



STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
COLLEGE AT OLD WESTBURY

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April 15, 1976

To: Faculty Council, Joint Council, cc. E. Todd, J. Maguire

From: Paul Lauter

Subject: Administrative Response to Housing Issues

Edward Todd's draft memo of April 5 to Walter Relihan raises for me the most serious questions about his continuing role as a spokesperson for this college. If the letter has been sent, it would represent a thorough undermining of the Agreement which ended the strike.

Absolutely nothing in the letter reflects either the educational reasons or those based in the college's mission for providing family housing. In fact, no reason is given, except the pressure of the strike. On the contrary, endless reasons are given for not providing family housing. Such a memo is well known among bureaucrats; it says to his Albany superior "I have local pressures, but here's how you can say No for me."

Any serious effort to reflect the college's position on this issue would make at least the following points, all of which were articulated in the negotiations:

1) The Trustees have clearly supported the role of Old Westbury in serving historically by-passed students. That role has required examination and reformulation of the curriculum. It requires a higher level of certain ancillary services, like counseling. Similarly, it requires that the college reexamine the housing needs of such a student population.

In previous years we had not adequately reviewed at certain levels of the college the implications for housing of our commitment to the historically by-passed. We have now done so, and we have concluded that in order adequately to serve such a student population the college must provide year-round and family housing.

2) There are many precedents for providing such accommodations to students. After World War II, it was public policy to offer educational opportunities to veterans, many of whom were married and had families. Means were found for providing year round family housing for veterans. Similarly, institutions (e.g., graduate schools) which serve an older student population like ours routinely provide such accommodations. The college expects that precedents can be found that will enable us to comply with legal requirements so that we can provide family housing.

3) There is some reason to believe that pressures have been brought against the college's providing year-round and family housing in part because many of the students who will take advantage of it are members of minority groups. The college is committed to the principles of human justice, as is our University as a whole. We could not allow such racial/ ethnic overtones to block efforts which, from the standpoint of its educational mission, the college has decided are very desirable.

I would add two footnotes: first, from my point of view the initial paragraph of Todd's letter edges into libel. It clearly implies that the former Dean and the Director of Housing "hushed up" an illegal scandal which, only upon their removal, came to be known. That is absolute nonsense. If Todd didn't know there were children in the dorms, it only reflects how distant he is from students--and from his colleagues among the officers, most or all of whom knew. What it further reflects is the continued effort of Student Services to meet, instead of denying, the legitimate needs of a historically by-passed student body.

Second, Todd's letters stand in marked contrast to the eloquent testimony offered by Jim Gathard to the Senate Committee on Higher Education. Why is it that Jim's testimony in fact reflects what he described as his "deep sense of responsibility to the constituency I serve"?