

Racial Discrimination

NOW IT'S "INTEGRATION" ON FRATERNITY ROW

A new storm is stirring on the campuses of American universities and colleges.

Can fraternities and sororities be forced to open their doors to Negroes, other minority groups?

In some places, the barrier already has been cracked.

A question now is being raised, in the controversy over racial integration of schools, as to the rights of private clubs in barring Negroes and members of other minorities from their rosters.

The private clubs, in this case, are the men's fraternities and women's sororities—social institutions that have more than 400,000 student members on college campuses across the nation.

Many such groups have long-standing barriers against nonwhites, and often against students of Roman Catholic or Jewish faith, too. Now these societies are being pressed to open their doors to all races.

One large institution, the University of the State of New York, has decided to prohibit all social fraternities and sororities with national affiliations, permitting only nonrestricted local groups on the campuses under its jurisdiction.

Six schools have set deadlines for societies with national affiliations to remove restrictive clauses from their constitutions. This process has been completed at Amherst College and the University of Chicago, and is being carried out at Wayne University and the State universities of Wisconsin, Vermont and Connecticut.

Three large institutions, going even further, have set deadlines for ending discriminatory practices of all kinds by fraternities and sororities. Those schools are Dartmouth College, Columbia University and the University of Colorado.

Other schools, such as the University of Washington and the University of California, are requiring societies to make "sincere efforts" to abolish racial restrictions. Still other universities turn down applications for new chapters on their campuses from groups that have such restrictions.

Fight over "privacy." Estimates of the number of Negro students now belonging to once-restricted houses on Fra-

ternity Row run as high as 40 or 50. Many more Negroes belong to local fraternities and sororities.

It all adds up to a movement of growing importance on the American campus, one that stirs deep conflict.

Back of this controversy is the question of just how private these "clubs" really are—and just how much control over them the colleges can wield.

The position of most college administrators is that fraternities and sororities can offer a valuable addition to a student's education.

As a result, these groups are required to conform to college rules and to meet certain requirements as to academic, moral and living standards. As private clubs, however, these social groups in past years have had the same freedom as that given to country clubs

and similar organizations in setting qualifications for membership.

Now the charge is that restricted fraternities are "undemocratic" and cause "psychological hardship" to students who are rejected because of race or creed.

Balky alumni? Critics say that often it is alumni, not students, who want to keep nonwhites out of their fraternities and sororities. They cite such indicators as these:

- A 1951 poll of fraternity members at the University of Minnesota showed 80 per cent in favor of dropping racial barriers in their organizations.

- In 1949, a poll taken by a student newspaper at Dartmouth found that 72 per cent of that college's fraternity men wanted to eliminate restrictions.

Officials of national fraternities, however, point out that fraternities and so-

Dartmouth College is one of three large schools that have set time limits for ending discrimination of all kinds in fraternities and sororities. At Dartmouth, the target date is 1960. But one fraternity at Dartmouth—Gamma Delta Chi—already has acted to remove restrictions, as the accompanying pictures show.



AFTER THE BARS came down at Gamma Delta Chi fraternity

rorities are voluntary associations of students with similar tastes and backgrounds—students who must live together over a period of years.

One official of a national fraternity, a businessman, puts it this way:

"If a student does not like the policies governing the local chapter of a fraternity, he shouldn't join it. If people in a local chapter do not like the principles laid down by the national organization, and can't get them changed at our annual conventions, they can always quit the fraternity."

Officials divided. At a dozen or more schools, local chapters have been expelled or have withdrawn from their national organizations in the last 10 years because of differences on the race question. In recent months, Sigma Kappa sorority revoked the charters of its chapters at Cornell and Tufts after they had pledged Negro students to membership.

College administrators, too, are divided on this question. Some are taking an active role in pushing desegregation. For instance, the dean of students at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania said in 1954:

"Negro students will not come where

they feel they are not wanted . . . By removing discriminatory clauses from their charters, fraternities have an opportunity to make a significant contribution to a more democratic way of life. To accept this as their responsibility would be evidence of the practice of Christian brotherhood on which fraternities are justified in their existence."

On the other hand, Edmund E. Day, president of Cornell University, says:

"As social organizations, they [fraternities and sororities] are free to create whatever standards of eligibility they wish . . . Some of them have conditions set forth in their constitutions barring certain minority groups . . . Well, exclusiveness is not undemocratic as long as it doesn't deny anybody's right. I don't construe it to be my right to get into many well-known and exclusive clubs."

Pressure from outside. Pressure on these social groups to eliminate racial barriers has been mounting steadily since World War II.

This pressure creates few or no problems for some fraternities that never had restrictive clauses or policies. Purely local fraternities and sororities likewise

are having little trouble. The eight Negro national fraternities are open to all races, and one of them claims nearly 200 Oriental and white members.

Most of the 90 or so social fraternities and sororities that have a top rating nationally, however, were founded as restrictive groups. Now they are finding themselves the major target of the desegregation drive.

East meets West. All but six or seven national fraternities, and one sorority, have dropped clauses requiring racial restriction. One president of a national fraternity estimates that 21 fraternities and sororities that formerly were for whites only now have one or more Negro undergraduates in their membership. Even more societies are believed to be admitting Orientals.

A negro is president this year of the Colgate University chapter of Tau Kappa Epsilon. In recent years, a Chinese member of Beta Theta Pi has served on the Interfraternity Council at the University of Wisconsin.

In many fraternities, however, nonwhites are kept out of local chapters.

The Northwestern University chapter of Psi Upsilon recently asked a Chinese



—Carroll from Black Star

IN THE GAMMA DELTA CHI CHAPTER HOUSE
Several other fraternities at Dartmouth also now admit nonwhite members

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student to resign, after accepting him as a pledge. He is Sherman Wu, son of Dr. K. C. Wu, former Governor of Formosa. The chapter president said this:

"We pledged him because we thought he would be an asset. We deplored him because we felt he would be a detriment. We accepted him regardless of race, but the campus, especially the freshmen, would not accept him as a person. They accepted him as a Chinese boy."

One national fraternity exchanged its requirement that members be of "Aryan blood" for another which specifies that new members must be "socially acceptable to all members of the fraternity." Another ruled that every new member proposed must be approved formally by the national organization.

Such rules do not always prevent admission of members from minority groups. As one example, Delta Upsilon alumni hold life membership in their college chapters, with power to blackball any applicant. Yet the president of that fraternity's chapter at Brown University, this year, is a Negro.

Practice vs. theory. National organizations with restrictive policies often "look the other way" when an influential chapter pledges a nonwhite.

Some universities and colleges are taking steps to deal with substitutes for racial clauses. Their aim is to force fraternities and sororities to become fully nondiscriminatory.

Brown University advised social groups in 1948 that they would have to end restrictive practices before they could occupy sites on the new university quadrangle, completed in 1951.

Dartmouth College, after two polls of students, set a target date of 1960, after which no national fraternity having a "written or unwritten" mandate to discriminate will be permitted on the campus. Several houses there now have nonwhite members—among them one fraternity that is still officially restricted.

Columbia University likewise set a deadline for 1960, later extended to 1964, after which it will withdraw recognition "from any fraternity, social organization or student group that...is compelled by its constitution, rituals or government to deny membership to any person because of his race, color or religion." The University of Colorado, this year, set a similar deadline for 1962.

Showdown soon? Top officials of fraternities—businessmen, lawyers, educators—say the segregation issue is heading toward a showdown before long.

Several national groups have lost two or more chapters. More may drop out as



UNIVERSITY OF CONNECTICUT has set a deadline for removal of restrictive clauses from constitutions



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA has called upon its societies to make "sincere efforts" to lift racial bans



COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY is among those schools to order an end to discriminatory practices of all kinds

deadlines for desegregation approach. Fraternities and sororities are under pressure from the opposite side, too. Many have strong chapters in the South that are firmly opposed to desegregation. And some Midwestern students and alumni are even more outspoken than Southerners against lowering racial barriers.

Fraternity members often are reluctant to discuss the matter. Local chapters that take in nonwhites prefer not to publicize an action that might invite suspension from their national organization if alumni object. National officers of fraternities are just as wary. One of them says:

"I think we have only one Negro, but we have to be very careful in what we say because some other fraternities are very unhappy over the whole question. We don't worry about the question or discuss it, and I think that's why we have a lower incidence of this sort of thing, taking in Negroes, than some other fraternities."

Action in courts. Legally, there has been only one real test in the courts so far on the racial issue confronting fraternities and sororities.

In 1954, a three-judge federal district court upheld the right of the University of the State of New York to ban national social organizations. The U.S. Supreme Court, without comment, sustained that opinion.

Still pending, in California, is a brief filed last spring with that State's attorney general by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It demands that the State deny campus privileges at its public universities and colleges to fraternities and sororities that discriminate on a racial basis.

One prominent fraternity official, a judge, says:

"I'm willing to go along with persuasive methods that will lower the racial barriers in my fraternity. Education solves many things. But if the time comes when it's decided that outsiders can tell my fraternity that it can no longer set its own standards on a national basis, then I'm willing to break it up rather than submit."

On the other side of this controversy, opponents of restricted fraternities and sororities cite the statement of President Charles Woolsey Cole of Amherst, a college that has forced its social groups to remove racial barriers:

"Institutions of learning," this educator said, "ought to pick and choose the best parts of our culture, not the worst. College students ought to set the pace. If they make enough headway with the democratic idea, the country clubs and the business clubs will come along later."