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[Statement from the Students Occupying Westlands to Esther Raushenbush, March 14 1969]

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March 14, 1969

(actual statement undated)

To: Mrs. Raushenbush

From: The Occupiers of Westlands

During our years at Sarah Lawrence we have found over and over again that change here is a subject for rhetorical discussion rather than for action, and that when action is taken and changes implemented, it is only patchwork that does not fully confront and challenge the nature of the whole institution. We, by questioning the tuition increase, have challenged the direction of this institution and the way in which that direction is determined.

We have demanded that the Board of Trustees rescind the tuition raise because we realize that it is not their role to determine either our needs as students or the needs of the society as a whole, but instead that they, as the holders of wealth, answer to those needs. The trustees have demonstrated that they do indeed determine the priorities of this institution, and of this nation by refusing to accede to this demand.

You say in your memo of March 14, to the occupiers of Westlands, that in response to our action, faculty, students and administration are ready themselves to act. You say that you have "set up good machinery so that everyone can go to work." However, we have no assurance that this machinery is indeed good or that it is directed toward accomplishing the ends for which we took our action. Therefore we are now putting our case to you, believing that we cannot have "good faith" in this community unless our demand for diversity is accepted. We have demanded that at least one-third of all admitted students be from "the black, brown, red, yellow and white working class," and we have explained how this program should be implemented. We require an explicit commitment to implement this specific demand fully and without delay to prove that when we leave this building "real" work can begin. Before we can proceed any farther, we must have a yes or no answer.