

# Berkeley: What Hath Reagan Wrought?

California's bruising political war with the campus is over, and the great university at Berkeley is clearly the loser.

by Roger M. Williams

*Berkeley, California*

**T**he University of California's war with Ronald Reagan has ended. Reagan has spiked his heavy cannon, and the university is regrouping behind its walls. It is impossible to assess precisely, amid the debris and the verbiage, the extent of the damage. But the clear loser is the university's preeminent campus, Berkeley. Its growth has been stunted, its image tarnished, and its spirit—the intangible self-assurance and optimism that pervade great institutions—severely dampened.

This is a situation shared by much of the rest of California, as it comes down off the high it created for itself in the decade of the fanciful "westward tilt" toward national leadership. But Berkeley's experience is more painful, because its leadership was neither wishful nor rhetorical. It was real. Berkeley was the finest public institution of higher education in the United States; it was arguably *the* finest, public or private. Berkeley's experience is more painful, too, because it didn't fall from the heights. It was knocked from them, largely by the onslaughts of Ronald Reagan and his followers.

Berkeley now sits in what its chancellor demurely calls a "steady state," which means in effect that: (1) it will not be whipped again if it behaves politically, and (2) its expansions and innovations—hallmarks of a great university—will have to come at the expense of existing programs. No less a Berkeley partisan than Clark Kerr, whose efforts in its defense cost him the University of California presidency, sees a negative impact of the Reagan years that reaches far beyond the state borders. "UC was moving forward very rapidly," says Kerr, "with new campuses, with Berkeley rated ahead of Harvard overall [by the American Council of Education in 1970], with the Berkeley and UCLA libraries ranked numbers two and four nationally. That forward motion was stopped dead in its

tracks, and California's leadership in public education stopped with it. That kind of leadership has to come from somewhere. The New York university system is still giving some. So are Florida and Illinois. But not California."

According to many observers, the decline that Kerr notes was inevitable. Some say that even without Reagan it would have started when it did and that it would have proceeded as quickly. In the late 1960s state governments were feeling a tight financial squeeze, and the public as well as its legislators had become convinced that their universities had been getting too fat for too long (an assessment that many inside the universities agree with). But the impact of Reaganism alone on the University of California should not be underestimated. On both the economic and political fronts, Reagan fired the first telling shots, well ahead of national trends.

Further, Reagan acted as an ideological, almost vindictive, crusader against the university. To be sure, California had severe fiscal problems when Reagan took office, and substantial cuts in university appropriations might well have been necessary. They could have been made regretfully or at least sympathetically. Instead, Reagan made the cuts—then and for the next few years—with the gusto of an old saloon buster, dragging in Americanism and the grosser forms of anti-intellectualism to justify what he was doing. While there doubtless was political opportunism in his actions, there was pure Reagan in them as well. "He has a sheer lack of respect for higher education," says a member of the state board of regents. "I think he really despises anything other than the kind of little college that he himself attended [Eureka, in Illinois]."

Reagan alone could not have grievously wounded the university. That took outside help, and there was plenty of it. Starting with the (in retrospect) extremely mild free-speech movement, California student radicals escalated their



Wide World

*In 1967, while battling with UC, Governor*

demands on, and insults to, the traditional university system, thereby alienating and frightening the taxpaying public—and a large segment of the faculty as well. Activist faculty members chipped in, threatening at one point (after the 1970 invasion of Cambodia) to "reconstitute" the Berkeley campus as a flat-out political force. A survey conducted in mid-1970 found 70 percent of Californians wanting the public to have a stronger hand in running higher education and more than half wanting to fire professors who opposed official policy.

Reagan's educational policies were aided by the striking slowdown in California's growth rate. While that was alarming to the state's chauvinists, it provided perfect justification for cutting expenditures for education: Shortfalls in tax revenues were expected, and not so many California kids would have to be educated after all. Reagan benefited, too, from the reluctance of prominent, politically influential Californians to defend the state's universities against his attacks.

This aggregation of fiscal demands, student excesses, ideological crusading, and public animosity was unloaded principally on Berkeley, which had consistently been the most radical campus in California and probably in the nation. Actually, student radicalism focused on Berkeley a hostility that had been building around the state. In the postwar years, Berkeley was California's most notable public university, and the state was proud of it. Californians knew that their sons and daughters could go there and get a good education, and practically



*Reagan addressed 3000 protesting students.*

every town in the state was run by lawyers and bankers and whatnot who had done that. Then the state began to grow rapidly. Clark Kerr launched his "multiversity," a three-layered, educator's dream of junior colleges, colleges, and universities, with Berkeley installed regally at the top. Berkeley became an elite institution—shunting aside all those reasonably able students who'd been admitted in the past. It became a place to which the poor sent the rich, or "advantaged," and whatever sense that made educationally, it could not for long make sense politically.

All this has brought Berkeley to its present diminished condition. One must carefully point out that the diminution is relative—to what the institution was and what it was intended to be—and that at this point Berkeley remains one of America's finest universities. Nonetheless, cracks have appeared in the solid structure that was pre-Reagan Berkeley. Some of the cracks are easily spotted; most are not. Each of them portends a significant weakening in any university that wants to be judged great. The most visible of the cracks is the library, where Chancellor Albert H. Bowker, a resolute optimist, has described the situation as "desperate." Under Reagan's relentless budget cutting, the library's rate of acquisitions has dropped below that of the state universities of Georgia and Colorado, schools that by Berkeley's major-league standards are Double A-league at best. The library's strength is in periodicals, which claim 55 percent of its budget; a substantial number of periodical subscriptions has been dropped, and

the prospect is for more of the same. Reagan can hardly be expected to see the importance of the problem. It was he who suggested, in the first years of the library's financial straits, that it raise money by selling its rare-book collection; after all, who was reading rare books?

The university administration cites building maintenance as a critical concern. In fact, the buildings are more run-down these days—some are not earthquake-proof—but there are more important measurements of Berkeley's condition. The summer quarter has been dropped for lack of funds. One hundred ten full-time faculty positions have been lost, and dollar-conscious administrators are trying to "lose" others. Student-activated experimental courses have been reduced to an insignificant few, the result primarily of political pressures to which administration and faculty capitulated. Experimentation of this kind died at Berkeley in 1968, when students tried to institute a course in racism with black nationalist Eldridge Cleaver as lecturer. Reagan and the regents squalled, and Charles J. Hitch, university president, "compromised" by letting Cleaver speak just one time; Hitch also refused to give academic credit for the course, although its intellectual value was the equal of many in the Berkeley catalog.

What else has Berkeley demonstrably lost? A number of departments, victims of reordered priorities in a tight-budget situation. The Department of Demography has been phased out, and the design department is suffering the same fate. The agricultural sciences have been cut down and reorganized. The School of Criminology is awaiting execution. This type of loss is not necessarily damaging; it can be considered a healthy and necessary reorganization. Many at Berkeley take that view, not only about the demise of departments but also about the broader strictures on the university. Chancellor Bowker, citing Francis Bacon, told the regents last fall that adversity might even be less hard to endure than prosperity and that "the serious financial constraints placed on Berkeley . . . have done us some good."

Certainly Berkeley has not lost students, actual or prospective. Its enrollment of thirty thousand is well over its planned ceiling, and as Bowker notes, "the demand for admission has continued unabated." At the Law School there are more than ten applicants for each opening. It and Berkeley's other graduate schools draw a disproportionate number

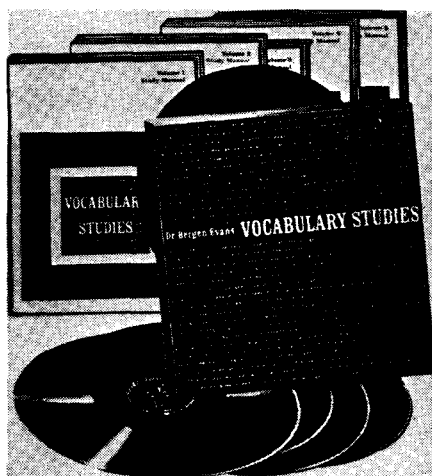
of out-of-state applications, and excellence is not the only reason; out-of-state law students pay \$1500 in tuition their first year—comparable eastern schools cost twice as much—and only \$750 for each of their next two years, when they qualify as California residents.

On the surface, Berkeley's faculty has not noticeably declined in quality. During the worst years of the Reagan-radicals' excesses, several highly esteemed Berkeley professors departed for more tolerable campuses. Resignations of non-tenured faculty climbed to 15 percent in 1969–70 but quickly subsided. Resignations of tenured people never got above the 2.5 percent they had reached in 1965–66, when "free speech" was filling the air outside the student union, and for the last couple of years they have been at their lowest point ever. Whether good faculty have stayed away from Berkeley is much harder to assess, but certainly they have not done so in large numbers.

Yet, there are worrisome signs. Numerous departments can cite recent cases of top men leaving or declining to come to Berkeley. Phillip Damon, one of the nation's leading scholars in comparative literature, is resigning to take a post at Stanford next year, and Berkeley's constricted budget—in this case, too few teachers for too many students—is known to be a major reason. "It's not a salary problem," says a colleague of Damon. "He wants support for the comp-lit program, and he can't get it." Before criminology was threatened with extinction at Berkeley, the school tried hard to recruit University of Pennsylvania sociologist Marvin Wolfgang, an outstanding man in the field. Wolfgang had often expressed interest in Berkeley, but on close examination he found the university unable to commit the kinds of resources he believed necessary to carry on a first-rate program.

"No really top man is going to take a job that promises the status quo or less," says Dr. Bernard Diamond, a longtime professor in the Criminology School. "He wants something challenging, something he can build on." Further, says Diamond, he usually wants "academic fringe benefits": lab space, a good equipment budget, the opportunity to bring junior associates with him. The steady-state institution cannot offer these things to many people, and Diamond believes the faculty is sure to suffer as a result. "In past years," he says, a bit wistfully, "an invitation to come to Berkeley was kind of a command performance, superseded only





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by one to Harvard, and not always then."

The chief threat to the Berkeley faculty, however, lies not in the loss of individuals but of positions. Professor Damon's colleague fears that Damon will not be replaced, and the dean of humanities admits that the two departments for which he worked will have to fight for a replacement; they will have to "list that as a top priority," the dean puts it delicately. Some faculty members foresee more subtle damage resulting from the pressure to reduce the number of faculty positions: a reluctance by departments to push out subpar people, for fear of not being allowed to replace them.

Berkeley's problems are more tangible and more acute in the program area, particularly in the physical sciences. Both the physics and geology-geophysics departments are suffering serious shortages of laboratory equipment. "Our equipment for teaching is either obsolete or worn out," says Ian Carmichael, chairman of geology and geophysics. "Since we have a hard time replacing it with anything new, we're turning out people who may be as well trained as they would've been ten years ago." Eugene Commins, chairman of physics, describes his lab operations as "shoestring" and says, "Another couple of years like this and we'll be in dire straits." Commins also reports a marked slowdown in the number of foreign students studying in his department: "It was about 750 five years ago, is 350 now, and in two or three years it will probably be zero." The vast majority of foreign students need waivers of tuition to be able to come, and those are in increasingly short supply.

Physical scientists here consider their departments a national resource, not a collection of teachers and equipment in the service of California alone, and their attitude is understandable. It goes to the heart of the question of what a great university is all about. Reaganism—the man himself is hardly alone in this—insists that the University of California exists to serve the state and its people; this attitude also is understandable, but it leaves little room for long-range, time-consuming research, in the physical sciences or elsewhere.

Although the chancellor's last report to the regents talks cheerfully about "program initiatives," a wide range of faculty opinion holds that new programs at Berkeley are now very difficult to institute. The reason is simple: In a steady state, where growth is minimal, new programming becomes primarily a matter of

university politics, with decisions being made on the basis of, Whose hide do we take this out of? The only alternative is outside funding, and these days that is hard to find. Departments as disparate as English and health sciences are feeling the effects. Charles Muscatine, a professor of English, calls the situation "unbelievably bad." Experimental programs that do get started must soon be accepted as regular budget items, and there, too, they come up against the inertia of steady state.

A case in point is a "medical school without walls" initiated two years ago. (Berkeley is one of the few large universities without a standard medical school.) The program instructs a dozen students in the fundamentals of health care, deemphasizing gadgets and specialization. Its modest cost has been borne by a foundation thus far. The university will have to take over the program in another year, and Dr. Diamond, one of its champions, is pessimistic about the prospects for that. "It will probably wither," Diamond says. "Not because of its quality or the need for it, but because everybody here is fearful of new ventures." Chancellor Bowker terms the restrictions on new programs "just a fact of life" in American higher education. "In the Fifties and Sixties," he says, "if you made a mistake, if you put in a program that wasn't first class, you could let it sit and get rid of it with growth. You can't do that any longer."

Berkeley finds comfort in the fact that other universities are facing many of these same problems and that Berkeley's diminished condition can be seen in relation to the generally weakened state of higher education. While that is true, it seems reasonable to judge Berkeley on its own merits, because it has been America's premier institution and because it has come under unique political pressures. One must think back to the segregationist South—perhaps as far back as Gene Talmadge's early-1940s vendetta against the University of Georgia—to recall a governor who has treated his state university as Ronald Reagan has. "Our morale and image have taken one hell of a beating," says Professor Sanford Kadish of the Berkeley Law School, "and in that you can certainly single out Reagan—for a reckless undermining of public confidence in the value of higher education in general, and in UC and Berkeley in particular. It's frightened some of us. It's made us look for ways to tell the public that we're doing important

things, that we're performing social tasks with immediate payoffs."

Observers of California politics agree that Berkeley as a political issue is dead. It died with student radicalism and the resultant softening of public opinion toward the university. The defeat in 1970 of Max Rafferty, the arch-conservative state superintendent of public instruction, is regarded as the clearest sign of changing times. Governor Reagan seldom denounces the university nowadays; indeed, he attends only one-third of the regents' meetings, which he used as forums for his bombast during the late Sixties.

Anti-Reagan sentiment at Berkeley appears to have settled into a quiet, ongoing animosity. Gone are the lively days when students struck back with fiery speeches and mocking posters. Reagan, obviously fearing student reaction, has not made a public appearance on the Berkeley campus during his seven years as governor. His last private appearance there, to attend a regents' meeting, was marked by his flashing a finger—grinning all the while—at a group of students. The *Daily Californian* ran a photo of governor and finger on page one, noting that the gesture came from a man who had been morally outraged by the free-speech movement. In a more mature effort to counteract Reaganism, Berkeley students now operate a lobbying office in Sacramento. Most students think Reagan has "really decimated" the university, according to Steve Ross, an editor of the *Daily Californian*, who adds, "We're not getting as good an education here now, not in terms of what the state can provide."

Behind the present quiet political facade are a number of important and potentially disruptive issues. One is Reagan's long-standing demand that university professors spend more time in the classrooms. He has a formula worked out for each level of the California system. Chancellor Bowker, anxious to avoid political management in such a sensitive area, has established standards of his own to assure that Berkeley's teachers do more teaching. Another, currently livelier, issue is tuition. Reagan wants students to pay a larger portion of the cost of their education. In recent years the administration has instituted and substantially raised tuition, but Reagan considers it still far too low. The university budget remains an ongoing issue, with Reagan routinely reducing budget requests put forward by the university system. (Berkeley's budgets have fared considerably worse than those for

UC as a whole. During the decade ending 1972-73, Berkeley's share of state funds rose from \$45 million to \$80 million, which, according to university officials, has meant an actual reduction in purchasing power.) In last November's election, Berkeleyites worked successfully to help defeat Reagan's controversial Proposition One, which would have set limits on the state's tax rates. They saw in the proposition an attempt to impose future binding restrictions on state support of the university.

California's board of regents, which reflects the polar ideological divisions in the state, is no longer the antagonist of the university that it was in the early Reagan years. Despite Reagan's having appointed or controlled one-third of its membership, the board has increasingly sided with UC in the ongoing struggles against Reaganism. Moderation is now the guiding philosophy of the board.

With the board back where it should be, on the university's side, UC administrators can pay more attention to an increasingly important political force—California's large and now aggressive


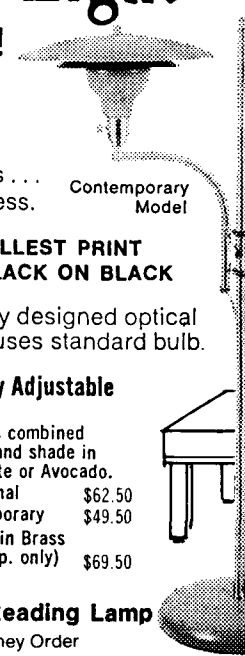
minority groups. These groups are well represented in the state legislature, and they have no ties to and little sympathy with "elitist" institutions like Berkeley, which, deliberately or not, have operated as bastions of the white middle class.

Between 1968 and 1972, Berkeley more than doubled its percentages of black and Chicano students and increased the percentage of Asian-American students from 9.3 to 11.7. Willie Brown, an influential black assemblyman, says that is inadequate. Brown seeks an open-admissions policy. Citing UC's disproportionate claim on the state's higher-education resources, he also seeks to have minority and low-income students share the benefits of the disproportion. (These measures are anathema to the governor, who believes that academically unqualified students should start at lower levels of the system and, if they can, work their way up to the universities.)

Some political observers give UC generally low marks for its political maneuvering in Sacramento. An aide to a powerful state senator remarked not

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long ago that the university system's full-time capital lobbyist "doesn't know anything except what kind of drink to serve you when they give a party." Lewis Butler, a politically well-connected San Francisco attorney, says: "The university's future depends a good deal on whether it has somebody who can explain and justify its activities to the people—and particularly to the legislature. After all, the state has a legitimate interest in what the university is doing and producing." Neither President Hitch nor Chancellor Bowker fills the role of public salesman for UC; Bowker had a reputation for shrewd political dealing in his last post, chancellor at CUNY, but he seems to have left that skill in New York. "Maybe Charlie Hitch can't actually sit down and negotiate with Willie Brown," says Lewis Butler, "but Brown at least has to feel that the university people respect him."

Berkeley and UCLA together are involved in another quasi-political struggle, over the distribution of funds among the two dozen fiercely competing universities in the California system. The newer universities in the system are ambitious and often dissatisfied with the educational functions allotted them under the state's master plan. A number of them want more graduate schools, the right to grant Ph.D.s, and ever-larger shares of the higher-education budget. Berkeley and UCLA of course have been resisting this. They lost an important round a couple of years ago, when nineteen state colleges won the right to call themselves universities. That change had Governor Reagan's approval. But the governor now seems reluctant to continue building up these institutions, some of which have been suffering declining enrollments.

Reagan, who has aching presidential aspirations, has declared that he will not run for a third term as governor this year. If he does not, there are at least a half-dozen Republicans and an equal number of Democrats eager for the job. With the exception of Lt. Gov. Ed Reinecke and Atty. Gen. Evelle Younger, all of the leading contenders appear more friendly toward the university than Reagan has been. No matter who succeeds Reagan, however, not even the most optimistic official at Berkeley predicts a return of the sky-high budget days. For Berkeley, as for most public universities, the steady state is unavoidable for the foreseeable future. Whether that will permit greatness as Berkeley has known it in the past depends on who is defining greatness and against what standards. □

## Don't Politicize the University

by Sidney Hook

Every teacher who takes his vocation seriously must be intellectually concerned about the social conditions that bear upon his activity and that support or frustrate his educational goals. This is what I mean by his sense of mission. If he cares enough about his students, his subject matter, and the effectiveness of his teaching, he must care about *more* than them alone. But in pursuit of that mission, he must not mistake the classroom for the barricades and seek to politicize the university for a cause that as a citizen in his private capacity he is perfectly free to pursue.

The effort to politicize schools and universities from within is foolish for many reasons today, the most obvious being its counterproductive character. For nothing is more likely to bring about the politicization of the university from *without*, and from a perspective extremely uncongenial to that of the new progressive critics of education. In combating this internal politicization one of the most formidable problems is coping with the teacher, no matter what his discipline, who, encouraged by some of the prophets and seers of the new educational and social order of the future, regards his class as a staging ground for revolutionizing society or for disrupting the local community if its norms of social morality fall short of his own notions of the good society. In pursuit of a political commitment, he is often led to abandon elementary principles of professional ethics and sometimes to deny, in an apology for his political mission, that any distinction can be drawn between objective teaching and indoctrination.

The following passage is not the most extreme pronouncement of this point of view. It can be matched by others. It acquires a certain piquancy because it appears in a publication of Teachers College (*Perspectives in Education*, Fall 1969) where John Dewey formulated the principles of education for a free

*Sidney Hook retired from New York University in 1972, after forty-five years of university teaching. This article is from his new book, Education & the Taming of Power, published this month by Open Court.*

society. So far as I know it has not brought any critical response. Says the writer:

It is the task of the teacher to educate—to educate for change—to educate through change. To educate for orderly planned revolution. If necessary, to educate through more disruptive revolutionary action.

John Dewey would have been the first to repudiate this travesty of the role of a teacher in a free society. The task of the teacher is to educate students to their maximum growth as perceptive, informed, and reflective persons so that they can decide intelligently for themselves *what* is to be changed, *where*, and *how*. It is not the teacher's function to indoctrinate his students in behalf of any cause no matter how holy, to brainwash them into becoming partisans of revolution or counterrevolution, or even to prod them to take the stance of radicals or standpatters. To declare as this teacher does—and unfortunately he is not alone—that students are to be educated for and through "disruptive revolutionary action" is to declare oneself morally and pedagogically unfit to inhabit the academy of reasoning and reasonable persons.

It is false to assert, as is commonly done, that the American school system today, especially in our major cities, incorporates the ideals of Dewey's educational philosophy. It is also false to claim that its radical critics today are justified in invoking his ideals for their distinctive proposals.

John Dewey's philosophy has still a great deal to teach us. But it is not the first nor the last word on our problems. To his words of wisdom we must add our own, for we face conditions and challenges that either did not exist or were not so acute in his day. □

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