

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

Evidence 20: Jerry W. Lusk, Letter to the Editor, May 1970

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Introduction

In the midst of the furor over the Williams Hall takeover and the debate between students over the pros and cons of antiwar protest, the letter to the editor reproduced below appeared in *The Collegiate Times*.

Questions to Consider

- Why is the author so upset?
- Why did the student editors of the campus paper consider such an issue important enough to feature alongside lengthy and emotional letters concerning the ongoing campus unrest?
- What does the letter suggest about the importance of personal issues as well as political concerns to college students at the time?

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Editor, Collegiate Times:

I am usually a very easy person to get along with, ask anyone who knows me and they will attest to that fact. However, there are certain things that I just don't go along with, and I feel that I must speak out at this time on a certain matter which concerns every student at Tech who has ever set foot inside the Squires [student center] Snack Bar. The issue at point is the policy that "Food may not be removed from the snack bar."

On the night of April 23rd, after three hot hours of helping to broadcast the President's Quarterly Meeting over WUVT [student radio station], I stopped in the snack bar to quench a great thirst with just a simple Coke. In addition, I had a very important phone call to make, so, after purchasing the Coke, I left the snack bar by the door nearest the Information Desk and started across the lobby to get to the telephones. At this point, after only one swallow of my Coke, I was verbally challenged by the girl at the Information Desk and asked where I was going, I replied, "to the phone

lobby." She then replied in a very haughty tone of voice that I could not take the Coke with me. I replied that she had to be kidding, the sign in the snack bar said "Food" could not be removed, not food and beverages. She then said that "Food" included my Coke, and that if I wanted to drink it, I would have to do it in the snack bar. At this point in the conversation, dying of thirst and in a hurry to make my call, I became extremely angry. Rather than embarrass the girl by telling her what I thought she should do with the Coke, I stepped back into the snack bar, left my Coke on the nearest table, and then went to make my call without my Coke. The point I wish to make is this. If the officials at Squires will now allow "Food" (by their definition) to be removed from the snack bar or consumed anywhere else but in the snack bar, why then do they have both drink and candy machines spread throughout the building? If they do not wish to have crumbs, spills, etc. all over the place, why then do they directly contradict themselves by maintaining "food" machines in the building at other places than in the snack bar?? Hypocrisy is one thing that I just cannot abide, and if the officials of Squires are not hypocrites in this case, I wish they would tell me exactly what they think they are. I can really see no difference between a Coke in a can or the same drink in a paper cup. If they allow canned drinks throughout the building, then they should not get all bent out of shape if a student wishes to take a drink in a paper cup to a location outside the snack bar, If the officials are going to have such a policy as 'Food cannot be removed from the snack bar,' then they should be prepared to completely define their meaning of "food." A complete list of all items which cannot be taken out of the snack bar should be prepared and posted in the snack bar for the convenience of all patrons. Any item which can be purchased in one of their machines should not be included on such a list, not should any student be reprimanded like a child for attempting to take any such item out of the snack bar. In this manner, further confrontations between myself and the girl at the Information Desk could be happily avoided!

In the future, I hope that the management of Squires will attempt more to serve the students of Va. Tech rather than restrict their every movement when they are on the premises.

Jerry W. Lusk

Source: Jerry W. Lusk, Letter to the Editor, *The Collegiate Times* (15 May 1970), 2.