

The Point of No Return: The *Exponent's* Coverage of Purdue University's 1969 Fee Hike

Ian Smith

Purdue University

Sixth Semester Undergraduate History Student

[smit3475@purdue.edu](mailto:smit3475@purdue.edu)

(219) 307-5604

For universities across the United States, the 1960s were among the most tumultuous times in memory. This infamous decade was characterized by scenes of protest, disobedience, rebellious artistic expression, cross-class solidarity, and a generation of disillusioned young people pushing for independence. Of course, the rebellious character of the 1960s was not limited to the universities; this was also the era of the Civil Rights movement, the Black Panthers, the New Left, the anti-Vietnam War movement, in addition to a number of other revolutionary organizations and movements. In spite of this, more than any other era of unrest, many of the movements of the 1960s developed within universities. This was particularly due to the massive influx of students from the Baby Boomer generation, which stretched the limits of college admissions and made for rather crowded campuses. In fact, by 1960, college enrollment had increased to 3.63 million students, a 45% increase from the post-WWII period; furthermore, between 1960 and 1970, college enrollment skyrocketed to over 8 million students, more than doubling within a single decade.<sup>1</sup> This massive confluence of young people within confined areas naturally led to the discussion of shared grievances, leading young people to fight for their beliefs in an unprecedented manner.

At Purdue University, however, the 1960s were largely a period of quiet discontent. When compared to other large universities, such as UC Berkeley or Columbia, Purdue's sustained calm throughout much of the 1960s was certainly an anomaly. However, this was to change rapidly in May of 1968, as racial prejudice and discrimination catalyzed many African American students to peacefully march to Hovde Hall, the main administrative building, in order to protest racial prejudice at Purdue.<sup>2</sup> And yet, it was not until the spring of 1969 that mass student unrest emerged on Purdue's campus. This unrest was due in large part to the university

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<sup>1</sup>John R. Thelin, *Going to College in the Sixties* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2018), 12.

<sup>2</sup>John Norberg, *Ever True: 150 Years of Giant Leaps at Purdue University* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 2019), 242.

administration's decision to raise fees for the upcoming school year. More than any other event, the 1969 fee hike protests catalyzed much of the campus into resistance, prompting demonstrations, sit-ins, marches, and scathing op-eds.<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in spite of the importance of this event for the history of Purdue University, there is a distinct lack of academic research related to it. Discussion of the 1969 fee hike is limited to mere paragraphs in Purdue history books, such as in Norberg's *Ever True*, Topping's *Century and Beyond*, and Klink's *The Dean's Bible*. Similar protests against the fee hike took place at Indiana University, which is well documented in the IU Archives; however, the protests began at Purdue.<sup>4</sup> This event is worthy of greater attention, especially given how significant it was for the typically docile Purdue campus.

One of the key players in escalating this conflict was the *Exponent*, the student-run daily newspaper at Purdue. The *Exponent* covered the fee hike and subsequent protests in a highly incendiary way, feeding into the mounting student discontent towards the Purdue administration. This dampened the already strained relations between the administration and the staff of the *Exponent*, ultimately resulting in the administration changing the *Exponent* from a university-funded, student-run club to an independent corporation with no official affiliation with Purdue. The *Exponent's* coverage of the 1969 fee hike and subsequent protests served as a major breaking point in Purdue-*Exponent* relations.

The fee hike fiasco began when, in mid-February of 1969, the Purdue administration announced that fees for the following school year would increase from \$400 to \$700 for in-state students, and from \$1,200 to \$1,600 for out of state students.<sup>5</sup> The university also planned to increase annual room and board costs by \$100, causing the estimated total cost to rise from \$1,950 to \$2,350 for in-state students and from \$2,750 to \$3,250 for out of state students. This

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<sup>3</sup> John Norberg, *Ever True: 150 Years of Giant Leaps at Purdue University*, 247.

<sup>4</sup> IU Archives Exhibit, ed. "1969 Fee Hike Protest." Indiana University Bloomington.

<sup>5</sup> John Norberg, *Ever True: 150 Years of Giant Leaps at Purdue University*, 247.

constituted an increase of roughly 20%, more than enough to disconcert students. The cause of the fee hike was the recently announced Indiana state budget, which dramatically cut funding for higher education for the subsequent two years. The Indiana Legislature proposed that \$106.2 million be allocated to Purdue (for both the main campus and its regional campuses), a whopping \$55.3 million decrease from the \$161.5 million budget for the previous two years.<sup>6</sup> Here, it is important to remember that the student population was still increasing as more people from the Baby Boomer generation came to age. This meant that the state cut funds to Purdue (and the other state universities in Indiana) at the time when they needed them the most. The administration, particularly then President Frederick Hovde, felt backed against a wall by the state's choice. Naturally, students responded in an overwhelmingly negative manner, leading to immense unrest on campus.

Tensions finally erupted when, on April 17th, 1969, between six and eight hundred students marched on the administration building, later known as Hovde Hall.<sup>7</sup> The students demanded to speak with President Hovde, however, much to the students' dismay, he was out of state for an unspecified reason. The students then left the building, but not before writing up a list of demands for the president and declaring a boycott of all foods sold in the Student Union. Later, on April 21st, around two hundred students marched on the Administration Building once again, this time, however, in the middle of a meeting being held by the Board of Trustees and other university officials.<sup>8</sup> The students were not permitted to enter the meeting, so they decided to wait until Hovde was finished, lining the halls, staircases, and empty rooms of the building. At 5 p.m., the building was set to close and the administration had given the students no sign that they would meet with them; therefore, many students refused to leave. Upon hearing this, John

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<sup>6</sup> "Fee Increase Probable Due to Budget Cut." *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), Feb. 18, 1969.

<sup>7</sup> John Norberg, *Ever True: 150 Years of Giant Leaps at Purdue University*, 247.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 247-248.

Hicks, then vice president of Purdue, ordered the police to arrest students at will. Robert Topping referred to this as “the most distasteful chore [Hicks] had to perform in his nearly 40 years at Purdue.”<sup>9</sup> At the end of the day, Purdue police arrested 41 students, however, they were subsequently released once the students agreed to vacate the premises. That evening, over five thousand students marched across the campus to protest the administration’s disregard for student concerns.<sup>10</sup>

The following day, over six thousand students crammed into Elliott Hall, demanding that Hovde meet with the Governor of Indiana, Edgar Whitcomb, to reverse the impending fee hikes. Hovde eventually agreed, although a few days later, he announced that he would not be able to meet with him, as the Governor sought to punish students who were protesting, regardless of the circumstances.<sup>11</sup> Then, on April 30th, several hundred students entered the Memorial Union and staged what they called a “live-in”; students entered with pillows, blankets, books, and so on, intending to stay in the union until their demands were met.<sup>12</sup> This demonstration was not exclusively about the fee hike, as many students were there to protest other things as well, such as the Vietnam War and racial injustices on campus. The live-in lasted for five days, finally ending on May 5th with the police entering the Union with billy clubs raised, beating and dragging out those who refused to leave. This was the end of the fee hike protests, in part because the semester and academic year was ending soon. However, the protests surrounding the fee hike were among the largest and most significant student demonstrations in the history of Purdue, shaking the administration to its core.

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Topping, *Century and Beyond : The History of Purdue University* (West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1988), 331.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> John Norberg, *Ever True: 150 Years of Giant Leaps at Purdue University*, 248.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

The *Exponent* played a major role in catalyzing student outrage over the fee hikes, culminating in the aforementioned demonstrations. Subsequent sections provide comprehensive documentation of the *Exponent's* coverage of the fee hike and related protests. I will also analyze the ways in which the *Exponent* chose to cover the events, paying particular attention to word choice, language, and the *Exponent's* use of surveys to galvanize campus opinion.

The *Exponent* first mentioned the fee hike on February 18th, 1969, mere days after the administration announced the increase. The article was aptly titled “Fee Increase Probable Due To Budget Cut”, and was largely an informative piece.<sup>13</sup> The author, Bob Metzger, explained the major reasons behind the fee hike, citing the proposed budget from the state of Indiana as the primary reason. The next mention of the fee hike occurred in the edition from March 14th, nearly a month after the first article. Titled “*Exponent* to Poll Fee Increase Reactions”, the article explained that the *Exponent* would poll students on their reactions to the fee hike.<sup>14</sup> The main question of the poll was, “Will you return next year if the fee hike goes through?” The *Exponent* marketed the poll as an opportunity for students to voice their opinions to the Board of Trustees, who were to receive the results of the poll in an upcoming meeting.

The next mention of the fee hike within the *Exponent* occurred in the issue from March 18th, one of the most significant days for our discussion. Three articles within the issue were especially relevant: “Poll Shows Students to Leave”, “Hicks to Speak at Forum Today”, and “Hicks Cites Size, Student Activism as Reasons for Legislative Cuts”. The first article, “Poll Shows Students to Leave”, explained the results from the poll taken on March 14th. The results showed that eighty-one percent of the total 1000 participants indicated that they would not be

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<sup>13</sup> “Fee Increase Probable Due to Budget Cut.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), Feb. 18, 1969.

<sup>14</sup> “Exponent to Poll Fee Increase Reactions.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 14, 1969.

able to attend Purdue the following year if the fee hike went through.<sup>15</sup> According to one student surveyed, “This fee increase will probably keep me out of school for a year, until I can make up the difference. During this year, I imagine I will be subject to the draft, and the future, as far as college is concerned, is somewhat hazy after two years of service.”<sup>16</sup> This article sent shockwaves throughout the student body, furthering their dissatisfaction with the administration’s decision to increase fees.

The next article of importance was titled “Hicks Cites Size, Student Activism as Reasons for Legislative Cuts”, and its content is somewhat self-explanatory from the title.<sup>17</sup> Through directly citing a speech given by Hicks at the Faculty Senate meeting the previous Monday, the article claimed that the primary reason for the budget cuts from the Indiana State Legislature was student unrest on campus. According to Hicks, lawmakers felt that student activism had been on the rise because of the increasing size of the campus; furthermore, he argued, by cutting the university’s budget, the state could “[get] the larger campuses under control”.<sup>18</sup> Naturally, this caused even more student backlash, as they felt as if the Indiana State Legislature was actively attempting to stifle them simply because they were expressing their thoughts and making demands. Moreover, this fits in with the narrative of generational clashes that defined the 1960s. This tension is most certainly present in the *Exponent’s* article, with the author referring to Hicks’s speech as a “sorry state of the union address”.<sup>19</sup>

The final article of importance from the March 18th issue was titled “Hicks to Speak at Forum Today”. The article explained that John Hicks would be holding an open-forum to discuss

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<sup>15</sup> “Poll Shows Students to Leave.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 18, 1969.

<sup>16</sup> “Poll Shows Students to Leave.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 18, 1969.

<sup>17</sup> “Hicks Cites Size, Student Activism as Reasons for Legislative Cuts.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 18, 1969.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

the fee increases that day.<sup>20</sup> The author quoted then Vice President of the Student Body, Rick Parker, who implored all students to attend the meeting in hopes that the Board of Trustees would be swayed in favor of the students. The following day, March 19th, the *Exponent* published a follow-up article, titled “Fee Forum Explains Increase”, in which the author provides a synopsis of the aforementioned forum.<sup>21</sup> The meeting consisted of Hicks explaining the concrete reasons for the increase. The most interesting aspect about this article, however, is the section in which the author quoted Homer LaRue, who was a leader in the Office of Black Student Affairs. LaRue “raised the question of what implications [the] tuition increase would have on the ability of black students to continue in school.”<sup>22</sup> This was a significant moment. By quoting LaRue, the *Exponent* effectively tied the fee hike directly to racial inequity at Purdue, which was a significant concern at the time (and remains so). Thus, the *Exponent*, in effect, showed the student body that the fee hike was something to be outraged about for a variety of reasons, important among them being that it would directly affect many black students, who would otherwise not be able to afford to attend. This furthers the notion that the *Exponent* played a key role in catalyzing the student body’s resistance to the fee hike.

Then, on Friday, April 11th, the *Exponent* published an article titled “Boycott, Rally Monday to Protest Fee Hike”, which explained that the leaders of the movement, notably Homer LaRue and Bill Smoot (who we will meet later), called for a boycott of all things related to the Memorial Union, including products sold within, meetings held within, and all services within.<sup>23</sup> Further, they called for a rally on the following Monday in order to, in LaRue’s words, “...force the whole university—students, faculty, administrators—to take a unified stand against the state

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<sup>20</sup> “Hicks to Speak at Forum Today.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 18, 1969.

<sup>21</sup> “Fee Forum Explains Increase.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 18, 1969.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Boycott, Rally To Protest Fee Hike.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), April 11, 1969.



[of Indiana].”<sup>24</sup> This article illustrated that the students were not necessarily protesting the administration directly; rather, they were protesting the state of Indiana, furthering tensions between the Indiana State Legislature and Purdue students. On April 17th, the day of the infamous march on the Administration Building, the *Exponent* published a follow-up article, titled “Students Present Boycott Demands”, which listed the eight demands of the protesting students, chief among them being reversing the fee increase.<sup>25</sup> The most interesting aspect of this article was the *Exponent*’s choice to quote Mike Brand, one of the leaders of the movement, who, in reference to the aforementioned rallies, said, “Those were just rallies, and they accomplished nothing. Hovde isn’t worried because you’re sitting on the grass. Let’s turn these requests into demands and go to the administration building.”<sup>26</sup> These were fighting words, and the mere fact that the *Exponent* published them showed that they were at least sympathetic with the movement, if not actively in favor of it. Additionally, it put the *Exponent* directly at odds with the administration, which, at this point, was nothing new.

Throughout the subsequent protests, including the “live-in” that took place from April 30th to May 5th, the *Exponent* covered the student actions in a consistently supportive light, furthering the already growing tensions between the administration and the newspaper. The final *Exponent* article from this academic year related to the fee hike appeared in the issue from May 14th, one of the final days of the semester. Entitled “Officials Recommend Sacrifice”, the article stated that “‘the [fee] increases could push Dad into a night-time bartending job and Son into a part-time job in the university bookstore.’ That’s the opinion of scholarship officials at the four universities, who find little except more sacrifice to recommend to needy students”.<sup>27</sup> This article

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> “Students Present Boycott Demands.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), April 17, 1969.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> “Officials Recommend Sacrifice.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), May 14, 1969.

illustrated the ultimate failure of the anti-fee hike movement at Purdue, and, in some ways, seemed to be an insult to the students who protested. In essence, the university stated that the fee hike is not their problem, dismissing the very real concerns of students and parents alike. Thus, the *Exponent's* coverage of the fee hike ended with a whimper, not a bang, certainly a marked change from the aggressive stance taken earlier.

Ultimately, the *Exponent* played a crucial role in galvanizing the protests surrounding the fee hike. Their positive coverage of the student-led resistance undoubtedly inspired and galvanized a number of students to participate. As we have seen, their coverage failed to amount to any change. However, their controversial coverage would ultimately lead the *Exponent* to become an independent corporation in August of 1969 at the behest of the Board of Trustees. The fee hike controversy of 1969 was not the first time that the *Exponent* had gotten into hot water with the Purdue administration. In fact, by the time of the fee hike coverage, the *Exponent's* relationship with the administration was rocky at best. This stemmed from two incidents that occurred in September and October of 1968, respectively. The first incident was a speech given by then Chief Editor of the *Exponent*, Bill Smoot, on September 14th, 1968.<sup>28</sup> The speech was then published in the *Exponent* on September 18th, further spreading the speech and igniting controversy.<sup>29</sup> In the speech, Smoot encouraged the young women present in the meeting to “embrace their individuality” by expressing their own, personal sexual code of morality.<sup>30</sup> This caused great controversy, especially among the conservative and religious crowds within and outside of Purdue. More importantly, it outraged the administration, including Beverly Stone, the newly appointed Dean of Women at Purdue, who was vocal in her opposition to Smoot’s speech and his subsequent decision to publish it in the *Exponent*, referring to the

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<sup>28</sup> Angie Klink, *The Deans Bible* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2014), 285-286.

<sup>29</sup> “You Judge Smoot’s Speech.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), Sept. 18, 1968.

<sup>30</sup> H.L. Ewbank. “Who’s in Charge?” *AAUP Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (1969): 455-57.

*Exponent* version as “the most watered-down version imaginable— even so, it was still pretty bad”.<sup>31</sup>

The other major incident that heightened tensions between the *Exponent* staff and the administration was an article published on October 24th, 1968, in a recurring segment titled “Notes from a Black Book”.<sup>32</sup> The article, written by graduate students Paul and Deborah Cappel, was a scathing critique of President Hovde’s response to student unrest on campus, utilizing some choice words that ended up offending the entire administration of Purdue (and many others). To briefly quote the Cabbels, “Only when the students and faculty of this university realize that they are standing knee-deep in Hovde-sh\*\* will last week’s administrative disaster begin to be corrected.”<sup>33</sup> The response from the administration was unilaterally negative. During the Board of Trustees meeting on November 5th, the administration condemned the authors, Smoot, and the remainder of the *Exponent* editorial staff, warning that any recurrence of this kind of behavior would result in expulsion.<sup>34</sup>

On the following day, Smoot issued an editorial apologizing to those offended; however, he doubled down on his freedom of speech, stating that he could not be punished for expressing his rights.<sup>35</sup> Smoot, as it turns out, was dead wrong.<sup>35</sup> The administration removed him from his position on November 8th, 1968, with an article written by Donald Mallet, then VP for Student Affairs, appearing on the front page of the *Exponent*, citing Smoot’s breach of the ethics code.<sup>36</sup> As Topping notes, however, the *Exponent* staff eventually pressured Hovde to allow Smoot back, although Smoot declined. However, this event led the Board of Trustees to sanction an official

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<sup>31</sup> Angie Klink, *The Deans Bible*, 286-287.

<sup>32</sup> “Notes from a Black Book.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), October 24, 1969.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1968 Nov. 05, 5 Nov 1968, BOTM19681105, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 793.

<sup>35</sup> H.L. Ewbank, "Who's in Charge?" *AAUP Bulletin* 55, no. 4 (1969): 455-57.

<sup>36</sup> “Smoot Removed as Editor.” *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), Nov. 9, 1968.

investigation into the *Exponent* in order to acquire advice as to how the university should treat it in the future, eventually leading it to relinquish the *Exponent* from university control.<sup>37</sup>

Now, I would like to take some time to explore the administration's response to the fee hike backlash in order to understand the event from their perspective. The minutes from the Board of Trustees (BoT) meetings and Angie Klink's *The Dean's Bible* provide the perspectives of the upper administration of Purdue as well as the unique and important perspective of the female deans at the time. The relationship between the Board of Trustees and the *Exponent* was already strained by the time the fee hike came around due to the aforementioned Smoot controversies. However, due to the end of the semester of Fall '68 and the subsequent break, the BoT did not discuss the *Exponent* again until their meeting on January 14th, 1969. The *Exponent* was only briefly mentioned in the meeting; in essence, the committee previously designated to investigate the *Exponent* explained that they were preparing their report for the BoT, which would include recommendations for the future of the *Exponent* as an institution.<sup>38</sup>

The next mention of the *Exponent* appeared in the BoT meeting from March 4th, 1969. In this session, the Special Committee on the *Exponent* gave its recommendations, chief among them being that the *Exponent* should be reincorporated as an independent, non-profit corporation, bearing no signs indicating any relationship with Purdue.<sup>39</sup> After a long discussion regarding the recommendations of the committee, the BoT concluded that it would consider the committee's recommendations and would reconvene at a later date to further discuss the matter. Then, on March 19th, in perhaps the most important BoT meeting, the members of the board, including Hovde, concluded that "a separate, non-profit corporation with a student-faculty board,

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Topping, *Century and Beyond : The History of Purdue University*, 401.

<sup>38</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1969 Jan. 14, 14 January 1969, BOTM19690114, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 873.

<sup>39</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1969 Mar. 04, 4 March 1969, BOTM19690304, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 10.

financially and editorially responsible, will work.”<sup>40</sup> They later concluded that the financial and legal processes involved with the transfer would take some time, but that they would be completed. Interestingly, this is the meeting in which the BoT received the aforementioned poll conducted by the *Exponent* about the fee hike, which they chose not to discuss. Further, it is curious that the BoT’s decision to allow the *Exponent* to become an independent corporation came mere days after the *Exponent* published its highly incendiary poll. It is quite possible, then, that the BoT was finally pushed over the line by the *Exponent*’s coverage of the fee hike, particularly the poll.

The next meeting in which the *Exponent* is mentioned took place on June 6th, long after the end of the protests, and was largely a status update on the transition.<sup>41</sup> The BoT expressed their hope that the transition would be complete by August. This ended up coming true. In the meeting from August 27th, 1969, the *Exponent* officially became an independent organization under the newly-made parent organization called the “Purdue Student Publishing Foundation”.<sup>42</sup> This was a major moment, as it illustrated both the willingness of the university to sacrifice control of a major institution and the resolve of the *Exponent* to remain steadfast in its colorful, free, and incendiary reporting style.

In Angie Klink’s *The Deans Bible*, Klink discusses the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the Dean of Women, Beverly Stone, and her assistant, Betty Nelson, vis-à-vis the fee hike protests. There were a number of other crises that occupied the attention of the Office of the Dean of Women at this time, ranging from women pushing for the end of curfew hours, a push to

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<sup>40</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1969 Mar. 19, 19 March 1969, BOTM19690319, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 120.

<sup>41</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1969 June 06-07, 7 June 1969, BOTM19690606, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 324.

<sup>42</sup> Board of Trustees Minutes, 1969 Aug. 27, 27 August 1969, BOTM19690827, Board of Trustees Minutes, Volume 25, Purdue University Archives and Special Collections, West Lafayette, Indiana, USA, 343.

end the separation between the Dean of Men and Dean of Women, controversy surrounding the so-called “black salute”, and so on.<sup>43</sup> However, when students staged the infamous “live-in” in the Union in late-April of 1969, Betty Nelson was assigned to stay in the Union in order to monitor the students. Nelson later recalled, “...the lounge just east of the Great Hall was filled with students who were playing guitars. They were all over the floor, and they were having a good time. They were not being ugly or abusive of the place, but there were a lot of bodies there, and folks didn’t quite know what to do about that.”<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, the female deans seemed to understand the students’ perspectives better than others in the administration. Later, they even went on to help students who had been arrested during the live-in, going as far as buying a suit for a job interview for one of the women after graduation.<sup>45</sup> However, that is not to say that Stone and Nelson were totally lenient. They still suspended and reprimanded all female students who were arrested during the live-in. Recalling the event in a later interview, Stone said, “We had no choice but to suspend them. [However], almost every student had a good enough relationship with a member of the dean of women staff that, through the summer, they made contact [with us]. They asked for recommendations... I think you can combine [discipline and counseling] if there is compassion . . . if there is genuine concern for the individual.”<sup>46</sup> Furthermore, while the fee hike protests certainly agitated the Dean of Women, they seemed to understand where the students were coming from and why they were protesting. They remained steadfast in their commitment to following the procedures while still retaining compassion and empathy for their students.

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<sup>43</sup> Angie Klink, *The Deans' Bible*, 295.

<sup>44</sup> Angie Klink, *The Deans' Bible*, 297.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, 299.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid*, 298.

The *Exponent's* coverage of the 1969 fee hike was a major breaking point in *Exponent*-administration relations. While tensions between the *Exponent* staff and the Purdue administration were certainly present before its coverage of the fee hike, they were greatly inflamed by the *Exponent's* steadfast, sharp, and provocative coverage of the fee hike. In particular, the poll conducted by the *Exponent* on March 14th was a major embarrassment for the administration, given that over eighty-one percent of polled students reported that they would not return to campus the following year. Furthermore, the university administration made the decision to make the *Exponent* an independent organization four days after the poll was published, and while it is impossible to definitively conclude a causal relationship between these two events, it is certainly within the realm of possibility.

Additionally, the *Exponent* was actively in favor of becoming an independent organization. On March 13th, the day before the poll, the *Exponent* published an article called "Why Incorporate?"<sup>47</sup> In the article, the author argued that the *Exponent* should be made into an independent organization for a number of reasons; first, the paper would be able to act freely and outside of the influence of the administration; second, the paper would then be subject to the free market, meaning any publications which did not fulfill the newspaper's intended purpose would jeopardize its financial viability; third, making the *Exponent* independent would guarantee that it would make decisions based exclusively on its interests as an organization instead of being subjected to the interests of the university as a *whole* under administration control; and fourth, the university administration would bear no responsibility for the content of the *Exponent* if it was independent.<sup>48</sup> Thus, it is also quite possible that the *Exponent* covered the event in an

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<sup>47</sup> "Why Incorporate?" *Purdue Exponent* (West Lafayette, IN), March 13, 1969.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

intentionally provocative manner in order to widen the rift between themselves and the administration so that they would relinquish control.

The successful reincorporation of the *Exponent* was a significant event in a number of ways. First, it represented a major victory for the editors of the *Exponent*, as they had finally acquired their independence from the administration. In the context of the 1960s, this makes sense, as this was a manifestation of the general desire among young people for independence from the institutions of their parents. Secondly, as Klink points out, “The *Exponent* debacle was touted as a beginning that opened the way for real dialogue with the administration.”<sup>49</sup> That is, because the *Exponent* was now an independent organization, it could participate in conversations with the administration without the hierarchical relationship impeding on the true independence of the *Exponent* staff. Whether or not that materialized is another story, but in the moment, it was seen as a significant shift in the balance of power between the administration and the *Exponent*.

Events such as the 1969 fee hike show us that bringing about change is certainly possible through pressuring established institutions. Although the student demands for the fee hike to be reversed never amounted to anything more than a collection of protests, we can still feel the impact of this event. The *Exponent* is still independent, and proudly so. Additionally, in the context of modern events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement that erupted this previous spring, the study of the youth uprisings of the past is essential to understanding our present moment. Many of the same dissatisfactions that the Baby Boomers were complaining about still exist; however, today, it is the Baby Boomers who have become (in some instances) the stern, strict, “anti-freedom” old people who they complained so much about during their youth. Nevertheless, the movements of the past, such as the movement against the fee hike at Purdue,

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<sup>49</sup> Angie Klink, *The Deans Bible*, 290.



reverberate throughout the present; the stories of these resistance movements live on today, and their legacies are kept alive by contemporary changemakers, both inside and outside of Purdue.

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