

SHOCKLEY

## Free Universities—Or Captive?

The cause of academic freedom suffered a severe setback at Dartmouth College when a group of about thirty Negro students prevented a visiting scientist from presenting a paper on the question whether heredity or environmental factors are of greater importance in determining human intelligence.

Dr. William Shockley, a Nobel prize physicist who is currently professor of engineering science at Stanford University, has been subjected to attack before this. Last year, fear that controversy over his views might lead to hostile demonstrations led the faculty of the Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn to cancel an entire symposium in which Dr. Shockley was to take part. At Dartmouth, faculty and administration tried desperately to protect the scientist's right to speak, but the dissident students managed, with sustained, mocking applause, to drown out his efforts to be heard.

The issue is not whether Dr. Shockley's theories have merit. The crux of the matter is that unless the campus can be kept open as a forum of ideas, no matter how controversial, it will have lost its usefulness to education, scholarship and a free society.

The Dartmouth episode is unhappily not an isolated incident this year. In recent months, teachers whose views were offensive to some activist faction have been intimidated and harassed; lectures have been interrupted; subtle and overt pressures have been exerted to influence academic policy. The action of the Regents of the University of California in trying to oust Angela Davis, a radical black teacher who is a member of the Communist Party, is similar in nature to the black students' silencing of Dr. Shockley.

There is little merit in protecting the freedom to advocate what is currently popular; only the safeguarding of controversial, or even odious, ideas can assure the perpetuation of the university as a sanctuary of freedom. Once that principle is publicly compromised, the greater danger is a creeping, imperceptible draining away of free discourse as caution becomes the hidden yardstick of institutional policy.

Pressures to politicize the universities—often in the name of high-minded goals—are pernicious because they imply that the institution henceforth will be held responsible for what is said and thought in its classrooms and lecture halls. It is a trend that must be resisted, whether the pressures come from the right or the left, from blacks or whites. What is at stake is not the structure, but the heart and mind of the campus.