

Questions About Trial Of Six NMU Black Students Fielded By Two Attorneys

About 500 students and faculty members at Northern Michigan University attended "a tell it all" question and answer discussion between the prosecutor and defense attorneys in the recent trial involving six black students charged with creating a disturbance at the Dec. 17-18 sit-in in the office of the Northern Michigan University dean of students.

J. Kent Bourland, Hancock, defense attorney for the black students, and Marquette County Prosecutor Edward A. Quimnell headed more than a dozen questions concerning the Marquette County District Court trial from the audience Tuesday at the bi-weekly Academic Senate meeting.

Both were invited to participate in the question and answer discussion by the Academic Senate.

30 Minutes Of Questioning
Each attorney spoke to the crowd for 10 minutes before answering questions. They answered questions from the audience for about 30 minutes.

In his opening remarks, Quimnell told the crowd that "we should be thankful that violence at Northern Michigan University has been minimal."

"Violence cannot solve any basic issues," said Quimnell. "It seldom has anything to do with persuading anyone. Violence only serves to build resistance."

Misinformation Charged
He concluded his opening remarks by saying that there should be some sort of limitations on demonstrations. They should be peaceful and purposeful.

Bourland told the audience they were being fed with misinformation about the black community at Northern.

"The problem, I believe, is that the community at large systematically over the last two years has been fed misinformation about the black community and more recently the sit-in," said Bourland. "Blacks told me it was worse than I would ever believe — you will see."

"With the truth in your hands, you will be quite surprised."

Question For Prosecutor
One of the questions asked of the two attorneys during the question and answer period was why the prosecutor decided to press charges against the six black students.

Quimnell responded by saying that the "wishes of the victim" are always considered before deciding whether to prosecute. But, he added, the final decision is always left up to the prosecutor.

Commenting on the question, Bourland said it was his understanding that NMU President John X. Jamrich urged the prosecution of the six black students and would not retract the charges until last week.

Final Responsibility
Quimnell admitted that the administration was "certainly con-

sulted" on whether to drop the charges, but said he made the decision.

"The shots were being called from Dr. Jamrich's office from the very beginning," said Bourland. "I think President Jamrich was behind the prosecution from the beginning."

In response to Bourland's remarks, Quimnell told the audience that "it's not all — Northern's fault." He said he did not want to pass the burden of his responsibility to anyone else. He repeated that the university could have asked him to prosecute the black students all day long, but that he still had to sign the complaint himself.

'Drawn Out Too Long'
One student asked the two attorneys why the university decided not to pursue prosecution of the black students after the trial was declared a mistrial.

"I do not know why the university decided not to push for another trial," said Quimnell. "I suspect that the case has just drawn out too long."

Quimnell also indicated that he was "amazed" that Jamrich had ordered the tapes of the Charles Griffin hearing erased shortly before the trial began. A recommendation by the Student Judiciary for discipline against Griffin, a 1968 student, led to the sit-in demonstration.

Quimnell added that the black students did have a purpose for the demonstration. He said that until the damage was done there was no need to prosecute.

'Conflict Of Interest' Charged
"It looked like we had enough evidence at the time to convict the six black students," said Quimnell. "But we didn't."

In response to Quimnell, Bourland said that "there isn't one person in this room who would not have joined that demonstration if you knew all the facts."

Answering one final question about the news coverage of the trial in The Mining Journal, both attorneys lashed out at "what appears to be a conflict of interest" with John McGoft, a member of the NMU Board of Control and president of Panax Corp., which publishes The Mining Journal.

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