A Few Words to Obi

In the initial fall quarter issue of this paper, most students learned of the new society on campus, Obi, which declared both in this paper and before student government that its primary purposes were:

(1) To foster and encourage Black cultural awareness for “all” students on campus, and;

(2) To encourage better, more fruitful communication, and hopefully, better understanding between Blacks and Whites on campus.

Although only four weeks have passed, it would seem that the Obi Society is not only heading, but heading at flank speed, toward failure in the accomplishment of these goals.

The cornerstone of failure in this effort is the unrealistic attitude which Obi has displayed at each and every dealing that society has had with student government, this paper, and more important, with the general student body of this college. This attitude is clearly exemplified by statements such as: “WE DEMAND . . .” “. . . BY ANY MEANS NECESSARY.” It is further exemplified by Obi’s personification of the entire staff of TCC as “The Racist Administration” and the student body as “This Racist Campus.”

Related to this attitude, perhaps as cause, perhaps as effect, is the equally unrealistic approach the society as a unit takes in implementing its goals. It is inconceivable that a group which declares as its goals communication, interaction and acceptance could honestly believe that it was effecting progress by either deliberately, or inadvertently, blocking communication with hostility, unilaterally isolating its membership into a black clique, and provoking rejection through its offensive manner. Seemingly, Obi’s accomplishments to date are totally antithetical to its avowed objectives.
On the basis of its actions, Obi must truly believe that it is faced with a campus administration which would be unresponsive without threats, a student government which would do nothing positive without demands, and a student body composed of Ku Klux Klansmen just waiting to string Obi members up at the first opportunity. Perhaps these conceptions, however false, are at the foundation of Obi’s negative direction.

If so, it might alleviate the situation to point out several facts, these being:

(1) To any objective observer the administration has done all within its power, and even more, to accommodate the needs of Obi and ALL black students on campus.

(2) Prior to the hostile and offensive displays which took place during the student government meetings at which Obi was recognized and its budget approved, most members of the student government were either indifferent or positively inclined toward Obi.

(3) TCC student body members are an apathetic crew as a rule and it is extremely unlikely that any great percentage had formulated any attitude whatsoever regarding Obi, until, I repeat, UNTIL Obi began its DEMANDS and veiled extortion before the student government and in Fred Lowe’s articles in this newspaper.

Demands, veiled threats and something akin to mass paranoia will encourage neither ‘favorable’ Black awareness, nor understanding between Obi and the general student body on this campus.

At the present time, it is possible, even probable, that many members of student government and a large number of the general student body have at least the beginning of a very negative attitude toward Obi.

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The greatest single factor in this new general attitude has been the large sum of money Obi DEMANDED (and got) from ASB. Aside from the fact that no club or organization on campus receives anywhere near the $5,850 Obi has gotten, aside from this point, the prime consideration is that Obi doesn’t ‘request’ things from ASB or ‘ask’ for things from ASB—Obi DEMANDS things from ASB, demands with the attitude that ASB and Tacoma Community College “owe” Obi the things it demands. This is the prime basis for the developing negative attitude of many students.

The simple truth of the matter is that neither the college nor the associated students of this college “owe” Obi anything, anymore than they “owe” the American Indian or the Japanese American anything. Both of these ethnic groups are represented on campus. Should either, or both, ever organize into societies it would be hoped that they, by virtue of the fact that young men and women attending college should possess some degree of intelligence and maturity, would not DEMAND or EXTORT their requests from this college.

This editorial is not intended to add pressure to an already sensitive and unfavorable situation. Its only purpose is to point out that should Obi continue its present course they will not only waste $5,850 of the associated students’ money, but much more serious, they will certainly fail to accomplish what they were given that money, in good faith, to accomplish; namely, to promote understanding and integration between the Black man and the White on this campus.

It is hoped that Obi will re-evaluate its attitude and its approach in order to work toward a more realistic effort. A primary consideration of this re-evaluation should be the fact that every Black student who follows Obi through TCC will attend this school in the shadow of Obi’s success or Obi’s failure in the 1968-69 academic year.

—Loman West

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