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## [Speech by Esther Raushenbush at all-college meeting, March 11, 1969]

Esther Raushenbush  
*Sarah Lawrence College*

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Remarks by President Raushenbush  
at All-College meeting  
Tuesday, March 11, 1969

Let me say to all of you something about practical matters about the College that many students are concerned with, and that the document from Westlands dealt with, which all of you have read. And my response is to you all. It is not an answer because some of the things in the document can't be answered intelligently quickly or even responded to quickly. But you are concerned about them, and I want to say what I can, mainly to give some facts about how things are, and what we have done. I know you all have a fact sheet about things the students, faculty, and administration have been doing about problems and issues that have been the subject of debate and discussion--and I can clarify a few.

1. One has to do with students from low income families. I want to say that 30% of our students are now on scholarship and that the average family income of those students is in between \$7,000 and \$8,000. In most colleges like ours the average income is between \$9,000 and \$11,000--that is because we give larger scholarships. We now think it will be possible to get funding for an additional 5% of our entering class from families that have under \$3,500 in income. Some of these may be our Upward Bound students. And increasing scholarship funds has high priority.
2. We have made arrangements for the participation of black faculty and black students on admissions; and have recommended to the new Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid Policy to consider how we can give proper help to high-risk students, black or white, whom we should admit because it might be important to educate them here. This is one of the things the Westlands document spoke to. Along with this we will develop other criteria than the Princeton Plan for such students.
3. The document also spoke of abolishing confidential reports. We have done this, and no confidential reports are now written, in our reporting system.
4. About abolishing grades or ratings altogether: I have written about 20 graduate schools to find out if they would accept written evaluations instead of grades. Only one said they would. If we are to implement this idea, we will have to work with graduate schools who, at this point, say definitely it would jeopardize our students if we sent no ratings.
5. It is publicly known that we are coeducational--all the publicity we get acknowledges this--but we need to do more publicizing about recruiting men. We will take this fall as many qualified men as apply to us; we are keeping our lists open, and we are making provisions for recruitment.

There are other, far-reaching matters in the document, but we have now begun to have good machinery for dealing with them, and with others.

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I have to say to all of you that we cannot rescind the tuition increase for the coming year. I have told you how several of our alumnae trustees have given extra money, as a sign of confidence in all that the students have done the past weeks in the interest of the College, so that increase in tuition was reduced \$100. I have told you the Board of Trustees have allocated funds so that no student here for whom the tuition increase creates a hardship will suffer from it. More we cannot do now. I hope deeply, as does the Board, the faculty, the rest of the administration, and our friends, that the plans for reorganizing the College that should be swiftly under way now, will halt this unhappy rise.

About Westlands itself I want to say nothing about how I feel at this time, but only some things you need to know. There are nearly a hundred application folders of black students that we have not been able to read--and time is flying. No transcripts or letters of recommendation to graduate schools have been sent--and time is flying. We have already had some cancellations of capital gifts--the very money that is needed for the things students want--and time for getting the money is flying too.

This has been the most difficult week in the life of the College, not because Westlands has been closed and the people who work there could not work there but because the heart and core of the College--the chance to communicate freely--was interrupted in its function. I am glad you are here now, and that we are in the same room, because maybe now, all the depth of trouble which was not caused by the Westlands sit-in, but which was manifested by it, can now begin to be reached. It must be reached. We must not have a divided College, because the special nature of this College is such that if it is deeply divided it cannot live. Everybody, those who are or have been in Westlands, the others who have been concerned with the same problems, but have been working on them outside Westlands, the black students, and the faculty and the rest of us, must work at the cleavages and heal them. I deeply hope this can begin today.

I call on all of you to support the efforts that are being made to make this possible. I have tried to respond to the Westlands document on the matters I can make immediate response to. I hope the students who have been in Westlands are here. In the past week many students and all the faculty have been working at the problems that have been so sharply stated. I hope the students in Westlands will come out and join in this effort--the only effort that can recreate the College.

I have two documents to read you--one from a group of students and one from the faculty:

#### TO THE SARAH LAWRENCE COMMUNITY

At its meeting on March 10 the teaching faculty adopted the enclosed statement. The teaching faculty has recommended to the President that this proposal be accepted by the Administration. We have asked Mrs. Raushenbush to declare a moratorium until March 23 on decision-making on the issues raised in the current controversy.

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Having received these assurances, we are informing the College community of the position and action we have taken. We are asking the teaching faculty to convene on March 11 at 9:00 a.m. in order to elect its representatives to the Task Force and to begin discussion that will establish the Faculty's positions for the information and guidance of its representatives.

In the light of these events, we invite all students to join with us in taking those decisions which can be implemented immediately and in establishing priorities for decisions that cannot be made at once. (Statement follows)

All members of the faculty are convinced that the purpose of this College is to be continually responsive to the needs of its students, and believe that this College is peculiarly equipped to fulfill these needs. But we have been moving too slowly, and we have come to realize that there is a point beyond which discussion is self-defeating and does not add significantly either to insight or opinion.

The problems raised by the demands of the students occupying Westlands concern us all, and we respect the intensity of their resolve to make Sarah Lawrence a truly humanistic and egalitarian institution. The faculty is particularly anxious to realize as quickly as possible our commitment to coeducation, diversity and to a curriculum that is responsive to student needs and meets our professional standards.

In the interest of prompt action we propose that a task force be created immediately, composed of the President, the President-elect, and the Dean, four faculty members, three of the students occupying Westlands, three members of the Black Students Association, four members of the Student Council, and three members of any student group that identifies itself as a faction with a solid position on any or all of the issues. It will be the task of this group to propose to the community, not later than March 23rd, measures that will carry out the will of the community. For its deliberations, space will be set aside that will allow open meetings to take place. The task force shall itself determine the procedures by which the views of non-members shall be heard and discussed.

Any decisions taken by this task force that have educational implications cannot be considered final until they are ratified by the faculty.

The other document is from a group of students dealing with changes to be made:

A group met on March 10 at 7:00 p.m. At that meeting of 150 to 175 students we concluded that we require several days to work out an adequate response to the Westlands demands and to formulate our own proposals. We therefore request that the Administration make no decisions regarding the Westlands proposals until we have finalized our responses.

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In addition to educational needs, to the style of the College, to plans for restructuring, for increasing diversity, and for educational content and methods, there must be a full and searching inquiry into costs--what the College costs now, and what the new directions will cost.

There must be new and careful analysis of space--what we have, what the new building will provide, and what will be needed for the future.

The Task Force provided for now, on which students, faculty, and administration will work together, will work on these problems.

Out of the anguish of this week, out of the pressure for the most deeply-felt changes, out of all the commitment to ideals that must not be lost, will come, I hope, the sense of a common cause that this College has had, that seems to have faded, and that, if we are to have a College at all, must be infused with new life.

Just before I came to this meeting I was handed another document I want to read:

The faculty has, in this morning's meeting, unanimously elected the following representatives to the Task Force:

Harold Aks  
Robert Engler  
Eva Kollisch  
Francis Randall

The faculty has passed the resolution, a copy of which is appended here.

The faculty has requested me to tell you that it will continue to meet and address the issues raised in the current situation, but that in the light of the time it has taken to arrive at this resolution, we estimate that comparable time will be needed to arrive at positions with respect to other issues.

#### Resolution of the Teaching Faculty

The faculty and trustees traditionally have distinct roles in the running of a college. It is the concern and responsibility of the faculty to act upon all matters which are relevant to the educational life at the College, while the corresponding responsibility of the trustees is mainly fiscal. We should not confuse these roles, or else we will render ourselves incapable of fully discharging our properly constituted responsibility to the College community. It is important that we assume our traditional role now. Therefore, we resolve:

1. That the faculty as a body pledges its commitment to the greater economic and racial diversity of the student population of Sarah Lawrence, consonant with the urgent positions of the BSA, the Westlands group and, indeed, the overwhelming majority of the student body because it recognizes that this



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would substantially contribute towards fulfilling our goals of academic excellence consistent with the immediate and long-range needs of our students.

2. That it recommend to the faculty representatives of the Task Force that this matter must be given the highest priority so that part one of this proposal may be implemented as fully and quickly as possible.
3. That we urge the trustees to recognize our commitment and to assume, immediately and intensively, the task of searching for ways in which to make this diversification fiscally possible.

Sarah Lawrence is to achieve full coeducation at the earliest possible date. Towards this end we urge the appointment of personnel in the Admissions Office to recruit men. We ask the Admissions Committee to hold 50% of the available freshmen places in September 1970 for qualified men and to make every effort to fill them. We also urge the acceptance of that proportion of qualified male transfer students which will realize the aim of full coeducation.

The faculty has agreed to cancel all teaching appointments for the rest of the day so that its meeting may continue immediately following the all-College meeting.

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INFORMATION THAT MAY PROVE USEFUL TO THE SARAH LAWRENCE COMMUNITY

I. Re Trustee Awareness of Needs for New Fiscal Basis for the College

The Board of Trustees and the Administration realize that a new financial basis for the College has to be sought within the year. This was reported to the Board by the Ad Hoc Trustee-Administrative Committee in April of 1968.

II. Re Admissions Policies

No racial or economic percentages have been established for entering students, freshmen or transfers. The administration's reply to the BSA document of March 7 reviews the procedure by which recommendations for changes in policy, or new policy, can be accepted and implemented.

At its November 13, 1968 meeting the General Committee voted to create a policy committee on admission and financial aid. The faculty voted to approve the establishment of this committee in December 1968 and subsequently elected two faculty members, Robert Zimmerman and Jewel Cobb, to the Committee. The membership of the committee is to include two students to be selected by the student body, two faculty members elected by the faculty, the faculty trustee, the Director of Admissions, and the Dean of the College. Edward Cogan is currently the faculty trustee. Deirdre English, President of Student Council and member of General Committee, reported that the students had determined that the two students to serve on the Committee should be the Chairman of the Student Scholarship Committee and a member of the BSA elected by the group. Mrs. Raushenbush appointed Robert Zimmerman chairman of the committee. Lisa Kimball is Chairman of the Student Scholarship Committee; has been appointed by the Black Students Association.

III. Re Composition of Admissions Committee (according to Faculty By-Laws)

The present composition of the Admissions Committee is as follows: 7 faculty elected by faculty; 2 senior students elected by students; Director of Admissions (Chairman); Director of Financial Aid (ex officio). In addition, one male student is added to the reading team for each male applicant; it has also been agreed that two black students and one black faculty member read all black applications in addition to the other two readers of the Committee for each applicant.

IV. Recruitment of Admissions Candidates from Minority Groups

We have accepted students through, and are continuing our contacts with ASPIRA (for Puerto Rican students), Operation Exodus, Educational Talent Search, Yale Transitional Year, the ABC Talent Search, the Bedford-Stuyvesant Youth Leadership Institute, Upward Bound organizations of Bowdoin College, Le Moyne College, Columbia University, Sarah Lawrence College, NSSFNS, the NAACP, and the Museum of American Indians, the Association on American Indian Affairs. The Admissions Office and Committee welcome suggestions and additional sources for recruitment of students from all minority groups.

Information useful  
to SLC community

#### V. Re Determination of Size of Financial Aid Awards

The College Scholarship Service Parents Confidential Sheet will continue to be used at least as a starting point for determining the existence of financial need. However, adjustments in that service's calculation of an applicant's needs are urged by the Service, and the Financial Aid Office has made and will continue to make such adjustments as a result of studies made by the Sarah Lawrence Financial Aid officer and several students of the "invisible black tax", an additional 10% may be added to calculated need if the Policy Committee on Admissions and Financial Aid ratified this suggestion.

#### VI. Re Status of Coeducation

The graduate program of Sarah Lawrence has always been fully coeducational. No sexual distinctions have been made between or among the applicants. The Center for Continuing Education has recently changed its admission policy and is now open to both men and women, whether or not they have had any college experience.

We have already declared publicly that we are a coeducational undergraduate college, and are trying actively to recruit men students. A brochure has been prepared, and is presently in Westlands, ready to be mailed to schools and organizations all over the country. In January, at a faculty meeting, the faculty voted its willingness at the President's request to consider individual male freshman applicants for next year; although at an earlier meeting they had unanimously voted to admit only upperclassmen. More than 25 men freshman applicants are waiting to be processed, as well as more than 60 transfer students.

Following the September Seminar students planned to organize a recruiting drive for men students over Christmas vacation and this didn't work out. In January, the Coeducation Week Committee organized a better structured group which did spend Interim Week visiting men's colleges seeking transfers as well as guests for Coeducation Week. In December, General Committee had decided to add students to the present Faculty-Student Committee on Coeducation. Three students, Margery Cuyler, Joy Jones and Lowell Miller, are on that Committee.

Prospective black male undergraduate students, at Mrs. Cobb's suggestion, are to be contacted along with black female students, through a number of qualified Negro colleges, the United Negro College Fund and the National Scholarship and Service Fund for Negro Students, as well as all black SLC alumnae.

Our aim is to get as many qualified men students as possible next year. In keeping with this intention, no deadline has been established for men applicants. General Committee and the faculty agreed that the lowest priority should be given to guest students as against transfers.



Information useful to the  
SLC community

VII. Re Ratings, Faculty Reports, and Confidential Remarks

The use of confidential statements in faculty reports was abolished last fall. The administration already declared at the September Seminar its enthusiastic support of the abolition of grades, but was checked by student members of the Seminar who were concerned about jeopardizing students applying to graduate schools. Mrs. Raushenbush has conducted a survey of more than two dozen graduate schools to which Sarah Lawrence students regularly apply, and all but one have indicated that the absence of grades would be unacceptable.

Alternatives to the present system of faculty reports and ratings should certainly be explored by the task force, and any of its recommendations be ratified by students and faculty.

VIII. Re Follow-up of Proposals and Recommendations Made by the August-September 1968 Seminar

We also feel you should know that this College has moved a great deal this year since the September Seminar. All of the proposals have been acted upon except the building of the swimming pool and the Trinkaus master plan for restructuring faculty groups along interdisciplinary lines. A master file of all actions and pertinent information on each of the specific recommendations of the September Seminar has been kept up to date week by week. Copies are available to any student or faculty member in the library, Mrs. Dahlberg's office, and Mrs. Mattfeld's office.

IX. General

We hope that all groups will be realistic in their appraisal of the amount of time required to do responsible planning for any project that affects the education and lives of students and faculty.