demonstrate renewed determination to end the war and the unprecedented alienation of American youth caused

\textsuperscript{367} Ibid., 34; Account of the arrests, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s}, 520; Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20 November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 14.

\textsuperscript{368} Buford, \textit{May Days}, 31.

\textsuperscript{369} Thomas Gardner, Transcript of a Lecture for Julian Bond’s History of the Civil Rights Movement, 20 November 1990, Thomas Gardner and SSOC Papers, 11192-a box 6, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 15.

\textsuperscript{370} Buford, \textit{May Days}, 38.

\textsuperscript{371} Ibid., 39; Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s University}, 521.
by that conflict. I have conveyed that alienation in a letter to our senators.”372 The speech was met with loud cheers and raised fists. It was an unprecedented success for the striking students in general and the new left in particular, which had been agitating against the war and for the university to become involved in social justice issues for more than five years.

While students and faculty cheered Shannon, Virginia’s political establishment, conservative alumni, board members, and the media castigated him. Governor Abner Linwood Holton, Jr. expressed his “[disagreement] with President Shannon’s position” and threatened that taxpayers were “ready to cut off funds to state supported schools.”373 Joseph H. McConnell, the new rector of the University and President of Reynolds Metals, led the conservative charge maintaining that the speech should have been cleared through him first and that he would never have agreed to it. Elements of the media criticized the university for not breaking the strike and arresting more students and a Richmond Times Dispatch editorial accused Shannon of:

practicing appeasement...he has praised demonstrators who tried to burn down the ROTC building...for their magnificent spirit...but the most shocking illustration of Shannon’s eagerness to appease the irresponsible radicals on his campus was his quick willingness to sign a maliciously warped letter that seems to suggest President Nixon launched the Cambodia campaign for personal and political reasons.374

As pressure on Shannon grew, the student movement rallied behind him and he became the most unlikely of heroes during the strike. While students claimed Shannon’s conversion as a “victory” for the strike, Shannon also claimed victory because, unlike

373 Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 522; Cavalier Daily (UVA), 13 May 1970; Holton clarified that his remarks were not a threat, just “something for student and faculty strikers to think about.”
374 Dabney, Mr. Jefferson’s University, 522-523; Richmond Times Dispatch, 12 May 1970.
hundreds of other universities nation-wide, the University of Virginia officially remained open throughout the events of May 1970.

On the night of Sunday 10 May, 500 students, including a large contingent of fraternity men, seized University Avenue in front of the Rotunda. The crowd was ready for battle, but police never appeared and the protestors contented themselves with naming the street “Freedom Street” and painting a large white fist in the middle. Monday was referendum day, the day in which the popularity of the strike and its future would be put to the test by a general vote of the student body. The university-wide referendum drew an unprecedented seventy-three percent turnout and students were asked to vote “yes” or “no” on the strike, and “will strike for,” “will endorse but not strike,” and “will not strike for” on each of the nine demands. The student body overwhelmingly approved the strike by sixty-eight percent (4,909 for to 2,266 against), as well as six of the nine demands including: 1) revoking the injunction (2,575- 2,326- 2,221), 2) opposing the carrying of firearms by university police and prohibiting outside law enforcement (3,044- 2,197-2,041), 6) urging President Shannon to sign the “Hester Statement” (2,121- 2,394- 1,947), 7) committing the university to achieving twenty percent black enrollment and $100,000 for a black admissions program (1,853- 2,661- 2,680), 8) accepting women on an equal basis as men (2,196- 3,818- 964), and 9) allowing university employees to strike and bargain collectively (2,047- 3,415- 1,474). The three demands which failed were: 3) calling for the removal of all R.O.T.C. groups from campus (1,490- 1,495- 4,141), 4) demanding that the university sever contractual obligations with the Judge Advocated General Corps (1,203- 1,598- 4,224), and 5) terminating all research sponsored by the

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Department of Defense (1,472- 1,607- 4,013).\textsuperscript{376} The results were an incredible upset for proponents of the strike as it was widely believed by conservative students, administrators, and alumni that the “silent majority” of university students would back them in opposing the strike. Dabney reflects their shock at the outcome stating, “While disorders at the university were led by a relatively small and tightly organized group of radicals, the extent to which the student body seemed to sympathize with some of their principal ‘demands’ is surprising.”\textsuperscript{377}

The success of the referendum emboldened the Strike Committee and ensured that the strike would continue for the remaining few weeks of the semester. The Inter-Fraternity Council (IFC) endorsed the strike and after negotiations with the Strike Committee, the Student Council, and faculty representatives, President Shannon announced several options for students participating in the strike to complete the semester academically. Subject to a personal arrangement with his or her professor, a student could 1) complete class work on time and take the exam on the scheduled date, 2) accept the semester grade as of 1 May, 3) take the final exam during the fall semester up until 1 October, 4) substitute other work instead of an exam by 1 June, or 5) sign a statement and leave the university without taking exams.\textsuperscript{378} The statement read, “because the dictates of my conscience do not allow me to continue academic work in this time of crisis, and because I feel that each person must actively contribute toward the solution of our pressing problems, I pledge my honor as a gentleman that I am actively working towards the goals of peace and the objectives of the Virginia Strike Committee.”\textsuperscript{379} On Friday 15

\textsuperscript{376} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{377} Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's}, 523-526.
\textsuperscript{378} Ibid., 527; Rob, \textit{May Days}, 43.
\textsuperscript{379} Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's University}, 527.
May, striking students from the University of Virginia participated in a large protest march in Richmond, the last major demonstration of the semester.

On 12 May 1970, striking students at Virginia Polytechnic Institute (VPI; now known as Virginia Tech) seized control of Williams Hall. After refusing to leave, 108 students were arrested and charged with a variety of offenses. As they had been the core of political activism in Virginia for the better part of a decade, the new left at the University of Virginia called for a statewide meeting of striking students to be held in Charlottesville from 17-18 May. They dubbed it the “Third Raleigh Tavern Convention,” the first two being held in Williamsburg in 1769 and 1770 by nascent American revolutionaries. The convention drew students from around the state, including VPI, and workshops included: Strike Organization, Women’s Liberation, Faculty, 18 year-old vote, Student Councils, Fund Raising, Marshals, Alienation, Community, Hatfield-McGovern, Summer Activities, Churches, and Peace Candidates.  When comparing the workshops to the events of the UVA strike, it appears that the convention was an attempt by the new left at the university to tactically coordinate all striking students in Virginia.

The Raleigh Tavern Convention was the last major event of the 1970 student strike at the University of Virginia and by the end of the semester life was returning to normal on campus. Under pressure from conservative alumni, political figures, and the media for not breaking the strike and arresting more students, the administration commenced legal proceedings against a number of the strike leaders. Bud Ogle and Bob Collector were both convicted of “failure to disperse” and given fines (which were appealed). However, one person, Tom Doran, faced the brunt of the university’s legal

380 “Raleigh Tavern Convention,” Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 16, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
retribution. Doran, described as a radical socialist and Black Panther supporter, was a former student in the process of re-applying to the university when he participated in the strike.\textsuperscript{381} As such, he perfectly fit into the administration’s view that “outside agitators” were responsible for some of the strike’s excesses. In June, Doran was arrested and accused of damaging the R.O.T.C. building, cursing and abusing University Security Chief Rea Houchins (spelled Houchens in other references), pasting posters on the Lawn, and illegally occupying Maury Hall.\textsuperscript{382} He was convicted in absentia on the cursing and abusing charge after he had been told that his trial had been continued by a court clerk and in August was convicted of damaging the R.O.T.C. building. However, the evidence against Doran in that case was tenuous at best (a student marshal testified that Doran was not in the R.O.T.C. building) and he was given only a $100 fine. According to the new left, which was carefully watching Doran’s legal odyssey, “the University Curia [was] enraged: What? No jail sentence after all of our work? Well, we shall see about this!”\textsuperscript{383}

In September Doran was re-arrested and charged with perjury for denying in court that he was near the R.O.T.C. building. Bond was set extremely high ($5,000 cash or $10,000 property) and “apparently the initiative [for this indictment] came from the University of Virginia hierarchy.”\textsuperscript{384} Doran was also permanently banned from the university grounds and university events under threat of arrest.

In addition to monitoring Doran’s legal problems, new left students spent the summer of 1970 organizing a group which they hoped would capitalize on the success of

\textsuperscript{381} Sally Hemmings (UVA), Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; “Doran’s Dilemma,” Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
\textsuperscript{382} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{383} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{384} Ibid.
the strike. The Union of University Students (UUS), a campus organization established on 21 May 1970, was an attempt by the coalition of new leftists and moderate student leaders to preserve the unity of the Strike Committee into the next school year. The organization was explicitly new left in its ideology, striving to "create an open and democratic University and a free, just and peaceful world to obtain and guarantee the ability for all people to directly control the institutions and decisions that affect their lives, and to provide a means by which students can coordinate and inspire efforts towards these ends." UUS was conceived of during the first meeting of the Strike Committee and was designed to be "a Union OF students FOR students" with its immediate concerns being "the improvement of the quality of student life in the social, political, and academic environments... academic reform [and] opposition to the Vietnam War."386

However, despite UUS’ attempt to carry forward a united student movement into the next school year, the new left at the University of Virginia was beginning to fall apart by 1970/71. Because of the national movement’s loss of direction following the collapse of SSOC and SDS in 1969, many committed student activists dropped out of the movement or left the activist scene at the university and most of the organizers who remained began to become involved with a wide range of political causes. With the admission of the university’s first fully co-educational class in the fall of 1971, the topic of women’s liberation evolved from just a talking point for the previously male dominated new left to an issue which demanded action. A chapter of W.I.T.C.H (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell) was formed and declared:

385 UUS constitution, May 1970, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
386 UUS, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
As members of the most consistently oppressed segment of society, we declare our freedom in mind and body. The following are true: That the sexual mores of this culture dehumanize and destroy both men and women; That women alone cannot be free unless the system itself is destroyed, freeing all people, and also that no revolution can succeed unless once and for all women can call their bodies their own, unless all our minds are liberated from sexual stereotypes, unless each life is precious and self determining- truly, not tokenly, free.387

There is not much information readily available about the activities of W.I.T.C.H at the University of Virginia, but by 1975 there was an active and well publicized campaign by the university chapter of the Radical Feminists Union (RFU) and the Charlottesville chapter of the National Organization of Women (NOW) to close down a “Jack the Ripper” themed bar (the Minories Pub) close to campus.388

By 1970/71 there was also a strong undercurrent of anti-authoritarianism and anti-organization amongst new leftists at the university reflective of the hippie counterculture prevalent in the nation. To this end a YIPPIE chapter was formed on campus whose “non-leaders” advocated, “Any activities necessary to awaken the University to its responsibilities to the people of Virginia.”389 Activists also became involved with campus chapters of the ACLU, the American Friends of Free Palestine, the Black Students for Freedom, the Friends of the Quang Ngai Hospital, the Guerrilla Theatre Coalition, the Law Students Civil Rights Research Council, the Virginia Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the Virginia Veterans for Peace, and countless other ad-hoc groups which never received official university recognition.390

387 UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.79, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
388 Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 8:23, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; Charlottesville Daily Progress, 3 November 1975.
389 UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.791, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
390 Ibid.
Sporadic protests continued throughout the 1970/71 school year, including a May Day demonstration to mark the one year anniversary of the strike and to protest the university’s designation of the day as “Law Day.” Students sponsored a speech by the mother of a draft resister and attempted to present “the People’s Peace Treaty” during the “Law Day” activities. On 25 September 1971, RSU and the Virginia Weekly staff co-sponsored a protest against “the slaughter of the Attica prisoners and inhuman conditions in the Charlottesville city jail” stating, “the poor fill the jails, the rich go free.” Moderate student leaders slowly drifted away from their former new left allies and began to focus their activism on agitating against increased enrollment and “overcrowding” at the university. By the spring of 1972 major demonstrations at the University of Virginia had completely ceased and remaining new left students and other radicals at the university had largely coalesced around one student-community group, the Charlottesville Resistance (CR).

CR had been organized as the Charlottesville Draft Resistance (CDR) in 1969 and was nominally active during the strike. According to Peter Daly, who worked with CR and UUS, the new left collapsed at UVA because “people were burned out. People couldn’t keep that up, and the younger kids coming into the University just weren’t that interested. The lottery system had been instituted by that time, of course, a lot of people knew they weren’t subject to the draft, and those people weren’t interested in draft resistance.” Another activist, Jim Cameron, contends that, “there wasn’t in the student body the long-term realization that the war wasn’t going to end if you [just] went to a

391 “A Brief History of the Charlottesville Resistance,” ed. by Marvin Cole, 5 May 1977, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 3, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 2.
392 Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 17, University of Virginia Special Collections Library.
393 “A Brief History of the Charlottesville Resistance,” ed. by Marvin Cole, 5 May 1977, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 3, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 11.
couple of rallies.” As the early seventies progressed, CR took in activists from other new left groups as those organizations meekly folded or faded into oblivion one after another; SDS (officially) in 1971, MOBE in 1971, RSU in 1972, the *Virginia Weekly* in 1972, VRI in 1973, and finally UUS in 1974.\(^{395}\)

Among other activities, CR members travelled to Washington D.C. in the spring of 1971 with a bloc of Virginia activists for a national anti-war demonstration and Daly was arrested while trying to read George Tolstoy’s “Letter to a Non-commissioned Officer” on the floor of the Senate.\(^{396}\) The group organized a protest during the university’s annual “R.O.T.C. day” ceremonies in 1972, during which activist Steve Squire was arrested. In 1973, the organization participated in the “counter-inauguration” of Nixon following his presidential re-election, sponsored “A week of concern for political prisoners in South Vietnam,” and led a boycott of Vice-President Spiro Agnew’s speech at the university.\(^{397}\) In 1974, CR sponsored an “Indochina Week of Concern,” picketed Duke Power Company recruiters at Minor Hall in sympathy with unionizing mine workers, and protested CIA recruiters on campus. These actions were always small drawing a few dozen activists, a far cry from the thousands who demonstrated at the university in 1970.

With the demise of the new left and the cessation of major protests during the early seventies, the University of Virginia returned to normalcy, although a much changed institution due to the events of the preceding fifteen years. When the new left

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\(^{394}\) Ibid., 17.

\(^{395}\) UVA Student Council Appropriations Committee Papers, RG 23/2/6.79, University of Virginia Special Collections Library; “A Brief History of the Charlottesville Resistance,” ed. by Marvin Cole, 5 May 1977, Social Movements Collection, 9430-f box 3, University of Virginia Special Collections Library, 11-20.

\(^{396}\) Ibid., 11.

\(^{397}\) Ibid., 3.
first became active at the university in 1964/65 through SSA and began agitating for civil rights and university reform, there were only a handful of black students and 660 women (almost entirely contained in the graduate school) amongst the 6,600 registered students.\textsuperscript{398} In the fall of 1970, the first semester after the student strike, those numbers had risen to 236 black students (two point two percent) and 1,963 women (eighteen percent) out of 10,852 total students.\textsuperscript{399} As a result of the hiring of a black dean of admissions and recruiting at black schools, black enrollment at the university rose throughout the seventies. The number of women on campus also grew exponentially and by 1974 there were 5,211 women to 9,171 men (thirty-six percent).\textsuperscript{400} While there are obviously many factors which led to such a dramatic increase in diversity at the University of Virginia during the early seventies—including national events, court decisions, and changing ideas on race and sex—it is clear that new left students played an integral role. Given the university administration’s initial hostility towards integration (race and sex) and the considerable length of time it took to achieve even a token measure of it on the grounds, it seems probable that had the new left not spent the majority of the sixties agitating for integration, civil rights, and university reform and keeping such issues at the forefront of public discussion and thought, desegregation of the university would have taken much longer.

However, even if it cannot be proved exactly to what degree new left student activism influenced administrative decisions to enroll black students, hire black faculty and administrators, and admit women on an equal basis with men, the new left definitely

\textsuperscript{399} Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's University}, 485; State Council of Higher Education for Virginia, \textit{Higher Education in Virginia} (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1972)
\textsuperscript{400} Ibid.
was instrumental in changing the general attitudes of the student body to a point where racial integration and co-education were embraced by the majority of students. Through independent newspapers, lectures, demonstrations, information tables, and face to face meetings, new left students helped to change the student body from an insulated, apathetic, and generally racist group in the early sixties, into one in which the majority openly demanded equality by the early seventies.

New left organizing also contributed to dramatic changes in the rules governing student life at the university. In addition to agitating for and winning visitation rights in University housing, the new left campaign against the Honor System led to a revamping of that institution in 1969/70. The Honor System was curtailed to only include offenses committed in Charlottesville and Albemarle County, an appeal process for guilty verdicts was introduced, attorneys were allowed to sit-in on the proceedings on behalf of an accused student, and the question of intent was elevated to take precedence over actual violations of the code.\footnote{Dabney, \textit{Mr. Jefferson's University}, 541.} When the new left first began organizing around the issue in 1964/65 the Honor System was being expanded, and its contraction and reformation in the late sixties can be seen as directly resulting from general student opinion turning against the system due to years of agitation against it by the new left.

The new left at the University of Virginia and their liberal predecessors also contributed to a fundamental restructuring of Charlottesville's social and political orientation. The city was a much changed place following its two decades on the front lines of the desegregation, civil rights, and anti-war struggles. Fifteen years of local activism by white liberals, civil rights advocates, and new leftists in partnership with the black community had created a new city, a liberal bastion surrounded by relatively
conservative rural counties. After successfully integrating public schools and the University of Virginia, defeating segregation and Jim Crow, and voicing their opposition to the Vietnam War during the sixties, a coalition of Charlottesville’s liberals, black community leaders and new leftists set about realigning the city’s political scene. From the beginning of the desegregation crisis in 1957—when residents voted for J. Lindsay Almond (D) over Ted Dalton (R) 2,839 to 1,788 for Governor—until 1969, when they voted for William C. Battle (D) over statewide winner Abner Linwood Holton, Jr. (R) 4,745 to 3,826, Charlottesville had consistently backed Byrd Organization Democrats in gubernatorial elections (Almond, Harrison, Jr., Godwin, and Battle). 402

However, this all began to change following events of the late sixties and early seventies in the city, including the student strike at the University of Virginia. In 1972 liberal activists finally wrested control of the state Democratic Party away from the Byrd Organization and for the first time in modern history the party did not run a candidate for governor. 403 Liberal forces rallied around Henry Howell, a former anti-Byrd Democrat who had led the fight to re-open Norfolk’s schools during massive resistance. Howell had narrowly lost the 1969 Democratic primary to Battle and in 1973 decided to run as an independent. His opponent was a former Governor and Byrd Democrat from Southside, Mills E. Godwin, who had been a fierce proponent of massive resistance and had reluctantly switched allegiance to the Republican Party. 404 The Howell campaign brought liberal forces in Charlottesville together and some within the new left at UVA actively campaigned for him. Howell carried Charlottesville by 5,162 votes to 4,600 for Godwin,

402 State Board of Elections, Official Election Results (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1944-1998).
404 Ibid., 13-14
but lost the statewide election by fifty point seven percent to forty-nine point three percent.\textsuperscript{405} The election effectively completed the realignment process in Virginia with conservative Byrd Democrats becoming the base of the Republican Party and the Democratic Party moving into the liberal camp. In 1977 Howell ran as a Democrat against Republican Lieutenant Governor John N. Dalton. He lost narrowly in Charlottesville—5,185 to 5,207 with 57 people voting for an independent candidate—and this became the last time that a Republican gubernatorial candidate has won the backing of the city’s voters. Since then Charlottesville has voted for Charles S. Robb (D), Gerald L. Baliles (D), L. Douglas Wilder (D), and Mark Warner (D) who all won the general election and Mary Sue Terry (D) and Donald S. Beyer (D) who both lost. In 2005, Charlottesville residents overwhelmingly voted for Tim Kaine (D) over Jerry Kilgore (R)—8,018 to 1,870—cementing the city’s reputation as a liberal Democratic stronghold in the state.\textsuperscript{406}

Charlottesville’s reputation as a politically liberal Virginia city is also due to its voting record in national elections. This too switched in the early seventies due to local (civil rights, the student strike, realignment, etc.) and national (the Vietnam War and Watergate) events. After voting for Johnson in 1964, Charlottesville’s voters approved Nixon (R) in 1968 and 1972 (over Humphrey-D 5,601 to 3,831 in the former and McGovern-D 7,935 to 5,240 in the latter). In 1976 they narrowly backed Jimmy Carter (D) over Gerald Ford (R)—6,846 to 6,673—and have never since voted for a Republican presidential candidate, supporting Carter (D) against Ronald Reagan (R) in 1980, Walter Mondale (D) against Reagan (R) in 1984, Michael Dukakis (D) against

\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 122.
\textsuperscript{406} State Board of Elections, \textit{Official Election Results} (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1944-1998).
George H.W. Bush (R) in 1988, Bill Clinton (D) against Bush (R) in 1992, Clinton (D) against Bob Dole (R) in 1996, and Al Gore (D) against George W. Bush (R) in 2000. In 2004, city residents voted for John F. Kerry (D) over George W. Bush (R) by a substantial margin of 11,088 votes to 4,172.  

However, these are just the results of gubernatorial and presidential elections, and to draw solid conclusions that specific new left political actions and campaigns during the sixties and early seventies in Charlottesville caused an ideological and political shift in the consciousness of city voters would require an exhaustive and comprehensive analysis of local, statewide, and national elections, which is an entire study in itself. What is known, is that Charlottesville today—unlike the city of the 1940s and 1950s—is considered by most political analysts to be a reliably liberal locality, and that this trend appears to have begun in the early seventies after fifteen years of social and political activism by liberals, civil rights activists, and new leftists.

In 1949 noted political scientist V.O. Key claimed that “of all the American states, Virginia can lay claim to the most thorough control by an oligarchy.” Key’s critical analysis of Virginia politics was heavily relied upon by the new left at UVA to explain the statewide context of their struggle for civil rights and reform (university and political). Especially by the late sixties, new left activists viewed the corporate controlled university and the conservative controlled electoral process as part of the same general system which oppressed the state’s working class and black population. However, the new left activists also saw that cracks were developing within the Byrd Organization’s domination of Virginia politics and some actively joined with liberals,

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407 Ibid.
408 V.O. Key, Jr., Southern Politics: In State and Nation (New York: Vintage Books, 1949)
409 Key’s books routinely appeared on SSOC’s “reading lists.”
newly empowered black citizens, and labor groups to support realignment and the
gubernatorial campaigns of Henry Howell in 1969 (when he narrowly lost the
Democratic primary to William Battle), 1973, and 1977. Although Howell did not win,
the coalition of liberals, labor, and blacks threatened traditional conservative domination
of state politics. This, combined with withering critiques leveled at them by new left
students and others alike, convinced many former Byrd Democrats, including Mills
Godwin, to moderate their rhetoric and move away from their traditional support of
segregation and racism. Virginia began the process of evolving away from this “Old
Dominion” of racism, segregation, massive resistance, and the Byrd Organization with
the election of Republican Linwood Holton in 1969. In his inaugural address Holton
declared, “Let our goal in Virginia be an aristocracy of ability, regardless of race, creed,
or color. Here in Virginia we must see that no citizen ... is excluded from full participation
in both the blessings and responsibilities of our society because of his race. As Virginia
has been a model for so much else in America in the past, let us now endeavor to make
today’s Virginia a model of race relations.” Such a statement would have been
unthinkable political suicide ten or even five years earlier and is a testament to the
societal changes brought about by the civil rights movement and their liberal and new left
allies over the course of the sixties. Holton followed up his statement with action,
integrating the state and capitol police, naming a black citizen as chair of the Richmond
city elections board, and most famously, allowing his children to be bused to an
integrated city school.

The 1969 election also dramatically altered Virginia’s political direction for
another reason. State Senator J. Sargeant Reynolds, a rising political star, was elected

Lieutenant Governor, opening up a Senate seat from Richmond that would need to be filled in a special election. A young black Richmond lawyer named L. Douglas Wilder saw the opportunity and declared his candidacy. Wilder had grown up in Richmond and attended Virginia Union University, majoring in Chemistry. After serving in Korea, Wilder decided to go to law school and was awarded $210 a year by the state of Virginia to attend Howard University in Washington D.C. (which was considered the difference in cost between Howard and the University of Virginia).\textsuperscript{411} Wilder returned to Virginia and passed the state's bar exam on 8 December 1960, becoming one of only fifty-one black lawyers in the state at the time.\textsuperscript{412} Throughout the sixties, Wilder built his firm and reputation taking on everything from minor offenses to murder cases and even gave legal aid to VSCRC organizers during the summer projects in Southside.\textsuperscript{413} In the 1969 special election, Wilder faced Republican Morrill M. Crowe and defeated Democratic Lieutenant Governor nominee Fred Pollard. With Pollard and Crowe splitting the city's white vote, Wilder was elected with 15,844 votes (to Crowe's 10,318 and Pollard's 6,015) on 1 December 1969.\textsuperscript{414}

With his election, Wilder successfully integrated the State Senate, becoming the first black representative in that body since Reconstruction. Throughout the seventies and early eighties he built seniority in the Senate and cultivated important allies within the state Democratic Party. In November 1985, Virginia voters were given the opportunity to confirm how far the state had come since massive resistance and the Byrd Organization when they were presented with a state-wide Democratic ticket which included a white

\textsuperscript{411} Ibid., 53.
\textsuperscript{412} Ibid., 63-64.
\textsuperscript{413} Paul M. Gaston (Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Virginia) in discussion with author, September 2007.
\textsuperscript{414} Baker, \textit{Wilder}, 80.
man (Baliles), a black man (Wilder) and a woman (Mary Sue Terry). All three swept to
power and the election moved Virginia further in the direction of a “New Dominion.”
Baliles won statewide with fifty-five point two percent of the vote, Wilder defeated
Republican John H. Chichester fifty-one point eight percent to forty-eight point two
percent, and Terry easily won with sixty-one point four percent.415 In Charlottesville,
Wilder took 5,285 votes to Chichester’s 3,264 and Terry received 5,970 to her opponent’s
(W.R. O’Brien) 2,580.416 After four years as Lieutenant Governor, Wilder decided to run
for Governor in 1989. He defeated Republican Marshall Coleman by a slim majority,
becoming the first black politician to ever be elected state governor in the United States
of America (in 1872 P.B.S. Pinchback temporarily became Governor of Louisiana after
the former Governor was impeached). In less than thirty years, Virginia had gone from
being a politically backward state controlled by a small group of racist white elites who
maintained their power by disenfranchising a large percentage the population (black and
white), to the first state in the nation to elect one of its black citizens as governor.
Although problems of racism, discrimination, housing segregation, and sexism still exist
in the state, Virginia would not be nearly as politically, socially, and economically
advanced as it is today without the tireless work of thousands of liberals, civil rights
advocates, and new leftists who struggled for equality, justice, and democracy against
tremendous odds in localities such as Charlottesville during the late fifties, sixties and
early seventies.

On a regional and national scale, it would be hard to argue that the civil rights,
anti-war, and new left movements did not play an integral role in reshaping the country

415 Ibid., 212.
416 State Board of Elections, Official Election Results (Richmond: Commonwealth of Virginia, 1944-1998).
socially and politically. In most parts of the nation, including the South, racism has become a socially abhorrent anathema, and today, there are communities of social justice advocates in almost every city, county, and state. Domestically, in addition to the fundamental restructuring of American politics due to realignment and the electoral enfranchisement of black citizens, many pressing societal issues of our time—including environmentalism, abortion rights, and affirmative action—have roots in, or were considerably impacted by the social movements of the sixties. American foreign policy in the last quarter of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century has been similarly affected. In 1980, the new right—a reaction by conservative activists to the leftist social movements of the sixties, especially the new left—helped Ronald Reagan win control of the White House. Reagan immediately began to confront what he and other conservatives called the “Vietnam syndrome,” a belief that the American people would not support military interventions in foreign countries following the war in Vietnam and the societal upheaval associated with it. Following a series of mini-interventions during the eighties (Grenada and Panama overtly, and Nicaragua covertly) Reagan’s successor, George H.W. Bush, declared after the 1991 Gulf War, that “the specter of Vietnam has been buried forever in the sands of the Arabian peninsula... it’s a proud day for America— and by God, we’ve kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all.”\footnote{Norman Solomon, \textit{Beyond the Vietnam Syndrome}, 14 September 2005, \url{http://www.antiwar.com/solomon/?articleid=7252}} However, by 1993 the “syndrome” was back when President Bill Clinton withdrew American troops from Somalia following the killing of eighteen soldiers in an urban battle with militiamen in Mogadishu. According to some contemporary political analysts, the current and continuing war in Iraq has proved that there never was a
"Vietnam syndrome." Noam Chomsky contends that high casualty numbers and a lack of domestic opposition to the war show that "there's never been anything like the so-called Vietnam syndrome: it's mostly a fabrication...polls have demonstrated time and time again that Americans are willing to accept a high death toll—although they don't like it, they're willing to accept it—if they think it's a just cause."\(^{418}\) Regardless of whether or not there actually was a "Vietnam syndrome," it is a legacy of the social movements of the sixties, especially the new left, that today—more than thirty years after the fall of Saigon—American foreign policy is still debated in terms of what societal effect it will have on the people of the nation. The 1960s were a turning point in American history. Systems of oppression that had been in place for decades and centuries were broken down and as a result of the social movements that emerged during the decade—including the new left—the people of the United States began the process of moving towards a society that one day can truly fulfill the promise of a nation with liberty and justice for all.

In addition to reshaping the University of Virginia and contributing to the restructuring of Virginia politics and society, the new left at UVA was an important part of a movement which has fundamentally changed the way in which history is practiced in the western world. It is through social history, the new left's greatest contribution to the historical profession, that the importance of the new left as an American political and social movement can truly be understood. By constructing a "bottom-up" analysis of the new left which focuses on people, organizations, communities, and campuses overlooked by traditional histories, a new perspective on the movement emerges. It is a history which illustrates how and why ordinary people in remote places like Charlottesville came

\(^{418}\) Ibid.
together to form organizations dedicated to social change in their communities and on their campuses. It shows how they developed ideologically and how they reacted and interacted with local, regional, national, international, and movement events. It illuminates the changing forms of opposition they faced, and how they dealt with the collapse of the national movement in their localities. However, most importantly, it is a history which demonstrates that people do indeed have the ability to change their school, their community, their state, their region, their country, and even their world.
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