

Unwarranted and irresponsible

The arrangements for the Black Ball/Black Awareness Week Ball which involved both the Student Activities Board and the Student Association for Black Unity have shown both these parties at their worst, although for different reasons. When we speak of the SAB and SABU we refer exclusively to the members of the SAB who have been involved, i.e., John Killpack and David Mathews, and those four or five Blacks who as members of SABU have been the leading force on the other side of the conflict.

The four or five members of SABU directly participating in the drama have been guilty of failing to communicate fairly and frankly with the Student Activities Board and their manner has bordered on arrogance. The SAB leaders, on the other hand, capitulated too readily to pressure from a special interest group and in doing so failed to represent and serve the majority of the student body to whom they are primarily responsible.

Before offering our comments on the circumstances which led up to Black Culture Week, a brief recounting of the Byzantine court intrigue, hopefully as factual an account as is possible, would be in order.

Last year the Student Activities Board, in this case the entire board, responded positively to a request from the leaders of SABU to help fund a concert during Black Awareness Week. The SAB promised \$2000 for a concert if SABU could match its contribution. Earlier this academic year it became apparent that SABU could not come up with its share. Previously, members of SABU had failed repeatedly to attend meetings of the SAB to communicate to that body about preparations for the joint venture.

In December when it appeared that Black Awareness Week might not be all that it had been promised to be, a group of freshmen made its complaints to Washington Hall authorities. These blacks felt that they had in some sense been cheated when they joined SABU with expectations that could not now be met. The administration then became somewhat involved in that it brought together the SAB and the SABU to work out another program suitable to both parties.

The members of SABU insisted that SAB provide them with funds for the Black Ball and that the negotiations be held during final examinations in December. This, although inconvenient for the men from the SAB, took place. The SAB finally promised to make \$400 available and wanted to co-sponsor a gala called a Black Awareness Week Ball which would be free and open to all students, provide beer and be informal. SABU insisted that the Ball be formal and with no beer served, agreeing to the other conditions, and the SAB capitulated.

Last week the **Ring-tum Phi** printed an invitation to the activities of Black Awareness Week from its coordinator, John X. Miller. The invitation from SABU referred to the **Black Ball**, adding that it was formal and by invitation only—the invitations being available to any student of W&L who cared to pick one up in SABU's office. No mention was made of the SAB's co-sponsorship.

In reaction to this invitation the SAB made and distributed posters advertising the **Black Awareness Week Ball** and did not mention the required invitations to be picked up. As a result four members of SABU visited the member of the SAB responsible for the new posters and accused him of undermining their Ball. In response to the intimidating visit the posters were withdrawn and new ones were made mentioning the invitation requirement. At this point the invitations are available in the Student Center at the information office.

The members of SABU active in this affair earlier refused to discuss their plans and problems with SAB and finally worked through the administration. After an agreement had been supposedly finalized SABU failed to honor its commitment to the SAB to advertise the Ball as a joint venture and as the Black Awareness Week Ball which does sound a good deal less clannish than "Black Ball." The active members of SABU failed to deal openly with the SAB and last week paid an unwarranted group visit to a member of the SAB in order that they might get their way.

The Student Activities Board apparently felt compelled to help finance the Ball when negotiations were set up by the administration but it should not have committed funds from the Student Body tax to an event which is obviously designed with the interest of a minority of the students in mind. Although the affair is open to all, one can hardly deny that it is tailor made to meet the interests of only a small group within the community. The SAB should allot its funds to functions which will serve the greatest number of students.

Theoretically the Ball is open to all, but most of those people involved in the intrigue would admit that the attendance will not be truly representative of the people who paid for the event, the majority of students here. Neither the SAB nor the Executive Committee should design its actions to cater to special interests groups within the community.

As it now stands it would only be fair for the Jewish or Catholic members of the student body to address the SAB and demand funding for a Jewish or Catholic Ball. They could invite all the students but everyone would fully realize that the program was designed to meet the wants and needs of a small group rather than to serve the greatest number of people.

The result of all this is that the Student Activities Board has not done its job in this instance and has established a dangerous precedent, SABU, on the other hand, has confused the issue and refused to work within the framework of existing student organizations. Both have thus hurt themselves and the rest of us and we think that the student body deserved a better showing from them.

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