

## Module 09: The 1960s: Who Won? Student Protest and the Politics of Campus Dissent

### Evidence 7: "The right to speak, the power to punish," April 1970

# A

#### Introduction

The editorial below from *The Collegiate Times*, written in response to antiwar activists' disruption of the Corps of Cadets' public drill the day before, presents a different perspective on campus protests than those expressed by student radicals. A large number of VPI students, including student leaders who later advocated a "hard" student strike and who unsuccessfully tried to call off the Drillfield demonstration, shared the sentiments expressed below.

#### Questions to Consider

- Where did students such as this editorial writer stand on the war in Vietnam and the presence of military institutions on campus?
- What did such students think of the "hippie" protesters in their midst?
- What kind of political climate did the writer advocate?

#### Document

The right to speak, the power to punish

As we look back on the occurrences of the past week, we see many incidents that have left their mark on this campus. Most of them we do not like.

All sides in these issues were guilty of mistakes, so we cannot endorse the overall actions of any group. We do wish to cite several incidents that took place during the week and evaluate the handling by those concerned.

When the corps of cadets were disrupted during their Tuesday drill, a clear case of depriving the rights to participate in a scheduled function existed. Physically preventing the corps activity was an abuse of the rights that the demonstrators pleaded.

We do not agree with the existence of the corps on this campus, and we do not approve of the American military system that it symbolizes. We do, however, recognize the rights of those individuals in the corps to take part in the drills without being physically hampered in doing so.

People who scream for their own rights while they deprive others of theirs are dictators. As we defended [student] Toby Cole's right to display the American flag as he saw fit [on the seat of his pants], we also defend the right of others to parade with a flag across the drillfield. As we defend the rights of those who have long hair and rags for clothes, we also defend the right for cadets to have their heads shaved and wear the uniform of the corps. . . .

Source:

"The right to speak, the power to punish," *The Collegiate Times* (15 Apr 1970), 3.