

Hampton students protest Bush speech

by Nancy Primack

Students at Hampton University in Virginia who oppose the choice of President George Bush as commencement speaker for this year's graduation ceremonies, have told the press that there would already have been protest demonstrations against Bush if not for police state tactics being used by the university administration of Bush's close friend, University president William Harvey.

The Concerned Citizens Committee, formed to support the students' right to free speech, detailed the pattern of intimidation at a press conference on April 11. Danielle Alexander, a representative of the Committee, said that "there is an atmosphere of fear in the nation and amongst the students and faculty at Hampton University. . . . Many students have described threats from the administration to keep seniors who participate in any protests from graduating. Some faculty members have reported being told that heads will roll if they voice any opposition to this decision."

Police state tactics

Students report that the Harvey administration told one senior distributing an anti-Bush leaflet in March that all her classes were dropped. Lasharn Williams, a Hampton sophomore, told the *Newport News Daily*, "Everyone's opposed to Bush coming. They're afraid to come out, because they fear Harvey will do something to them." The rumored presence of Secret Service and FBI agents on campus since March, has caused fear among many students that they are being spied upon.

These police state tactics used to intimidate opposition to Bush's speech at Hampton have been the subject of nationwide news media coverage, and now it is known that the ever so popular Bush is considered a pariah at the black university campus.

Bush is so disliked at Hampton that, despite this intimidation, various flyers are circulating on campus which call George Bush "an enemy of the black community," and say that he and Hampton president Harvey "are trying to destroy Dr. Martin Luther King's dream."

One fact sheet circulating reports that in 1969, then-U.S. Representative George Bush ran a task force which invited Dr. William Shockley and Arthur Jensen to expound upon their racist views that blacks were genetically inferior to whites. The leaflet quotes from the *Congressional Record* in

which Bush reported favorably on Shockley's "race science" theories.

University officials reacted swiftly to suppress the distribution of this fact sheet by confiscating it and threatening those distributing it with arrest. Harvey responded further to the growing unrest by sending all students and faculty members a memorandum which defended Bush. "In view of the President's long standing support of historically Black colleges and universities," Harvey said, he is "particularly pleased" that Bush is speaking at Hampton's commencement. He concluded his memo warning, "As is the case in our individual homes, honored and invited guests are to be treated with dignity and respect. I expect no less from the Hampton University faculty, student body, and other constituents!"

Students undaunted by such intimidation, responded immediately with more leaflets denouncing Bush's recent veto threat which stopped the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1990. His "support" for black colleges was also exposed, since his administration was responsible for massive cuts in aid for black colleges. Another leaflet denounced Bush's support for genocidal population reduction programs.

Disgusted with the University administration's tactics, several students, together with the Concerned Citizens Committee, called for an anti-Bush demonstration to take place in the city of Hampton, away from the campus. Organizers of the demonstration expected only 30 or so students to attend due to the environment of fear created by University officials. When over 100 students showed up with posters and placards denouncing Bush, Harvey announced that he would approve a demonstration on campus, in the football stadium, as the "official" school protest.

Bush was soundly denounced even at the "approved" protest. One student who addressed the rally said that not only was the invitation to Bush an insult to the students, but that "having George Bush speak is like inviting a murderer to write the eulogy for his intended victim."

But Hampton students are not alone in their protests against Bush. Students at the University of Michigan held protests in mid-April against Bush's scheduled commencement address there. When then-Vice President Bush spoke there in 1985, students hurled rotten eggs. Barbara Bush may be greeted with the same type of enthusiastic protest when she speaks at several commencement exercises this spring.

As the drive towards George Bush's new world order and the descent into economic depression continues, more and more students, as well as other citizens, find themselves increasingly locked out of opportunities and their rightful participation in U.S. society. Across the nation, students are protesting tuition hikes, budget cuts, and George Bush. Many ad hoc committees supporting the economic programs of Lyndon LaRouche are now forming on campuses to offer an alternative of economic growth and development to the depression and police state policies of the Bush administration.