

Memorandum for the Files  
May 11, 1970

On Friday, May 8, late in the afternoon, a Mr. Pearson and a Mr. Wright of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission appeared in the office unannounced. They wanted to talk with me. I devoted a couple of hours to them in discussing the matter which they brought to my attention.

They brought with them a letter dated May 8 from the Civil Rights Commission and signed by Miss Ruth Rasmussen, Acting Director of Compliance. The letter indicated that Mr. Harry Wright had been assigned the responsibility of supervising the investigation of the enclosed complaint.

The complaint presented to me was dated May 8, and the claimant was Mr. Patrick Williams, and the respondent named was Northern Michigan University. The alleged violations were discrimination in education, housing, and employment and indicated that they were due to race. The dates of the alleged violation were October 21, 1969 and continuing.

The facts of the violation alleged as follows: That Patrick Williams on behalf of the Black Students Association alleges Northern Michigan University's discrimination against him and other black students on a number of specific items including:

1. The University student discipline procedures are applied in a discriminatory fashion. Black students are disciplined more often and more severely.

In December, 1969, Mr. Charles Griffiths, a black student who was accused of having a female in his dormitory room was suspended from school, alleges that his suspension was based on race.

2. Black students allege that some classes are conducted in a discriminatory manner.

Linda Martin, Jean Stewart, and Randy Hamilton, all of whom are black students, allege discrimination in the conduct of Mr. Sindwani's sociology class.

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3. Black students allege that the University does not fulfill its responsibility to insure that racial discrimination does not occur when black students apply for approved off-campus housing.

Diane Elliot and Charles Griffiths, black students, allege they were discriminated against when they applied for university-approved off-campus housing.

4. Black students allege that the University medical center discriminates against black students with respect to both services and treatment.

In October, 1969, I, Patrick Williams, attempted to secure a prescription from the medical center. I was forced to write a check, while white students are allowed to place purchases on credit.

5. Black students allege that the University discriminates against them when they apply for student employment - particularly for resident assistant and campus security positions.
6. Black students allege that the University systematically harasses black students - Campus security singles out the cars of black students.
7. Black students allege that the University does not fulfill its responsibility to protect the physical well being of black students.
  - a. On May 2, 1970, I, Patrick Williams received a threatening phone call from a person who identified himself as a member of the Marquette Citizens Committee.
  - b. On or about April 15th, 1970, Bobby Satterwhite and Ken Johnson, both black students state that they were shot at by unknown assailants.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Pearson and I had a lengthy conversation in which they described the procedures of the Civil Rights Commission. Evidently Mr. Williams had visited with the Civil Rights Commission and expressed his concerns as indicated. As a result of that meeting, Mr. Patrick Williams indicated to them that he wished to file a complaint against the University.

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Mr. Pearson and Mr. Wright pointed out that the complaint with the Commission is not exactly like legal action. The process is that a citizen may file a complaint, and in this case the Black Students Association is filing the complaint. The complaint is then presented to the University with the beginning of an investigation process. According to Mr. Pearson and Mr. Wright, this investigation process should serve both them and the University. Thus, the process is presumably private as far as the Commission is concerned.

This is simply the investigation part; the charge would actually be made only after the investigation. If evidence is found regarding the complaint, then the situation moves into what he called a conciliation hearing. At that point the Commission presents specific recommendations to the University in order to adjust the discriminatory practices which were alleged. If the University does not comply, there is then a public hearing.

If the hearing referee supports the Commission, orders are issued. At this time the University may again file a request for further investigation if it does not feel that the orders are justified.

I then called Dr. Rombouts into the meeting, and we provided Mr. Pearson and Mr. Wright with a number of published items, including the report of the Human Rights Commission, our Student Handbook, the University catalogs, the Housing Handbook, and the Student and Faculty Directories.

We decided that a copy of the complaint should be reproduced and made available to each of the staff members who might be involved in further investigation and discussion with members of the Commission, including Dr. Niemi, Dean Kafer, Dr. Sindwani, Mr. Firley, Dr. Barbara Lyons, Dr. Rombouts, Mr. William Lyons, Mr. William Clark, Mr. Keith Forsberg, and Mr. Robert Pecotte.

It was decided that we would again meet with the five staff members of the Civil Rights Commission at 8:30 on Monday morning in my office. Following this at about 9:00 we would meet with the NMU staff members named above so that they might be introduced to the Commission staff and have a general briefing as to the procedures to be employed.

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On Sunday morning Mr. Wright called me and indicated that he had made contact with Dr. Rombouts and made an appointment to talk with him on Sunday night. The nature of that conversation was not entirely clear, except that Mr. Wright thought he would like to talk with Dr. Rombouts as Chairman of the Human Rights Commission here on our NMU campus.

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At 8:30 on May 11 I met with Dr. Sabin, Richard Jones, and Dr. Rombouts of our staff, and Mr. Pearson, Mr. Strell, Mr. Wilcox, Mr. Meyers, and Mr. Wright who are staff members of the Civil Rights Commission.

They briefly outlined the procedures of the Commission. I asked the question as to why the Commission complaint date on the complaint itself was May 8; they also appeared on May 8; and they also wanted to begin the investigation immediately. It was interesting to ask this question in view of the fact that one of the students whose name is in the complaint about housing has actually filed a complaint with the Michigan Civil Rights Commission about housing in Marquette. That complaint has been pending for five weeks now, and nobody has done anything about it. In fact, none of these staff members knew anything about that complaint.

A distinction was made between a complaint against a person as such and the institution and the institutional policy. It was obvious in the course of the discussion that these two do overlap certainly, but the point was made that the Commission would not make a complaint against a person in the course of the investigation. Such a complaint would have to be made by some individual.

Mr. Jones indicated that he wanted to sit in on interviews which involved most of the Vice Presidents and Deans.

Mr. Strell indicated the objective of this investigation not so much any particular person as discriminators but how the University policy might prescribe or imply discrimination.

Then about 10:00 we met in the Pioneer Room with the staff members of the Commission and included in it Dr. Sindwani, Mr. Clark, Mr. Forsberg, Dr. Kafer, Mr. Lyons, Dr. Lyons, Dean Berg, Dr. Vinocur, Dean Griffith, Mr. Pecotte, Mr. Firley, Dr. Niemi, and Dr. Rombouts. The Commission staff again

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explained the procedures briefly, and I emphasized to the members of the staff that the institution has no matters which cannot be indicated clearly to the Commission staff, and that we were cooperating completely in this investigation.

We decided that there would be some initial appointments between members of the staff and our staff to indicate the kind of data they might want, and that eventually they would have specifically scheduled conferences to get into the data and other information which the Commission members might want.

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