

Clear Up Meaning

Once again, confusion reigns on the campus of Northern Michigan University over the age-old question: "Does the University necessarily approve of an act or acts which it authorizes?" The answer to the question should be obvious—but, apparently, it isn't.

This time the confusion surrounds the erection of white crosses on the lawn in front of the University Center to commemorate Upper Peninsula men killed in Vietnam. The crosses were put up Tuesday by members of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee and their supporters.

Approval for the action was granted by Carol Huntoon, director of student activities. University President John X. Jamrich, while reportedly concerned over possible State legislative reaction to the cross-erection, nonetheless has refused to overrule Miss Huntoon's decision.

However, there are elements within the University community who see the University's authorization of the planting of crosses (i.e., the University's recognition of the right of free expression for all groups) as a University endorsement of the moratorium. The two cannot be equated.

Last year, the University was embroiled in a similar dispute over the publication of the underground newspaper *Peace*. At that time, those who were prone to confuse authorization and approval were allowed to call the shots, and, as a result, freedom of press (dissemination of written opinion) went by the boards.

It certainly is unfortunate that some legislators in Lansing would fiscally punish a University for allowing the peaceful expression of an opinion they don't agree with.

But what good is a large budget allocation if the University must castrate itself educationally and politically in order to get that allocation?

It's a difficult choice, to be sure. But, quite frankly, we would prefer to be richer educationally and ethically than financially.

Of course, there would be no choice to make if people could be made to realize that—to repeat—authorization does not equal approval.

This idea must be emphasized by all state universities as strongly as possible. Big campuses cannot make great universities out of spineless-as-jellyfish institutions.