

## Letters to the Editor

Editor: *Indiana Magazine of History*

It was with a great deal of interest that I read in the March 2003 *Indiana Magazine of History* the roundtable on Indiana University during the 1960s. Having previously read Mary Ann Wynkoop's *Dissent in the Heartland*, I found it to be a very informative piece. However, I must also admit that both the book and the roundtable were something of a disappointment, not for the content of their discussion but rather for what they left out. While it is the easiest critique in the arsenal of critics to lament the books that authors opt not to write, at times it is an appropriate tool, especially when it can serve as a call for further scholarly inquiry. In the case of the 1960s' student movement discussed by Wynkoop and the roundtable such scholarship needs to consider not the Left, but rather two other groups of students (and faculty and administrators) on college campuses who also experienced the 1960s and 1970s: Groups on the Right, in order to provide a more balanced view of campus conditions; as well as the vast majority of students who belonged to neither left- nor right-wing groups, but at different times may have agreed with both. These two understudied groups present historians with a vast field of potential scholarship if they are willing to look.

To her credit, Wynkoop at times touches on both of these groups in *Dissent in the Heartland*. In doing so, she illustrates clearly why places like Indiana University hold such promise for just this sort of historical inquiry. On the Right, Indiana University produced several notable, national leaders. Take, for example, Tom Houston, famous for his role in crafting the proposed Nixon administration's Houston Plan for surveillance of political enemies. Though he is relegated to footnote status in most histories of the period, if one were considering campus politics, one might ask why Houston came up with the plan he did. Was it something based on his experiences with the Left at IU? This would then lead to a richer understanding not only of student movements but also of the administration he served. Another example is R. Emmett Tyrrell, the founder and editor of the *American Spectator*, a widely circulated conservative journal, who also has roots at IU. The *Spectator* got its start on the courthouse square in downtown Bloomington, within sight and earshot of many of the demonstrations that Wynkoop discusses. Again, an historian looking at the Right on campus could investigate the hows and whys of the *Spectator's* origin, as well as whether Tyrrell drew inspiration from William F. Buckley's *National Review* and the Buckley-founded Young Americans for Freedom (YAF). Indeed YAF, the Right's answer in many ways for the widely studied SDS of the Left, would also prove a useful track for scholars, for as late as the mid-1990s IU still had an active YAF chapter. Why is it that YAF remained while SDS faded from view? Another possible IU example is Robert F. Turner, who goes unmentioned in Wynkoop's book, yet headed at both the campus

and state levels the very active Student Committee for Victory in Vietnam, which boasted a membership greater than that of SDS in Bloomington.

These are but three examples of many more conservative activists IU produced during the 1960s and 1970s who have gone on to be involved in politics and business after they left Bloomington. And as interesting as looking at the neglected Right will be, perhaps the group that deserves to be considered even more is the vast majority of students who were never (or rarely) active in any of the Left or Right's protests. Who were they? Why did they opt not to join either SDS or YAF? Why did they support certain issues but not others? To what degree did groups on the Left (or the Right) co-opt issues that most students agreed on, such as visitation hours for the opposite sex? To what degree, at the very least in Indiana, does such an investigation support the idea that Hoosiers prefer evolutionary to revolutionary changes, as expressed in James Madison's *The Indiana Way*? Was this model, for all its lacking in glamour of protest, actually the way that most students experienced the 1960s? And if so, why does it remain so neglected?

Hopefully, scholars will pick up on these proposed threads of study. By doing so, they will help all of us better to understand the Left that Wynkoop discusses in her book, while at the same time breaking new ground and considering new issues in relation to student movements and campus politics from the era. After nearly forty years, surely it is time to consider the other facets of the 1960s. *Dissent in the Heartland* is a good first step. Let us hope it is not the last.

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Mary Ann Wynkoop replies:

I want to thank Jason S. Lantzer for his thoughtful comments. I echo his call for further scholarly inquiry that reflects his concerns about conservative and apolitical students at Indiana University (and elsewhere) during the 1960s. And he's right, that wasn't the book I set out to write.

When I first got the idea to write this book during the 1980s (yes, it has been a long time), several books had appeared that presented student activism in the 1960s as a bicoastal phenomenon. There were also some accounts written by former activists who told their own stories from positions of leadership within various student groups. As someone who was somewhat involved in a variety of student groups and as a midwesterner, I wanted to discuss sixties history

in a way that emphasized the breadth of movements for social change, especially in the heartland. When I first suggested my idea of writing about Indiana University in the 1960s, several members of the faculty and staff sort of laughed, remarking that it would be a short book because nothing much happened in Bloomington. Of course, that only piqued my curiosity. Fortunately I had support from my advisor, David Thelen, and later from James Madison, and the rest as they say is history.

The reason I recount the history to this history is that when I began thinking about this topic I saw a lot of students who, as in the 1960s, seemed to think that actively promoting social change was far removed from their agendas. Conservative and apolitical students tried to marginalize activists on midwestern campuses. My idea was to make a connection with the past, demonstrating that there was a progressive tradition on campuses generally thought of as conservative—as IU certainly was. However, I do think that one of the legacies of the New Left has been to create a sense that most students were for civil rights, against the war, and part of the counterculture. So, it seems to me, it is a healthy balance to look now at conservative and apolitical students in a more direct way. Gregory L. Schneider has done that in *Cadres for Conservatism: Young Americans for Freedom and the Rise of the Contemporary Right* (New York, 1999) and he does discuss the roles of Tom Houston and R. Emmett Tyrell in some detail. More recently, Rusty L. Monhollon pays attention to conservative voices in *This Is America? The Sixties in Lawrence, Kansas* (New York, 2002). I feel quite certain that more studies of the sixties will emerge that follow Jason Lantzer's suggestions and will provide greater contextual backgrounds for the student movement than ones like mine supply. But then, that's the beauty of writing history—there's always more work to do.

And in the spirit of the decade—peace.

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