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Hackney, Sheldon: Humanities Chairman Nomination Hearing (1993): News Article 18

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Black Students Dump Campus Newspaper at Penn

By Mary Jordan
Washington Post Staff Writer

A group of black students at the University of Pennsylvania, upset about "blatant and covert racism" on campus, confiscated nearly all 14,000 copies of the student newspaper Thursday and dumped them in the trash.

The incident, one of many recent signs of racial tension at colleges, occurred the same day that 16 students were arrested at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill during a protest over the size and location of a new black cultural center.

"There were people waiting for the drivers when they delivered the

newspaper around 7:30 a.m.," said Stephen Glass, a junior who is the executive editor of the Daily Pennsylvanian. Glass said he believed that a conservative student columnist, who has questioned the heroism of Martin Luther King Jr. and written about what he described as preferential treatment of blacks, was the target of the protest.

In a column in February, Gregory Pavlik wrote that black militants rail against white bigotry while praising hatemongers like Malcolm X, an ex-pimp who conspired with the Ku Klux Klan. Pavlik, who was declining interviews, according to the paper, also criticized the Onyx Senior Honor Society, a black student group accused of hazing. He wrote that a white group would be

"kicked off" campus if its members behaved the same way.

Yesterday, no black student contacted was willing to be quoted about the incident. Instead a group calling itself the "Working Committee of Concerned Black and Latino Students" issued a statement saying, "This protest was not in response to specific events or individuals." Rather, it said, "it was a legal protest of the blatant and covert racism continually perpetrated by both institutions and individuals on Penn's campus."

"Not only are the papers free, but there exists no explicit restriction on the numbers of papers that any given student may remove," it said in defending its actions.

Signs left on the empty newspa-

per boxes by the students said: "Sometimes inconvenience is worth the price. . . . Think about it."

Barbara Beck, a Penn spokesman, said that one student had been caught by police. No charges had been pressed, she said, and the matter was being handled through the "judicial process."

Like many other universities located in inner cities, Penn has had ongoing friction between the predominantly black, low-income neighborhood it borders and its predominantly white, wealthier student body. Of its 11,000 undergraduates, 700 are black.

There also has been a long-running controversy between black students and the student newspaper at the University of Massachusetts at Am-

herst. In addition, there have been rallies at many colleges, including Harvard Law School, about the scarcity of black faculty members.

On Thursday at the University of North Carolina, 16 students were arrested for occupying the chancellor's office in a dispute over the cultural center after a visit by Jesse L. Jackson, who urged students to press their demands. The chancellor, Paul Hardin, said he did not intend to press charges "unless there is a recurrence of actionable disruption."

At Penn, university president Sheldon Hackney, recently nominated to head the National Endowment for the Humanities, said he regretted that "two important university values, diversity and open expression, seem to be in conflict."

He appointed two committees to examine "the serious problems now existing between the minority community at Penn and the university

police." One university police officer, he said, had been placed on desk duty after an "altercation" with students involved in the protest.

A statement by the black student group said one male student "simply questioning the motives for his detainment after the seizure of the newspapers was struck twice." This, along with the verbal harassment of other protesters, was the latest evidence that the campus police "disrespected, violated, threatened and ultimately brutalized" black students, the statement said.

Glass, the Penn editor, said there is "a lot of racial tension on campus." But while he "understood and encouraged the complaints and criticism," he thought students should be "held accountable" for throwing away the paper. Another group of students spent Thursday morning digging out the dumped papers and distributing 6,000 new copies.