

reply to Pres Terrell

May 11, eleven demands, designed to launch a frontal attack on racism at WSU and in the surrounding area, were presented to university policy makers. The response of those officials has been disingenuous. Had these officials seriously wished to combat racism, they would have met with Third World students to seek clarification of the points at issue and to explore alternative policies which might equally well root out the problem. Instead, policy makers did not meet with those groups who raised the demands. This contempt for the opinions and proposals of Third World peoples is itself a form of racism. (Much like the contempt shown for all students by the Faculty Executive Committee.)

One must conclude that decision makers of the university were not seriously interested in examining efforts to lessen racism. Instead, it appears that their efforts were directed at how best to decline the demands. Friday, President Terrell issued that declination. He did not have the decency to submit his statement to the aggrieved parties, as they had submitted their demands to him. Rather, in a spirit, once again, of contempt, he left it that the Third World could find out his opinions indirectly through public sources. Such behavior suggests, not a preoccupation with racism, but a preoccupation with public relations. Sunday, President Terrell did meet Third World Peoples. Since his decision had already been made, the purpose of the meeting could not have been to seriously consider proposals. It was only an ineffectual attempt to calm troubled waters.

Wednesday, President Terrell once again spoke publicly. Once again he spoke without consultation of the aggrieved. He told us of his opposition to racism. Verbal commitment is not the issue; the issue is, "Is one willing to take strong action to stop racism?" Apparently President Terrell is unwilling to make such a commitment.

Why? It is clear that social change involves changing established procedures and institutions. This in turn gives offense to those who have a vested interest in the status quo and to those, as regards the case at hand, who admire racism. Our policy makers' priorities, as suggested by their preoccupation with public relations over negotiations, seem to value the opinions of the enemies of change over the elimination of racism.

Nonetheless, an examination of President Terrell's recent proposals might be appropriate. He suggested the appointment of a "Special Minority Advisory Council". But since no powers are suggested for such a council, this is now no better than the promise of a committee; and, as anyone familiar with WSU knows, referral to committee is a graveyard for proposals. A meaningful council must have powers such as those outlined in demand 3, if it is to be meaningful.

President Terrell also called for an Assistant to the President for minority affairs. He neglected to note how such an assistant would be selected. A bad assistant is worse than none at all, since his efforts could be to direct issues into a dead end, similar to the committee system. One duty proposed for such an individual is the establishment of workshops. But since workshops appear to be optional, they fail to reach those who need them most.

Since aggrieved students are urged to employ established channels, there is a lesson to be learned from the proposal for an advisor for minority affairs. Such a request was made over a year ago by BSU, but was shelved until the recent strike. The moral is that militant action is necessary before students are listened to.

The suggestion for three minority group members to recruit Third World students is a good one. However, the term, earliest possible date, must be clarified.

In conclusion, university officials, by their behavior, have indicated that they respond only to militant action. If racism is to be eliminated, we must escalate our struggle.

While these may be helpful suggestions the the University has offered, it has nevertheless ignored the fundamental problem: that is that meaningful negotiation with the Third World groups must commence immediately before any solution to racism at WSU is possible. If such discussion does not take place immediately, WSU will lose most of its minority students. In such an event Dr. Terrell's suggestions will be worthless. Racism can end at WSU only when the university decision makers deal directly with Third World groups rather than issues and statements intending to please the white majority.

Strike now. Show your support by such meaningful and direct action by the WSU community and state leaders.