

Five Demands

by Larry Light

The Association of Black Collegians enjoyed a good turn out for their Forum in Colton Chapel Monday night. During the course of the program, five demands (variously called "suggestions," or proposals," depending upon the tone of a speech) were presented. One of the Black spokesmen hinted that these would be brought to the floor of the next faculty meeting. It is my fervent hope that the demands are fully considered in all of their implications by faculty, Administration, and students.

Let us analyze these one by one, according to their assigned priority:

(1) More Black students are needed on campus.

This is an aching necessity for Lafayette has only 43 Blacks in its entire student body. Such a situation is deplorable. If the social situation for white students here is below par, it only follows that Black students fare even worse. And, even with coeducation in the horizon, cultural opportunities for a Negro in a small, residential college of the Lafayette ilk will remain poor at best until some positive changes are made.

The biggest change, of course, could be an augmentation of Black student enrollment. A good point was made at the Forum that most Blacks currently enrolled here are academically qualified. It was then suggested that the admissions people seek out under-privileged ghetto students and give them a summer's worth of compensatory education prior to matriculation.

This has been on the Administration's mind for quite some time. The big drawback here is money -- an enormous quantity of which is needed to finance a program whose composition requires a good deal of costly one-to-one tutoring. Currently, as in the past, the Federal Government is being petitioned for capital. That we will get any is doubtful, since the Federal budget has been cut of this score; witness the failure of last spring to obtain that Upward-Bound grant. At any rate, private foundations should also be solicited.

Failing all else, the college's only recourse would be to generate the money from itself. You

about that "Lafayette is so rich, it can do anything it wants to." While this institution may indeed be "rich", the second part of the statement is not necessarily true.

To elicit the needed funds, I suggest that, first, the budget be looked into, a la The Meyer Report (hopefully at a much greater speed, of course). The cost of a compensatory education program is far less than that of co-education, so, therefore, any tinkering with the budget would not be of major proportions. If, by some chance, we cannot finance the program within the context of current assets, a giving campaign should be initiated for this purpose which would be open to both alumni and students.

(2) More Black teachers and a full-time Black administrator.

Needless to say, these people are in great demand today. Although the problems are obvious, I can't help but feel that this recruitment is not being pursued with the concerted vigor it should be. Our college now boasts one part-time Black instructor, one part-time Black administrator, and only one full-time Black in the Athletic Department. Lafayette has been seeking Black personnel for a year now and has accrued only meager results. I suggest a good re-evaluation of this aspect of recruitment.

(3) A Black Studies Program.

A mere handful of courses on the Black man are offered now. What the ABC came up with was laudable in that a middle ground is struck between the minimal amount of courses in Afro-American culture we now have, and a complete Black major -- which would tend to insulate a student's academic life from that of his white peers. However, the proposed program would insure that every opportunity be afforded the Black to form an appreciation of his own culture.

(4) An end to racism on the campus.

Neanderthal shenanigans such as the epithet painted on the ABC's meeting room door and the anonymous letter in last Friday's newspaper are atypical of the mood on this campus. It is extremely gauche for a white student to be

is something else again. A racist is not necessarily a bigot. Racism can be defined as the conscious or unconscious expression of white supremacy. This can take the form of apathy -- of indifference to the problems of the Black man in his fight for a decent place in American society. Thus, some the whites who spent Monday night with Rowan and Martin might just lie within this pall.

At any rate, the fact remains that the white student can no longer remain inert on this issue. An analysis of precisely how racism can be destroyed would be too lengthy for inclusion here. However, let me say that it behooves the white student body to open its mind to the situation and actually see what's going on. •

But let's not be sweet and nebulous about it. What is needed is positive action by the whites in support of the Black's demands. Several informal discussion groups are forming on the subject -- yet it is action which must follow these talk-fests. In displaying that they are alive and do exist, the ABC has thrown down a challenge for the whites to meet.

We should meet it as soon as possible.

(5) A Black house should be instituted.

The Forum panel was not very clear as to the precise nature of this house. A building for social activities and cultural purposes is indeed a good idea. As one ABC member stated during the discussion following the Forum, "We're trying to get ourselves together."

Black unity is an excellent thing, but Black separatism is not. For Black students to live and eat segregated from the whites would be to breed an unhealthy apartheid. More exposure of Blacks and whites is needed here to combat racism, not less.

At any rate, the proposals are, on the whole, good ones. It is now up to the Lafayette community to react to them.