DATE: March 4, 1969

RE: A memorandum for the record concerning the demonstration on this campus on Monday, March 3, 1969.

FROM: Wm. Hugh McEniry

The events culminating in the demonstration of March 3, 1969, in a major sense, began with a "statement to the press" released by a group of black students on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte on Monday, February 24. A copy of that statement is attached. In essence, it demands the immediate recognition of "the Black Student Union as an official campus organization. If our demand is not immediately met, other actions will be taken."

Apparently, the black students learned that campus organizations are approved by the Student Legislature, because they made no effort to confront the University administration other than to send copies of their "statement to the press" to the Chancellor, both Vice Chancellors, etc.

The black students did appear at the Student Legislature meeting on Monday, February 24. Ben Chavis, their apparent leader, got the floor of the legislative assembly, and asked Ronnie Caldwell to read the "statement to the press." Mr. Caldwell did so. Mr. Chavis then, from the floor, read a constitution for the proposed Black Student Union, and moved its immediate adoption. He was then told by the Vice President of the Student Body, presiding, that his motion was out of order, since motions can be received by the Student Legislature only from members of the Legislature. He was also informed that there was an established procedure for the recognition of campus organizations, and that the process for the recognition requires some time. Mr. Chavis was then able to get a member of the Student Legislature to move a suspension of the rules to allow the immediate recognition of the Black Student Union. After considerable discussion, the motion was withdrawn. The ruling of the chair was, therefore, in effect; and Vice President Stewart Auten turned to other business. The black students and some of their white supporters then left the meeting of the Legislature.

Nothing additional came to our attention until the morning of February 26 at 11:45 when a delegation of more than fifteen black students appeared in the office of Miss Bonnie Cone, each member handing Miss Cone a sheet headed "Ten Demands of the Black Student Union, UNC-C."
A copy of this sheet is attached. The group requested that Miss Cone present these demands to Chancellor Colvard in the hospital. She refused, and said that they would be presented to him when he returned to his desk and that in the meantime other administrative officers would stand ready to discuss these matters with the black students. Later on that day, Miss Cone wrote a letter to Mr. Chavis at his home address repeating what she had told the group orally. The letter was mailed to the address on the copy attached, and a copy was delivered to Mr. Chavis in person, also, the next morning by Miss Cone.

On that same day, the black students of UNC-C replied to Miss Cone with the attached letter stating that "your response was inappropriate, untimely, and inadequate, and makes no attempt to deal with the demands presented..." This letter followed a conference in which Miss Cone had delivered her letter to Mr. Chavis, and had encouraged him and his group to talk with her and any other members of the administration they wished in an effort to avoid further misunderstanding and difficulty. Upon receipt of their reply, which was apparently a repudiation of Mr. Chavis' leadership at this point, the administrative officers of the University felt there was nothing further to say, and we turned our attention to establishing the necessary communications channels in the event of trouble on Monday.

On Friday, February 28, three faculty members called on me to express the concern of the faculty, and to ask if the administration would be willing to do any talking with the students at all. The faculty members were Dr. Sherman L. Burson, Chairman of the Department of Chemistry; Mr. William F. Biglow, Instructor in Political Science; and Dr. Edward S. Perzel, Assistant Professor of History. They expressed the opinion that Monday's potential disorder might be "defused" if we expressed some willingness to talk with the students on specific items. They were informed that we were perfectly willing to talk to the students on specific items, and that the students had already been told so. However, we agreed that we were ready for a conference on certain items provided that the other items not named in the agenda would not be brought up on the understanding that these would be preliminary discussions, and on the provision that only UNC-C students would be in the meeting, and that there would be no publicity. I addressed a letter to the Black Students of UNC-C in care of Mr. Chavis expressing this willingness on our part. A copy of this letter is attached. Dr. Burson later furnished me his memorandum of his understanding of the issues that were to be discussed. A copy of this memorandum is attached.
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Following the writing of this letter, I left the campus for an appointment at Chancellor Colvard's home, he having just returned the previous night from Chapel Hill. When I got back to the office about five o'clock, I was told by Mrs. Grant that the meeting was on at 5:30. Mr. Chavis had called her.

At 5:30, we met in the Chancellor's conference room. I had arranged with Mr. Ballard, Chief Security Officer, for him to call into the Chancellor's office at seven o'clock to be certain that we were still free to go home to supper.

Mr. Chavis, four other students, and an outsider, Dr. Jim Grant, came to the conference. Dr. Grant represented himself as adviser to the Black Student Union. We avoided what will be our insistence that there is no Black Student Union because it has not been recognized, and insisted instead on our letter of agreement that no outsider come to the meeting. After a brief discussion, Dr. Grant left.

The meeting proceed in a very amiable fashion, the black students, one by one, warming to the discussion and entering it freely. The following clarifications were made and suggestions advanced:

(1) The University has been in discussion with Mr. Noyce Dube for a period of months about the possibility of his beginning some sort of work on our campus related to modern Africa. Mr. Dube is a Rhodesian who is working toward his doctoral degree in African Studies in California. He is currently a member of the faculty at Johnson C. Smith University, and has been interviewed by both the Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs and the Department of History some time during the past fall.

(2) We also discussed the possibilities of explaining the admissions policy at greater length and in greater depth to some of the black students who do not really know how this policy operates.

(3) We expressed our confidence that faculty and students at UNC-C would be glad to engage in a voluntary tutorial, but insisted that we would not be interested in setting up a tutorial that would exclude anybody, white or black.

(4) We discussed the possibility of seeking Foundation funds to bring a series of black scholars to lecture in their fields, since it appears that we shall be highly unlikely to attract and hold a large number of black faculty members in the near future. Those who are really good are being paid very high salaries, and many of the very excellent young men are being sought by the most prestigious universities in the country.
(5) We explained the way the State Personnel Act works, and pointed out that state employees are paid at least the federal minimum wage, and that, while overtime is strongly discouraged, when it is allowed, is already paid time and a half overtime as they demanded.

(6) We expressed our willingness to discuss the present grading system provided that the discussion did not become exclusive. Many of us have been talking about better ways to evaluate a student’s progress, but we have been doing this in terms of all of our students, not for the black students alone.

(7) We discussed, also, the searches that have been going on here for possible black faculty members. We pointed out to the students our determination that no man be invited to this faculty just because of his blackness. We also pointed out to them the several instances that have already occurred in this year when we have sought, though unsuccessfully, to employ some black faculty members. The meeting broke up at seven o’clock in a very friendly atmosphere.

On February 28 at 5:00 p.m., we received, through Miss Cone’s office, a petition from 74 students expressing their opinions about the ten demands and their support of the administration of the handling of the program. A copy is attached.

Over the weekend, there were no further developments I was aware of, though there were certainly plans being made.

Monday morning when I arrived on campus, I was met by Mr. Chavis who said that his group would like to talk with me. I asked them to come to the office. Between fifteen and twenty of them came. They told me that they wanted everything Miss Cone and I had discussed with them on Friday evening to be put in writing. I responded that I had tried to make it clear that the discussions of Friday evening were of a preliminary nature, that answers could be given to their requests only by the Chancellor, and that I was not sure I could put anything in writing, but that I would communicate with President Friday to see whether our discussions and their conclusions could be properly written at this time. They left the office leaving one student, T. J. Reddy, to furnish a line of communication. They came to the office about nine o’clock. It was about 9:20 when they left.

I tried to get President Friday, but the line was busy. I turned my attention to some other matters, and was interrupted by a telephone call from a television reporter asking if it were true that the administration had made concessions on six of the ten demands of the black students at the Friday meeting. I told him it was not true, and asked him where he got his information. He refused to tell me, and I refused to comment further.
on the matter to him. I then confronted Mr. Reddy with the fact that his group had broken the faith twice: first, by bringing an outsider to the meeting after agreeing to come without any outsider; second, by giving false information to a reporter. He denied any knowledge of the news leak, and claimed that someone else must have done it. Later, by the way, the reporter who called came by and told me flatly that he had not gotten his information from a black or white student—an obvious reference to faculty members. Still later, other reporters, not realizing what they were doing, told me just as flatly that this reporter did get his information from a student. The reporter who called me was Bob Nicholas from WSOC. The reporters who told me later that Bob got his information from a student were Ed Cody and Monty Zepeda from the Charlotte Observer.

After I had told Mr. Reddy about this story, and he had made his denial, I informed him that I was not at that time willing to write anything, that I was willing to do what I had said I would do in helping to clarify and strengthen some of these programs for all students, not just black. I told him that I felt that the administration had acted in and had demonstrated good faith, and that the black students had violated good faith at least twice.

It was, by this time, well after ten o'clock. At about 10:30, a placard went up in the Union announcing a speech by Brother Nundeen (?). It later developed that this name is an alias for Harold Avent, a leader of the black militant movement from out of town. My information is that he is from New York. We were beginning to get steady information from the campus that there would be an infiltration, a period of speaking, and then an effort to take over one of the buildings. Most frequently mentioned was the administration building. We also heard that the students who took over intended to wait until the law had been read them and then to disperse quietly.

At 10:45, Agent L. M. Harton of the SBI arrived and stayed with us throughout the day. At about noon, there was a noticeable influx of outsiders and the tension began to rise. I talked with Miss Cone, Dean MacKay, Mr. Batchelor, and Mr. Ballard so that we would be clear on our procedures. Each of us agreed to carry a copy of G.S. 14-132.1, and we agreed not to get trapped in the same building.

I asked Miss Cone to go to the student editor's office where there is an outside line not dependent on our switchboard. From that line she was to call me every fifteen minutes. In the event that she could not reach me, she was to call President Friday, and tell him that we had been taken over. She took up her post just before 2:00. In the meantime, we had learned that the speaking was supposed to begin at 2:15.
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Several telephone calls had been made to President Friday to keep him advised and to make it possible for him to keep the Governor's office advised. We had also advised Captain Wall of the County Police Department and the highway patrol, though it was perfectly understood that the highway patrol would move only on orders from Raleigh. We had also cleared with Captain Wall that as long as he was the only police force on the campus, he would be the ranking authority in consultation with administration, and that if the state highway patrol came in, Sergeant Lyerly would become the ranking officer automatically.

It was now about 12:15.

At 1:30, the black students placed signs on the wall of the administration building—"Colvard has Blackitis," "Scott is a Pig," and others. A tape recorder was placed in front of the building. These placards were, of course, unauthorized; and Miss Donna Railey read to the black students a Student Legislature regulation and explained to them that they were in violation. They refused to remove the placards. Miss Railey then requested the administration to remove the placards. In conference with Vice President Lewis and President Friday, it was decided that this had to remain a Student Legislature matter and that the administration would not remove the placards.

At 1:45, Captain Wall from the County Police Department arrived. He brought with him a walkie-talkie which was placed in my office so that communications could be constant. He also brought several of his men and held them just off campus. They came in only when the crowd began to grow in size. They came in then with real restraint, and should be commended.

At approximately 2:00, blacks and whites gathered in front of the administration building, the crowd now numbering well over 100. It grew to about 200 within the next two hours before it dispersed. Ben Chavis read the ten demands two times, and the black power sign was given on each demand. The Stokely Carmichael lecture was played on the tape recorder. Then the American flag and the North Carolina flag were taken down from the flagpole, and a black flag was raised. The black students claim that they really meant to raise the American flag on top, the state flag next, and the black flag on the bottom. However, a white student took the American flag and carried it into the administration building. The North Carolina flag was left at the bottom of the flagpole draped over the pulley arrangement by which the flags are raised and lowered. One of our security officers went out and got the North Carolina flag and brought it inside.
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At this point, the tension was at its highest. We had considerable discussion with Mr. Lewis and President Friday about whether there was a violation here that the officers could move on. It was the opinion of Mr. Harton of the SBI that the flag had not been desecrated, and it was the opinion of both Captain Wall and of our own security officers that there was danger of precipitating a riot if we moved in. We attempted to instead, and were successful, to persuade the white students not to start a fight.

The talk went on for about an hour. At that point, our white students reached the decision that they would not dignify this proceeding further; and, almost as if on signal, they walked away. The black students who were left looked silly, and almost immediately began to break up.

When all danger of violence seemed over, I asked our security officers to check the lower floor of the administration building and the lobby of the Union to be certain that no inflammatory materials of a dangerous nature had been left behind by the infiltrators. I stayed at the University for a meeting that lasted until nearly 8:00. All was quiet, and has been to this writing on the next day.

WHM:pg

cc: Chancellor Colvard