

12/10/53

STUDENT MURAL COMMITTEE DISPANDS
URGES FREEDOM FORUM

Final Report to Students in Open Letter to Chairman of Board:

Dear Mr. Davis:

The New School Student Committee against the Curtaining of Murals appreciates the consideration given by the Board of Trustees to its petitions, and is grateful for the sincerity of the Board's deliberations and response. We therefore accept the Board's resolution in the New School Bulletin (11/9/53) which its publication in the New School dissolved itself, satisfied that it has obtained the best commitment which the Board could in good conscience make in respect to Crozco's mural "Revolutionary Violence".

In this its final statement to the student body as well as to the Board of Trustees, the Committee calls upon the students at large to consider whether the present state of affairs is satisfactory: whether the Board's final resolution of the matter is adequate.

The outgoing Committee herewith respectfully submits a final summary of its views and recommendations as follows:

1. In protesting the curtaining of the mural, the Committee took the position that, in the context of the prevailing hysteria, such an act of official suppression represents a capitulation to the forces of darkness, wittingly or unwittingly. Our objective therefore was to induce the School to reconsider its act in light of its dangers to democratic tradition and cultural freedom.
2. The School's Board of Trustees has acted, upon reconsideration, by maintaining the curtain and simultaneously acknowledging the right of any person to look behind it! Thus is freedom of expression suppressed with a cavalier salute to freedom of inquiry!
3. The School administration is satisfied that it is serving the "majority" which demands the removal from their sight of that which they consider offensive. But we would have little democracy, indeed, if majorities were thus granted dictatorial power. There can be no democracy based solely on majority rule as the supreme arbitrary principle: democracy is created only by virtue of the limitations which a majority acknowledges, in its guarantees of the rights of minorities.
4. So while we concede the administration's right to its decision (though we regard this decision as being out of character, in a democracy), we urge that the student body seek other democratic ways of exercising its now abridged freedom; for no freedom can be preserved except by its exercise.

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5. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

- a) Though the curtain remains, there should be continued talk about it;
- b) Especially should there be widespread discussion about freedoms and democratic values generally;
- c) Overt activities should be conducted, to keep alive the freedoms of speech, assembly and petition, by actually speaking, assembling and petitioning;
- d) Specifically we propose that students make conversation about these matters among themselves, invite classmates with diverse views to join in representative class committees, to request or arrange the formation of a broad based Forum for Freedom in which the many aspects of these questions can be openly examined and evaluated.

6. The Committee thanks all the students who signed its petition last May, and the many others who expressed their sympathy and agreement though fearing to add their signatures. To you we say there is no freedom without courage; and as group action banishes fear and breeds courage, so isolation manifests fear and multiplies cowardice. Panic is the name given to the mass-neurosis of "each for himself", in which persons isolate themselves intellectually and emotionally from each other, sacrificing the survival benefits which natural group life confers, and succumbing to the deadly fallacy that each can only insure his own safety at the expense of all the others. We bid you displace panic by serenity; and learn to live as creative, expanding, healthy personalities by drawing upon the resources of fellowship for strength and enrichment.

7. Finally, we hope that the administration of the New School will redeem and implement its historic commitment to a vital democracy, by eschewing further infringements which tend to drive expression of dissent underground, and by rather supporting and encouraging student efforts to grasp the reality of democracy in an open exploratory Forum for Freedom, with a program involving both faculty and students in planning as well as in participation. We commend this proposal to you as a fitting effectuation of the spirit and the conscience so sensitively expressed by the editorial on freedom in your 11/16/53 issue of the New School Bulletin. We hail the contemplative excellence of this editorial, and seek its necessary translation into living action.

Respectfully yours,
The Student Committee