



PROVIDENCE COLLEGE, PROVIDENCE, R. I., MAY 4, 1967

Smith on Hunger Strike, Defies Administration

President Issues Strong Rebuttal

(Statement by Fr. Haas)

Providence College has been educating men for 48 years without any evidence of harm to their personal development because of the discipline imposed.

The regulations pertaining to attire and grooming are substantially the same that obtain in the present day professional and business world wherein courtesy, style, order and norms of conduct are never the enemies of mature and free men. The deliberate maintainance of civilized formalities in an academic institution is part of the history of higher education in the western world.

We lament the treatment of every-fact of life as merely casual and intend to preserve some semblance of good form at Providence College. We shall not be forced to conform to the lowest common denominator of taste by immature exhibitionists.

Few of the regulations at the college are considered so sacrosanct that they cannot be revised. In the interest of change and enlightenment,

however, we expect students to live up to the commitments which they freely accepted by enrollment.

Contempt and the arbitrary rejection of regulations would spell the end of any civilized enterprise, professional, political, or business.

Mr. Smith has not been denied food service in our dining hall. He was informed Monday that his continued attendance at the formal evening meal without a haircut would be considered an act of contempt.

He was notified last Monday evening that he is to appear before the Committee on Discipline this Thursday to explain his continued refusal to observe college regulations.

Even though Mr. Smith has informed the college that he intends to transfer from here next year to a school abroad, where he says he has already been accepted, the college administration nevertheless feels that while he remains here he will be subject to the same rules and regulations that other students are.

Plea For Reason

Gregory Smith, sophomore class president, has been told by the Rev. Walter J. Heath, O.P., not to take meals in Raymond Hall until he has cut his hair. In protest of this personal action by the Assistant Dean of Men, Smith and a number of his supporters have staged a boycott of the dining hall.

Admittedly the tenor of the sit out was not as tasteful as possible, but that aside, Smith's action seems just. Critics say that his action was out of order and liable to severe penalty. On the other hand, we question the justness and reasonableness of Fr. Heath's action which precipitated the situation. Fr. Heath made his decision as an individual rather than as a College official.

Apart from the question of disciplinary action against Smith is the question of hair itself. Presumably this matter is under study by the appropriate committee. Any recommendations for a change in the ruling on hair at this time would risk being discredited as mere emotionalism. However, enough has filtered down to the student body to leave the impression that no rule is so sacrosanct that it cannot be changed. This should be considered in any judgment made about Smith. To destroy a man's career for the sake of so tenuous a premise that long hair is unbecoming of a Providence College student would be unwarranted. Likewise, to deny a student the right to protest in the manner that best befits the circumstances would be a gross injustice.



Smith (left) and supporters protest in the rain.

500 Demonstrate

A hunger strike and demonstration has been going on at the college for the past two days led by Gregory Smith, '69. The demonstrations have been conducted to protest the Rev. Walter J. Heath's refusal to allow Mr. Smith to enter the dining hall until Smith got a haircut. As a consequence Mr. Smith began his hunger strike and will continue it indefinitely.

The incident has received large coverage in the press, television and radio throughout the Northeast. The *Providence Journal* ran a front page story with an accompanying picture on Greg Smith; WBZ, a Boston radio station, carried the episode with an added comment of "naughty Greg." Also it has been reported that a New York newspaper has made note of Mr. Smith's protest.

Smith, shielded from a light rain by a large poncho, sat on the front steps of Raymond Hall Tuesday afternoon until 6:00; he was accompanied by about 25 students, most of whom skipped the evening meal along with him. Some of the demonstrators took their cue from other, larger demonstrations by wearing daffodils and protest buttons. A sign was displayed which cited such great men as Moses, Christ, Aquinas, Lincoln, and Einstein having long hair, with the addition "and so will we."

A little before 5:00 Fr. Heath stopped briefly before the demonstrating students on his way into the dining hall. The Dean made the comment when questioned by the news media that he would make "no comment" for such a "low level cause."

Yesterday, the protest grew in size to about 500 with a noisy counter demonstration by about 15 students. The anti-Smith faction dressed in leather jackets carried signs stating that they would not take a bath till Smith got a hair cut.

Smith pointed out the incongruity of his situation by stating, "They'll let me go to class and anywhere else, but I can't eat here in Raymond Hall."

Many of the students standing in front of Raymond Hall were merely curious about what was happening, and some showed some skepticism as to the value of a controversy as supposedly insignificant as long hair. At one point in the demonstration, fruit was thrown down at the protestors from the rooms in Raymond Hall.

Lawrence Dominik, a faculty prefect, expressed some of the anti-demonstration feeling by stating, "The regulation as stated is completely negotiable according to Fr. Haas, but I don't think this demonstration is a valid form of negotiation."

Smith's Position On Controversy

By GREG SMITH

At the beginning of this academic year Fr. Heath told me to get a haircut or leave. I did. Two months ago Mr. Newton told me to get a haircut or go before the board. I cut it. Three weeks ago Fr. St. George told me to get a haircut or I would not receive any recommendations from the college. I did. This past Monday Fr. Heath told me I could not enter the dining hall until I had a haircut. I did not.

But the length of my hair, or anybody's for that matter, is not the question here. Must a person constantly bow before a rule that he feels is senseless, and that the administration is changing. I don't believe so. I was never raised that way. But the spirit of some people on the campus seems to be that a rule is a rule, immutable, not to be broken, never to be defiled, no matter how harmful the rule is. I protest.

I protest this attitude. I protest the inability of men to act like men on this campus. I protest the strongarm policies of the administration. I protest their right to tell me as a dignified human being, what to wear and how to wear it. I protest the action of Fr. Heath, the action which has not permitted me to eat for over 48 hours.

But am I really protesting, or just exercising my rights? Am I really doing this as a principle, or just because I like my hair long? Would anyone face expulsion and the loss of \$1,550 for two inches of hair? Would anyone be so petty as to put a student out for two inches of

hair? These are the questions I've asked myself.

For the past two years I have constantly tried to serve my class, my school, and my self respect. But apparently that has not been enough. Today I will face the disciplinary board on a charge of disobedience to a direct order. Have I in fact disobeyed anyone. Have I not received a haircut when told? Do the charges stem from my disobedience?

There is something much deeper in the motives of the administration in bringing me before the board. For the first time a student has said, "I will not serve false gods" and it is for this reason that I will be tried tomorrow. But this trial will not be before my peers, but before the administration. Will I have a chance?

There comes a time, hopefully, in every man's life, when he must make a choice between what is easy but wrong, and difficult but right. I speak in terms of right and wrong because that is what I am facing. I firmly feel that I am in the right, and that the oppressive administration is wrong in forcing outmoded rules on any individual.

The question finally comes to the fact that I have the duty to act in the way I feel is right. It would be morally wrong for me to act in any way but this way.

I will eat again when the administration tells me that I may enter Raymond Hall. I will get my hair cut only if my father asks it of me, because he is the only man I know who I love and respect.