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Newspapers in the Transformative 1960s at the University of Dayton

Brendan Zdunek
University of Dayton

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Honors Thesis

Brendan Zdunek

Department: History

Advisor: James Todd Uhlman, Ph.D.

April 2020

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Abstract

This honors thesis focuses on the University of Dayton during the 1960s when the university transitioned from a small, parochial Catholic college to a larger, more secular institution. This change was rooted in much wider transformations taking place in both the Catholic community and broader society during the decade. During this period of transition, two major groups, Dayton residents and University of Dayton students, had differing opinions on the transition. Campus and city newspaper coverage of key debates helped shape public opinion. This thesis examines how the local *Dayton Daily News*, and the University of Dayton student newspaper, *Flyer News*, both reflected and influenced Dayton residents and University of Dayton students, respectively. Specifically, this thesis identifies three key controversies in the late 1960s at the University of Dayton that embodied the changes and examines newspaper coverage of them.

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University of
Dayton

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Introduction

In the 1960s, the University of Dayton campus newspaper, *Flyer News*, and the city of Dayton's principal newspaper, *Dayton Daily News*, were instrumental in shaping public debate surrounding changes taking place on campus. This study examines the manner in which these newspapers covered major debates on campus during this time. While multiple protests and controversies occurred on the University of Dayton campus, this thesis will focus on three specific issues and the way newspaper coverage played a key role in the way the community negotiated them. These issues are a controversy in the philosophy department called the Heresy Affair, protests against two years of mandatory ROTC for all males, and a sit-in at the administration building, St. Mary's Hall, that called for multiple student demands.

The decade of the 1960s brought about major changes in the American Catholic community. As they did among many Americans, during the decade, the beliefs and behavior of American Catholics changed immensely during this time. There were two major reasons for this transformation. One reason was that the Second Vatican Council had ushered in an era of openness towards change in the Church. It encouraged those Catholics who wanted to bring their faith into what they saw as a closer alignment with the trends of the modern world. The other reason was the social change the United States was undergoing during the 1960s. Multiple social movements influenced American Catholics and further stimulated a re-examination of their religious beliefs and morality. One result was young American Catholics became more active in these movements. Many priests and nuns became involved in the civil rights movement, young college-age American Catholics joined the anti-war movement, and leaders such as Jack Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Eugene McCarthy also advocated for social change as well.

As the American Catholic community was being transformed, American Catholic institutions were transforming as well, especially Catholic higher education. Catholic colleges and universities such as the University of Dayton were powerful institutions during this time period. At the beginning of the 1960s, about one-third of all American colleges and universities were Catholic and they were providing the education of nearly

one-fifth of all college students.¹ For decades, American Catholics had viewed higher education as essentially training grounds for the younger faithful, preparing them to be good Catholics in a secular world. In the 1950s, the official public image from the Church leadership and from Catholics themselves was that all of the members of the Church were happy, obedient, and unified.²

Catholic universities sought to instill a strong moral education. They tended to do so by maintaining order and discipline among students through strict student-life policies such as curfews and restrictions on single-sex dorms. According to research on University of Dayton students, the majority of students' attitudes during the 1960s were primarily focused on campus life. There was very little discussion about outside-the-campus issues.³

However, younger American Catholics were emerging in a different world than their parents. The GI Bill and the general economic boom in the 1950s put American Catholics of the postwar era on a new path of educational, occupational, and geographical mobility. American Catholics were moving away from working-class, urban, ethnic neighborhoods and migrating to middle-class suburbs. As American Catholics became more integrated in the mass consumer culture of the postwar era, they were exposed to a wide variety of changes that raised questions about their faith.

These developments were mirrored on a smaller scale within the Church itself. Pope John XXIII, when he was head of the Catholic Church, convened an ecumenical council that would later be called the Second Vatican Council. The Council lasted five years and it undertook the massive task of giving the Catholic Church a new understanding of itself, of its rules and structures, and of its relationship to the modern, secular world.⁴

One place that the changing social realities and cultural attitudes of the American Catholic community were present was in its institution of higher education. At this time,

¹ James Michael Gavin, "Secularizing Trends in Roman Catholic Colleges and Universities," (doctoral thesis, Indiana University, 1971), 4.

² Kristine LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority: Reform, Rebellion, and Resistance in the Catholic Church of the 1960s," (doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000), 21.

³ Mary Anne Kane, "Attitudes of the UD Student Body During the 60s," (essay, University of Dayton, 1974), 1.

⁴ Phillip Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change in the 1960s," *The Review of Politics* 34, no. 4 (1972), 94, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1405957>.

institutions of Catholic higher education became the battleground in which the shifting attitudes in the community were negotiated. The University of Dayton exemplified this. Attitudes on the University of Dayton campus changed significantly between 1960 and 1970. At the beginning of this period, it retained many characteristics of a smaller, more parochial Catholic college, but, by the end of the 1960s, the reputation of the university had become more secular in orientation.

The University of Dayton, like many other institutions of Catholic higher education, had begun to hire more secular than religious professionals in the postwar era and, within that secular faculty, there was a decrease of those who obtained their degrees from Catholic universities.⁵ It was not just the student body and faculty becoming more secular, but the administrations of Catholic higher education were as well. For the majority of Catholic universities in 1960, the board of trustees consisted entirely of priests or religious board members. By 1970, they included a far greater number of non-religious members and, of these non-religious members, there were fewer Catholics.⁶

This secularization of Catholic higher education paralleled a reorientation of the views and the desires of the student body. Students attending college in these years grew up absorbing secular values through television, radio, and movies. They were increasingly accustomed to a large amount of freedom in their social lives. Furthermore, the early 1960s was an idealistic time for young American Catholics: the economy was strong, the young and inspiring Catholic John Kennedy was president, college enrollment continued to rise, and with the Second Vatican Council, the Church had signaled a willingness to consider change. These young American Catholics saw an opportunity to positively change the society.⁷ As we shall see, *Flyer News* played an instrumental role in mediating on-campus student debate over changing values while *Dayton Daily News* mediated public perception of the changes taking place on the University of Dayton's campus in the 1960s.

In the postwar era, the growth of radio and television emerged as the primary source of news for Americans, especially among the upper-class and college-educated.

⁵ Gavin, "Secularizing Trends," 63-64.

⁶ Gavin, "Secularizing Trends," 67, 69.

⁷ Helen Marie Ciernick, "Student Life on Catholic-College Campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s," (doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2003), 103.

The role of print journalism, however, started to fade. Newspapers began to decline as the primary source of news for Americans.⁸ Newspaper circulation per household across the United States decreased from 1.29 newspapers in 1945 to 1.05 in 1965. However, in smaller to more medium-sized cities, such as Dayton, circulation for newspapers remained unchanged or even increased.⁹ In Dayton, the *Dayton Daily News*, the main newspaper of the Dayton metropolitan area, remained the major source of news for the area.

For their part, during the 1960s, campus newspapers played a critical role in the way students negotiated the debates of the time. These newspapers played an important role of reporting news on college campuses and publishing opinions of members of the campus community, both student and non-student members.¹⁰ Additionally, student newspapers gave first-hand accounts of protest-related events. They not only reported on what occurred at these events but they also provided a voice for students about the events in columns, in editorials, and in letters to the editor.¹¹ *Flyer News* reported events on Dayton's campus and also gave the students a forum to voice their opinions on issues that affected them. While *Flyer News* was similar to other student newspapers in this fashion, it was also different from most student newspapers in one major way. *Flyer News* was university-funded, but, while it was financially dependent on the university, the students ran the newspaper independently of any administration restrictions.¹² This was unlike many student newspapers, especially at other Catholic universities, where criticism of the administration could result in restrictions.

In the years before the 1960s, *Dayton Daily News* and *Flyer News* worked to safely situate the University of Dayton in the mainstream of American culture. The *Dayton Daily News* heaped praise upon the University of Dayton. In their editorials, they lauded the University for its value and service to the city of Dayton. The relationship

⁸ Roper Organization, *Trends in Public Attitudes Towards Television and Other Mass Media, 1959-1974* (New York, Television Information Office, 1975), 3.

⁹ David R. Davies, *The Postwar Decline of American Newspapers, 1945-1965: The History of American Journalism* (Westport, Praeger, 2006), 114.

¹⁰ Terry L. Hapney, Jr., "Student Governance on Public University Campuses in Ohio: Higher Education Administrators vs. Student Journalists," (doctoral dissertation, University of Dayton, 2012), 30.

¹¹ Kaylene Dial Armstrong, "Telling Their Own Story: How Student Newspapers Reported Campus Unrest, 1962-1970," (doctoral dissertation, University of Southern Mississippi, 2013), 3.

¹² Dick Baker, "Where Do Student Groups Fit into the Picture?," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 7, 1964.

between the university and the Dayton community seemed to be one of pride and cooperation, according to the local newspaper.¹³ The editorial staff of *Flyer News* positioned the student newspaper in the mainstream of what historians describe as the liberal consensus of post-war political opinion. The views of the liberal consensus encompassed a widespread acceptance of New Deal programs and goals as well as a commitment to combat Communism abroad.¹⁴ For example, columnist Michael Kennedy wrote many of his columns on Communism, warning against extremism on both sides and against the spread of Communism in Latin America.

Outside of their anti-Communist sentiments, however, the campus newspaper reflected a largely apolitical culture. One particular issue that demonstrated this was the *Flyer News* coverage of a controversy over an organization called the National Student Association (NSA), “a nationwide organization of college students seeking to provide common ground for the exchange of ideas of collegiate, national, and international interests.”¹⁵ The Student Council considered joining the organization. The call to join NSA struck many as very political, an argument which *Flyer News* treated with a great deal of seriousness. One letter to the editor had pointed out that NSA had actually called for the abolishing of the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC).¹⁶ In November of 1962, Student Council had voted in favor to join NSA. Nearly 1,300 students signed a petition calling to put the issue to a student referendum.¹⁷ In April, the student body, in the words of *Flyer News*, “buried” the Council’s plan to join NSA by voting overwhelmingly to reject the proposal.¹⁸

University of Dayton students in the early 1960s may have wanted to stay out of politics, but that would not last long. In the latter part of the decade, students became more activist and began to question different aspects of their education on campus. Consequently, students of the later 1960s were much more political. The Heresy Affair of 1966-67 was perhaps the first sign of this shift. It involved four philosophy professors

¹³ Roberta Shallenberger, “Comparative Press Coverage of the University of Dayton,” (master’s thesis, University of Dayton, 1970), 2-3.

¹⁴ Godfrey Hodgson, *America in Our Time: From World War II to Nixon*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

¹⁵ *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 14, 1962.

¹⁶ Joe Doll, letter to the editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 26, 1962.

¹⁷ *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 2, 1962.

¹⁸ “NSA Buried in 7-1 Vote; University Party Sweeps,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 26, 1963.

who were accused by another philosophy professor of presenting material “heretical” to Catholic doctrine. This controversy revolved around the shift in the University of Dayton away from its older religious focus to one more accepting of the secular pursuit of knowledge. Central to the question was the freedom to choose what to teach and what classes to take without fear of censorship or compulsion.

In the coming years, the idea of academic freedom influenced University of Dayton students to question the rigid requirements of the school’s curriculum. Students began to protest against a mandatory requirement of two years of ROTC for all males. In time, more students saw participation in the program as complicity in the Vietnam War, which they rejected in growing numbers. If they had the freedom in learning about what philosophies they wished, why should they not also have the freedom to decide whether to take ROTC classes?

In the later 1960s, campus protests became less about a single point than a complex set of interconnected issues.¹⁹ The sit-in at St. Mary’s in 1970 exemplified this trend. It was conducted to gain personal and social freedoms for students. The previous two events had encouraged students to demand more personal autonomy. They asked for the right to access to birth control information on campus, a lifting of curfews, open hours in dormitories, and a student-run radio station. In time, most of the students’ demands would be fulfilled by the administration.

In focusing on these three events, this thesis will examine not only the underlying issues and trends that influenced the protests and controversies, but it will also examine how these events were reflected in *Flyer News* and *Dayton Daily News*. This examination will be based on both on how the reporters framed their stories, and the issues and the protests themselves as well. It will also be based on how the students and Dayton residents reacted in columns, editorials, and letters to the editor printed in the pages of the two newspapers.

¹⁹ Armstrong, “Telling Their Own Story,” 13.

Chapter 1: The Heresy Affair

Introduction

In October 15, 1966, assistant professor of philosophy Dennis Bonnette sent Karl Alter, Archbishop of Cincinnati, a letter, warning him of an impending “crisis of faith” at the University of Dayton. He asserted that fellow philosophy professors were presenting views that went against the teaching of the Catholic Church. To Bonnette, the matter was urgent because of the “harm to souls” that occurred daily in the classroom, so urgent that Bonnette seemed ready to resign publicly.¹ This letter set off what became known as The Heresy Affair or Heresy Scandal. After receiving the letter, Archbishop Alter later called Fr. Raymond Roesch, president of the university, and asked him to investigate the matter. Events that contributed to an ongoing transition of the University of Dayton were beginning to take place. The events helped accelerate the school’s evolution in the coming years from a small, parochial college to an institution that mirrored the secular, research-based institutions of the nation.

As Bonnette’s letter to Archbishop Alter reveals, this shift in the University of Dayton did not take place without controversy. Indeed, the change taking place at the university during the 1960s produced tensions surrounding its Catholic identity and with the local community’s perception of the institution. In the letters to the editor of the *Dayton Daily News*, a number of Dayton community residents complained about the “damage” that was being done to the students at the university. Some were not happy with what was being taught at the university. These tensions between the university and the community had been building up for many years.

American Catholics in the Postwar Era

The reactions typified by the events of what has become known as the “Heresy Affair”, that will be detailed here, were driven, in part, by the importance of religious identity to the American Catholic community. Throughout the previous century, American Catholics maintained a distinct religious identity through involvement in

¹ Mary Jude Brown, “Souls in the Balance: The ‘Heresy Affair’ At the University of Dayton, 1960-67” (doctoral dissertation, University of Dayton, 2003), 19-22.

parish, diocesan, and professional Catholic organizations and associations. The continuation of Catholic institutional separatism was necessary due to the prejudice against the community.

American Catholics were a minority compared to the number of Protestants residing in the country. Consequently, Catholics faced persecution at the hands of Protestants and had to unite and function as a sect to fight back against this persecution. Catholic immigration accelerated in the 1800s and this “minority” began to grow. With the surge of Irish Catholics in the 1840s, an “immigrant Church” identity emerged that emphasized a collective Catholic experience as one group to keep the faith and protect themselves from Protestant America. Schooling played an important role because Protestants ran the public-school system. To counter this, Catholics created their own school system.²

At the beginning of the 20th Century, some country clubs still banned Catholics and the Vatican still did not have an American ambassador. In the 1920s, a local Dayton chapter of the Ku Klux Klan terrorized the University of Dayton campus with multiple bombing threats and cross burning rallies.³ These sorts of conflicts were not unusual in the United States and they brought about the tensions that often revolved around a Catholic identity and an American identity. To counter this, American Catholics compartmentalized the religious sphere and the modern, secular sphere.⁴

This compartmentalization of the religious and secular spheres led to a monolithic unity within American Catholicism, known as the “One True Church.” According to Kristine LaLonde, the American Catholic identity entailed a certain insularity that limited interaction with the outside world. Additionally, LaLonde argues that their theology and their society discouraged interaction with people of other faiths. The strongest characteristic of this culture was its emphasis on authority and obedience. The hierarchy of the Church both worked to enforce its rules and generated its own expectations and order. The greatest strength of this authority grew from people’s belief in and assent to it.

² José Casanova, “Roman and Catholic and American: The Transformation of Catholicism in the United States,” *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 6, no. 1 (1992): 82-84, accessed February 4, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/20007073>.

³ William Vance Trollinger, Jr., “Hearing the Silence: The University of Dayton, the Ku Klux Klan, and Catholic Universities and Colleges in the 1920s,” *American Catholic Studies* 124, no. 1 (2013): 9-10, accessed April 18, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44195455>.

⁴ Casanova, “Roman and Catholic and American,” 102.

The Church had no legal or civil punishment as a method for enforcement; it depended on people believing in it.⁵

By 1965, however, American Catholics comprised a higher percentage of people in both the upper and middle classes than American Protestants. This allowed for thorough assimilation and Americanization in the Catholic population.⁶ As American Catholics benefitted from the country's economic prosperity, they contributed to the Baby Boom and moved to the growing suburbs.⁷ Adult Catholics and their children in the suburban parishes across the country began shedding their distinctive ethnic traits and blended in with their secular and non-Catholic neighbors. They began to live in single-family units away from their ethnic heritage, purchased cars from the suburbs to work, and saved to send their children to college.

The changes that had brought about this greater integration of Catholics into the mainstream of American society had taken place gradually. Events following the end of World War II appeared to accelerate this trend. As a result of the GI Bill, Catholic college enrollment in the United States increased 164% between 1940 and 1960.⁸ But here there were countervailing effects buried inside the assimilation trends. Since Catholics had separate schools, this meant Catholic college attendance increased substantially during this time period. Dennis Bonnette, the author of the letter to Archbishop Alter, is an example of someone who was steeped in Catholic school education. He graduated from the University of Detroit in 1960 and received his master's and his doctoral degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1962. Before he came to Dayton, Bonnette taught at the University of San Diego and at Loyola University in New Orleans, both Catholic universities. In short, Bonnette had a Catholic background and had a long history of Catholic education that, for some, reinforced the traditions of insularity.

Bonnette's thinking appears to have been influenced by another factor. As we have seen, Bonnette's education had taken place at a time when American Catholics were

⁵ Kristine LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority: Reform, Rebellion, and Resistance in the Catholic Church of the 1960s" (doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000), 47-48.

⁶ Norval D. Green and Ruth Hyland, "Religious Preference and Worldly Success: Some Evidence from National Surveys," *American Sociological Review* 32, no. 1 (1967): 75-78, accessed March 9, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2091720>.

⁷ Helen Marie Ciernick, "Student Life on Catholic-College Campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s" (doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2003), 19.

⁸ Ciernick, "Student Life," 22.

experiencing greater opportunities to integrate into the mainstream inside the U.S. However, this integration involved shared elements of reactionary thought that reinforced insularity. The anti-communist crusade of the postwar era spurred a stronger alliance between Rome and America.⁹

Simultaneously, however, the merging of Americanism and Catholicism contributed to the fading insularity. Young Catholics religious attitudes were ripe for change. Catholics were attending college at higher rates than before and, as a consequence, were exposed to different cultural influences. If the fusion of Americanism and Catholicism could be said to have culminated in 1960 with the ascendancy of John F. Kennedy, an Irish Catholic, as president of the United States, then so too could the evolution of a progressive-centered Catholic movement. Younger religious professionals were the first to be moved by changes within the Church itself.¹⁰ Fr. Roesch, President of the University of Dayton, was part of both of these groups. He was under 50 years old when he first began his presidency and, as a Marianist priest, he was one of the first people to feel the changes that would come to Catholicism in the 1960s. While many Catholics of the old order wanted to remain to how the Catholic Church had operated for many decades, Fr. Roesch was more sympathetic to the changes that came to the Catholic Church and he would help usher in those changes to the University of Dayton.

Second Vatican Council

These elements formed the backdrop of the coming crisis of the Heresy Affair at the University of Dayton. The events were also shaped by broader developments taking place in the Catholic Church. The Heresy Affair was one of the results of the Second Vatican Council. Some American Catholics favored Pope John XXIII, head of the Catholic Church, and his efforts to bring the Church into closer alignment with the modern world while other American Catholics preferred to retain the community's more insular identity. Both groups looked to the pope in the Rome as the ultimate authority on spiritual issues.¹¹ Pope John would call for a universal ecumenical council that would be called the Second Vatican Council. It marked a historic effort for Catholicism because the

⁹ Casanova, "Roman and Catholic and American", 104-106.

¹⁰ Phillip Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change in the 1960s", *Review of Politics* 34, no. 4 (1972), 99-100, accessed April 25, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1405957>.

¹¹ Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change," 93.

council was to bring the Church to a new understanding of itself and of its relation to, and responsibilities to, other Christian churches, non-Christian believers, and the whole modern secular world.¹² The Second Vatican Council was intended to shape how the Church would respond to the growth of secularism, technological changes, and the rise of political democracy.¹³

Ecumenical councils gathered together all the world's bishops to deliberate on issues of concern to the Church. Historically, they mostly took place when there was a serious threat to the faith. With all of the changes taking place in the world during the first half of the 20th Century, many in the Church hierarchy saw the Church as needing to better respond to and interact with the larger world.¹⁴ *Gaudium et Spes*, one of the official documents of the Council, states that, "The council yearns to explain to everyone how it conceives the presence and activity of the Church in the world of today."¹⁵ One of the conclusions of the Council was that private faith could no longer leave public, secular matters alone nor could spiritual truths be immune to freedom of inquiry.¹⁶

In Dayton, the importance of this event was not lost on either the city's largest newspaper, *Dayton Daily News*, or the University of Dayton student newspaper, *Flyer News*. As a newspaper of a Catholic institution, *Flyer News* covered Vatican II extensively. Before the Council started, it reported on multiple talks by religious professionals on what could develop from the Council. Its coverage continued through the subsequent developments of the Council. At the same time, *Dayton Daily News*, the secular newspaper, was covering each of the developments that came out of the Council. This secular newspaper also knew how important Vatican II was going to be in regards to the Catholic Church's new place in the modern world.

In the U.S., several of the injunctions of Vatican II directly impacted the ongoing tensions between the more insular Catholics and the more cosmopolitan Catholics.

¹² Gleason, "Catholicism and Cultural Change," 94.

¹³ C.J.T Talar, "The Crucible of Change: Andrew Greeley as Sociologist of American Catholicism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 20, no. 2 (2002): 15, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25154802>.

¹⁴ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 115-116.

¹⁵ Second Vatican Council, "Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, December 7, 1965," accessed March 17, 2020, http://www.vatican.va/archive/hist_councils/ii_vatican_council/documents/vat-ii_cons_19651207_gaudium-et-spes_en.html.

¹⁶ Casanova, "Roman and Catholic and American," 106.

According to LaLonde, the Council moved the Church's position away from a monolithic and insular approach to religious truth to one that included respect and openness for other faiths. They acknowledged that truths existed in other faiths and encouraged Catholics to work with people of other religions.¹⁷ Furthermore, the Council Fathers advocated dialogue between competent experts from different churches and communities and encouraged cooperation in social matters.¹⁸ Not only did the Council Fathers encourage dialogue with Protestants, but they also greatly emphasized a renewed engagement with the order and concerns of the modern, secular world. They stressed the need for everyone in the Church, both hierarchy and laity, to concern themselves with the establishing a just and peaceful world. All of these conclusions from the council marked a dramatic shift from insularity and restriction to a position of cooperation and openness.¹⁹

As the events of the Heresy Affair would soon indicate, one place the impact of Vatican II was most directly evident was in the Catholic institution of higher education, specifically with regards to Thomism, or Neo-Scholasticism, the official philosophy of the Catholic Church. Beginning in the mid-1920s, Thomism was the crucial element in integrating Catholic higher education.²⁰ At the beginning of the 1950s, it proved to be the glue holding together the Catholic academic community in the United States. The laity turned to Thomism in their debates with anti-Catholics in order to support their case for intellectual viability of Catholicism.²¹ According to Helen Ciernick, the authoritarianism and rigidity of the American Catholic culture also enforced Thomism as the one true philosophy, hindering the development of intellectualism.²² Ciernick argues that this Catholic "mental ghetto" left Catholic-college students behind their secular counterparts in building intellectual values but, in the 1960s, Thomism gradually collapsed.²³ Whether Ciernick's depiction of Thomism was accurate, or a fair assessment of its impact on the Catholic community, the conservatism of the Thomist position impacted the events surrounding the Heresy Affair in Dayton. Bonnette espoused Thomistic values and saw it

¹⁷ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 138.

¹⁸ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 140.

¹⁹ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 144-145.

²⁰ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 17.

²¹ Ciernick, "Student Life," 25.

²² Ciernick, "Student Life," 35.

²³ Ciernick, "Student Life," 50.

as the one true philosophy for Catholics. Growing up in this unified, monolithic, and insular American Catholic culture, it can be seen that he was not fond of the changes occurring around him and responded to those changes with an appeal to the authority of the Church.

The erosion of Thomism's hold over American Catholics in the 1960s went hand in hand with the broadening of American Catholicism. These changes precipitated questions about paternalism, participation of the laity in Church matters, and, most importantly for the Heresy Affair, academic freedom at Catholic institutions.²⁴ The general definition of academic freedom is the freedom of an individual to express critical ideas without the threat of formal or informal punishment.²⁵ At the University of Dayton and elsewhere, younger and more secular professors attempted to teach other philosophies besides Thomism. The issue of academic freedom came to the forefront of a controversy that would transform the University of Dayton and set it on a new path of education.

Heresy Affair

In the early 1960s, there was evidence of dissatisfaction with Thomism at the University of Dayton. In the philosophy department, the tensions between traditional Thomists and modern philosophers, who taught modern, secular philosophical beliefs such as existentialism, were starting to become more apparent. At the University of Dayton, modern philosophers such as Eulalio Baltazar taught that Thomism was outdated and that “not all truth is contained in our philosophy and theology.” To Baltazar, “Thomism having all the answers” is an incorrect way to think.²⁶ This position was considered unacceptable by Thomists who held that Thomism was to be the one true philosophy, mandated by the “one true Church.” These two opposing viewpoints created the foundation of the conflict between Thomists and non-Thomists that exploded in the events of the Heresy Affair.

The intensity of the coming debate was fueled by beliefs that, for some, defense of Thomism amounted to a defense of Catholic identity itself. For others, the rejection of

²⁴ Ciernick, “Student Life,” 36.

²⁵ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 214.

²⁶ Steve Bickham, “Is Thomism Enough for Us?”, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 27, 1963.

Thomism made space for a more progressive interpretation of Catholic identity. Tensions between Thomists and modern philosophers also arose because Thomistic courses served an apologetic function by providing a rationale for the Catholic faith. Thomists argued that students should know Thomism well before learning other philosophies which could threaten their faith.²⁷ On the other hand, the non-Thomists saw the purpose of their courses to be the encouragement of a search for truth, not just one ultimate truth. In the early 1960s, students at the University of Dayton responded positively to the new ideas and new approaches espoused by the non-Thomists.²⁸ This, along with increased criticisms of Thomism by professors like Baltazar, likely made Bonnette and other Thomists feel attacked. For them, these developments were an assault on faith. The Thomists' hostility and determination to fight to uphold their Catholic faith was all too evident in Bonnette's letter.²⁹

The conflict at the University of Dayton had begun to grow when the newly appointed Fr. Roesch began hiring younger and more research-based faculty. An alumnus of the University of Dayton and a Marianist priest, Fr. Roesch received a master's degree in psychology at the Catholic University of America as well as Ph.D. in Philosophy from Fordham University. Afterwards, he returned to the University of Dayton as a psychology professor and later became the chair of his department.³⁰ His background in the social sciences meant he understood the idea of academic freedom, and, as a result, he hired more non-Thomist professors for the philosophy department. The first non-Thomist philosopher, John Chrisman, was hired in 1961, followed by Baltazar in 1962. Not long after, in spring 1963, the tensions between the Thomists and non-Thomists escalated when Baltazar and Chrisman began to criticize Thomism in their presentations. By 1964 and 1965, the situation had become so polarized that job candidates were immediately asked, "which side are you on?"³¹

Students had begun to debate the central question animating the conflict years before the actual Heresy Affair occurred. As far back as March 1963, *Flyer News*, the

²⁷ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 65.

²⁸ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 70.

²⁹ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 89.

³⁰ "University of Dayton: Presidents," Libraries Research Guides, accessed 17 March 2020 <http://libguides.udayton.edu/c.php?g=15315&p=82747#s-lg-box-wrapper-277608>.

³¹ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 17-18.

student newspaper, had a small article on existentialism being discussed after a Philosophy Club meeting and contained a quote from John Chrisman.³² Along with covering the issues long before the scandal, *Flyer News* also tracked the students' feelings towards the gradual changes in intellectual matters. Later, in September, an article featured Baltazar and a lecture that described Thomism as outdated. The response by students "varied from straight out praise to definite displeasure."³³ Like the faculty itself, the students in 1963 were torn between older and newer ways of thinking. Many students thought that teaching other philosophies besides Thomism developed students intellectually. According to one student, Steve Bickham, students had "the right to investigate any system of philosophy."³⁴ In the words of Ed Esch, a *Flyer News* columnist, "Nor may we say that because we attend a Catholic school, we should follow Thomism blindly."³⁵ Demand for the study of other philosophical systems was so great in September 1964 that the Education Committee of the Union Activities Organization offered a philosophy course to "students interested in extending their knowledge of this subject beyond the realms of the standard course of UD."³⁶ After a brief hiatus, debate over the issue returned in spring 1965 when students began to call for teaching modern philosophies. According to one editorial in *Flyer News*, some students felt that their knowledge in philosophy was lacking compared to those from secular universities. But other students defended Thomism. It is the foundation of philosophical thought and because, said Ray Makkos, "this philosophy directs us reasonably to God."³⁷

In April 1966, it became evident that the student demand for non-Thomist classes was gaining traction. Dr. Edward Harkenrider, chairman of the Philosophy Department, announced that the courses for his department were now going to be more pluralistic. To undertake such a task, the professors were going to have more autonomy in what material

³² "Existentialism Discussed After Meeting," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 22, 1963.

³³ Steve Bickham, "Is Thomism Enough for Us?," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 27, 1963.

³⁴ Steve Bickham, "In All Seriousness," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 13, 1964.

³⁵ Ed Esch, "A Real Issue," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 6, 1963.

³⁶ "Education Committee Offers Philosophy Course to Students," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 11, 1964.

³⁷ Letters to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 26, 1965.

and what readings were given in their classes.³⁸ It was at this stage that Dennis Bonnette wrote his letter to Alter.

On October 15, 1966, the letter elevated the controversy from a campus conflict to a wider issue concerning Church teachings and education. The event that triggered this letter was a Philosophy Club presentation on October 11 by Professors Lawrence Ulrich and Randolph Lumpp on situation ethics.³⁹ Situations ethics states that each man is individual and unique and cannot be ruled by a system of “material norms of a universal kind.” Rather, individual acts should be judged according to the situation and context.⁴⁰ The Catholic Church was concerned with situation ethics. Pope Pius XII supported a view of universal norms and, thus, opposed situation ethics.⁴¹

Bonnette was outraged by the presentation on situation ethics. In the letter, Bonnette not only mentioned the lecture by Lumpp and Ulrich, but also another presentation on situation ethics by Baltazar and Chrisman in the spring. To Bonnette, these were not isolated incidents, but rather “the influence of these erroneous teachings” of situation ethics and modern philosophies “virtually permeates the university.” Bonnette asked the archbishop to send a representative to Dayton “for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive investigation of the grave spiritual harm” that he claimed was occurring. He also noted that some professors, including him, might resign in protest of the administration’s “failure to fulfill its moral duty.”

Also, in his letter, Bonnette claimed that, at the situation ethics talk in the spring, Chrisman had endorsed abortion and birth control.⁴² Bonnette opposed abortion and birth control. The Church opposed the former, but, at the time, there appeared to be shifting views on the latter. In the past, the Church had lobbied against specific government actions and programs that supported either abortion or family planning by the use of contraceptives. Archdiocesan announcements and sermons worked to stem the growth of public support for birth control programs. The long-time doctrinal position of the Church

³⁸ “Phil. Dept Revamps Courses,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 15, 1966.

³⁹ Jim Wade, letter to the editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 28, 1965.

⁴⁰ Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations. Volume II: Man in the Church*, trans. by Karl-H. Kruger (Baltimore, MD: Helicon Press, 1963), 217.

⁴¹ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 99.

⁴² Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 20-22.

had resulted in widespread cultural expectations within the U.S. among Catholics that families should be large.⁴³

In 1967, however, Pope John had appointed a Papal Commission on Birth Control and issued a majority opinion recommending a softening of the Church's prohibition on birth control. The recommendation would not be heeded as the Church remained opposed to contraception.⁴⁴ Despite this, by then, many Catholics had changed their minds on the issue as a 1967 Harris Poll revealed 73% of Catholics wanted access to birth control.⁴⁵ The Philosophy Club had also begun to debate about contraception and it was there that Baltazar gave his view on the matter.

Archbishop Alter asked Roesch to look into the matter. Roesch called a meeting of those involved, including Bonnette and the four accused professors (Baltazar, Chrisman, Lump, and Ulrich). Bonnette was asked to prepare a statement detailing his charges and the accused were given an opportunity to present their case. Bonnette's statement specified each instance in which the accused defied Church doctrine. The accused faculty's response asserted that this was a transitional time in the Church and claimed that their views were "within the bounds of current Catholic speculation."⁴⁶ On November 28, 1966, a little over a month after Bonnette sent his letter, the accused professors were declared innocent of teaching and advocating doctrines contrary to Church doctrine. Alter accepted the decision.⁴⁷

The *Flyer News* began to cover the events as soon as Bonnette sent his letter. The initial reports and editorials placed the events in the context of the larger fight between the Thomists and non-Thomists. *Flyer News* recognized that this fight had been occurring years before the Heresy Affair took place. In October 1966, an editorial called the conflict "that old problem" and stated that "questions of what should and should not be taught" in philosophy courses had been "tossed around for many years."⁴⁸ Later, in November, a *Flyer News* article further advanced this and brought up that many columns

⁴³ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 202-203.

⁴⁴ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 258.

⁴⁵ LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority," 262.

⁴⁶ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 22-25.

⁴⁷ "Four University of Dayton Professors Declared Innocent," 1966, News Releases 3080, accessed March 18, 2020, https://ecommons.udayton.edu/news_rls/3080.

⁴⁸ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 28, 1966.

in the 1964-65 academic year had debated the issue.⁴⁹ Now, the debate also took a satirical turn. One of the columnists for *Flyer News*, Harry Rodersheimer, gave an “un-award” to Dr. Bonnette that was called the “Joan of Arc Award for a) Purity, b) Martyrdom, c) Dogmistic Ideals and d) Naivety.”⁵⁰ As one can see, humor was still present among *Flyer News* writers even in controversial topics.

Coverage of the Heresy Affair extended beyond just Dayton’s campus. Publicity about the dispute was far-reaching and included articles in the *New York Times*, the *National Catholic Reporter*, and the local secular and Catholic newspapers and periodicals in the Midwest. According to Mary Brown, the secular press typically referred to the controversy as an internal religious dispute and reported the events as they happened. Three secular publications (*Wall Street Journal*, *U.S. News and World Report*, and *New York Times Magazine*) included the Heresy Affair in larger studies on changes in Catholic higher education.⁵¹

The Dayton Daily News covered the scandal as it unfolded and obtained quotes from affected parties. It ran a small article in December 1966 that explained the emerging conflict over the debate of situation ethics. Another article in January 1967 declared Baltazar’s views the embodiment of the spirit of Vatican II. This may have been an attempt by *Dayton Daily News* to give the reformers some sort of religious approval through Vatican II. If so, as a major supporter of the University of Dayton, it can be inferred that *Dayton Daily News* was trying to minimize any conflict between the students and the administration. Confirming this, the *Dayton Daily News* supported Roesch’s actions in handling the scandal. An earlier editorial had praised Roesch for forging a “bold new policy” and suggested that the Dayton community should learn from the university to “develop competence in the art of disagreement.”⁵²

With the *Dayton Daily News* seemingly against them, on December 6, Bonnette and eight of his supporters went on Phil Donahue’s local radio program called “Conversation Piece.” Donahue, of course, would go on to become a major innovator in daytime talk show television. Before television, however, Donahue had a radio show.

⁴⁹ Aggie Taormina, “Phil. Debate Not New to UD,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 11, 1966.

⁵⁰ Harry Rodersheimer, “Un-Awards III,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 18, 1966.

⁵¹ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 33.

⁵² Editorial, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 6, 1966.

Donahue was himself a staunch Catholic. He had attended the University of Notre Dame. However, like the key figures here, in 1967, he was questioning his beliefs.⁵³ Nevertheless, Donahue released a statement from a fellow staunch Catholic, Dr. Bonnette titled “The Declaration of Conscience on the Doctrinal Crisis at the University of Dayton.” The statement called the administration’s investigation a “classic whitewash” and called into question the lack of witnesses in the investigation.⁵⁴ According to the university, the accused never denied Bonnette’s statements and, as a result, there was no need to call witnesses. The university’s response went on to say that all that was necessary was to understand the context of their actions.⁵⁵ Afterwards, the faculty forum voted to approve Roesch’s handling of the matter and to censure the eight faculty members and force them to rescind the charges.⁵⁶

The scandal was still not over, though. A number of local Catholic pastors wrote to Roesch and Alter expressing dissatisfaction with the university’s findings and with the religious climate there in general. As a result, Alter formed a fact-finding commission.⁵⁷ Alter’s actions triggered a student response. The Student Council issued a resolution denouncing the fact-finding commission and upheld academic freedom. A month later, the commission reported that they had indeed found that there had been specified occasions of teaching contrary to Catholic doctrine. Nevertheless, the commission made no suggestions of dismissals of involved faculty.⁵⁸ The Heresy Affair was finally over.

The Catholic University and Academic Freedom

The Heresy Affair represented a growing strain on the University of Dayton campus between its identity as a Catholic college and its emerging reality as a secular university. That controversy had clearly spilled out into the community. The newspapers, both student and professional, played a crucial role in reflecting this growing strain.

⁵³ Phil Donahue, *My Own Story: Donahue* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1979), 56.

⁵⁴ Aggie Taormina, “Whitewash Charge Levelled After Philosophy Investigation,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 9, 1966.

⁵⁵ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 27-28.

⁵⁶ Aggie Taormina, “Faculty Forum Censure Eight Philosophy Professors,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 16, 1966.

⁵⁷ Aggie Taormina, “Archbishop’s New Committee to Investigate Controversy,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 13, 1967.

⁵⁸ Aggie Taormina, “Archbishop’s Board Finds Some Basis for Charges,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 17, 1967.

Before the Heresy Affair, many people viewed a Catholic university just as Bonnette did. It represented a Catholic perspective, but it also supported a vision of America. If the Catholic morals were diminished, then Communists would be able to take over America, it was argued.⁵⁹ Opponents of change believed it was the role of Catholic universities to train professionals to work within the Church or to do the work of the Church within the world.⁶⁰ Furthermore, some students worried about how the diminishing importance of Thomism would consequently diminish the importance of a Catholic university. As one wrote in *Flyer News*, “Catholic education must have a standard of values. If it doesn’t, what distinguishes it from a secular university?”⁶¹

In 1964, Roesch held similar views. He believed all faculty have a role to play passing on Catholic morals to students. In the midst of the Heresy Affair, however, Roesch also showed that he believed the university’s goal was to encourage “genuine intellectual inquiry and research” and the Catholic university was subject to all the demands and risks of this free and open inquiry. The duty to hand down Catholic doctrine, morals, and conduct was no longer the primary function of the Catholic university.⁶² The scandal reflected Roesch’s shifting view on the role of Catholic higher education and it had changed other people’s minds as well.

This shift in Roesch’s beliefs represented a larger trend of American Catholic higher education distancing itself from the Church to gain academic legitimacy amongst secular universities. Many of these Catholic institutions began to endorse the concept of academic freedom. When enrollment increased at Catholic universities in the postwar era, the number of lay professors in Catholic institutions increased. Many of these lay professors attained a graduate education at secular institutions and expected academic freedom.⁶³ These were the non-Thomists that Roesch was hiring in the early 1960s.

It was not only Roesch who questioned the meaning of a Catholic university, but students had begun to inquire about its meaning as well. After Alter formed his fact-finding commission, Jack Boos of *Flyer News* was critical of the Church’s “interference” at the university as he questioned “who really runs UD.” He even suggested that UD

⁵⁹ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 179-180.

⁶⁰ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 207.

⁶¹ Robert Baumgartner, “A Real Issue”, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 22, 1963.

⁶² Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 188.

⁶³ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 220.

should “sever all ties with the Catholic Church and go the non-sectarian route.”⁶⁴ *Flyer News* ran an article that asked the question of why to attend a Catholic university and some students answered they wanted a religious-based education while others answered they wanted a more secular education.⁶⁵

While many students were beginning to want a more secular education, a number of residents disagreed with them in the letters to the editor in the *Dayton Daily News*. One letter criticizes Roesch for damaging the souls of the students and praises Bonnette for “fighting for what he believes is right.”⁶⁶ Another letter brings about charges that Baltazar has advocated Communist teachings. Still another declared “too much academic freedom can send your soul to hell.”⁶⁷ More letters seem to be in favor with Bonnette and his supporters. Many of the “old guard” who grew up in the time when Catholic culture was more insular and then tightly bound to the reactionary politics of anti-Communist Americans did not want the modern philosophies to be taught at the university.

What is evident from examining the *Dayton Daily News* coverage of these events is that the newspaper sought to normalize the debate and thereby minimize polarization. To this end, besides its own coverage, it published letters by Dayton residents who approved of the university teaching other viewpoints. Residents demanded that other philosophies and viewpoints be taught at the University of Dayton. They depicted efforts to stop it as amounting to censorship. Another letter approved of the fact that the “old guard” had failed to prevent changes. The author encouraged the “old guard” to see that “the old views are not only the good views” and encouraged the search for truth.⁶⁸

It appears that despite the residents found issue with either the “heretical” professors or Fr. Roesch, the embattled university president believed he saw a major new trend about Catholic higher education emphasizing secularism and academic freedom education. His shift culminated in a speech he gave to the entire faculty on March 1, 1967 in a packed Boll Theater. He stated that he hoped to promote newer understandings of the role of the Church on campus advocated by leading authorities of Vatican II.⁶⁹ This new

⁶⁴ Jack Boos, “Who Runs UD?”, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 20, 1967.

⁶⁵ Paul Siegmund, “Why Attend Cath. Univ.?”, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 27, 1967.

⁶⁶ Bert J. Hosfeld, letter to the editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 10, 1966.

⁶⁷ Jack E. Focke, letter to the editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 7, 1967.

⁶⁸ Suzanne Smith, letter to the editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 19, 1967.

⁶⁹ Brown, “Souls in the Balance,” 290.

understanding was that the Church needs a new approach towards the modern world. As such, Roesch believed genuine academic freedom must flourish on campus and, thus, the four accused professors are free to teach as they see fit as long as they stay in the area of their expertise and give respect to the Magisterium.⁷⁰

Roesch's speech was greeted with a rousing standing ovation. The student newspaper editorial staff embraced Roesch's statement and embraced the ideals he had espoused in the speech. For its part, the *Dayton Daily News* felt that the events had enhanced the University of Dayton's stature as a more secular and more progressive educational institution. There was a debate over details, but editorials in *Dayton Daily News* lauded the university for sharing the spirit of Vatican II and for getting rid of the conservatism of the 1950s, and that a spirit of inquiry was necessary in the modern world.⁷¹

In the furtherance of these stated goals, Roesch had set up an ad hoc committee of faculty to conduct an open discussion directed toward establishing directives for allowing academic freedom on campus. A month after his speech, the committee began their work and completed their report later in July. In the report, they concluded the University of Dayton should investigate, probe, and search for truth and the mystery of life. The university's chief interest, it seemed, should be perfecting the world in a secular way.⁷²

Conclusion

After the Heresy Affair, Dr. Dennis Bonnette left the University of Dayton and taught at Niagara University for four decades. His departure as well as the departures of his supporters marked a shift for the University of Dayton from an emphasis on religious to academic, secular activities.⁷³ Bonnette represented the group of Catholics who believed Catholic higher education should be distinctly religious in the material it teaches and in the views it represents. To Bonnette, the Catholic university was meant to be merely an extension of the Catholic Church.

But, in the 1960s, Bonnette's views were increasingly in the minority on campuses. Following the Second Vatican Council, Catholic universities sought to become

⁷⁰ Aggie Taormina, "Fr. Roesch Reveals Stand on Philosophy Controversy," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 3, 1967.

⁷¹ Editorial, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 12, 1967.

⁷² Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 304-307.

⁷³ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 212.

more like their secular counterparts and include more graduate work, leading to more research and thought-provoking ideas.⁷⁴ It was in this atmosphere that the faculty and students supported the teaching of modern philosophies.

Newspaper coverage of this fight played a major role in determining the results. It was in the student newspaper that the new ideas gained traction and spread. *The Dayton Daily News* played an equally important role. It helped normalize the debate taking place on campus to a wider audience in Dayton itself. The newspapers' judicious decision not to inflame the debate modulated the more conservative public reaction.

The Heresy Affair can be summarized as an inevitable clash between two groups of Catholics. Those who grew up with the old pre-Vatican II Church such as Bonnette were guarded against the outside world and held to Thomism steadfastly as a defense to non-Catholics. When changes in Catholic higher education and in philosophy occurred after the Second Vatican Council, other Catholics began to embrace new views.

⁷⁴ Brown, "Souls in the Balance," 322.

Chp. 2 ROTC Protests

Introduction

In March 1969, Fr. Roesch received the U.S. Army's Distinguished Civilian Service Award, the highest award the army can bestow on a civilian. The award is presented to private citizens who have served the army in an advisory capacity and Fr. Roesch fulfilled that service by being a representative of the National Catholic Education Association to the Army Advisory Panel on ROTC Affairs. The citation stated he had fervently expressed "his support of the ROTC Program not just at the University of Dayton, but throughout the United States."¹ During the first decade of his tenure as President of the University of Dayton, ROTC grew to 2,500 cadets, making it the nation's second largest ROTC unit.² Yet, just a few months before Fr. Roesch received this award, his university was embroiled in protests against the two-year mandatory ROTC requirement for all males.

Students at the University of Dayton began to protest against their ROTC programs as the Vietnam War escalated. College students nationwide began to see ROTC programs as part of the Vietnam problem. At Dayton, the Heresy Affair had also played a role in enlarging protests. Many students were now inspired by the call for academic freedom to speak their minds regarding the war. In the wake of the Heresy Affair, some students saw a contradiction in Fr. Roesch's statements about academic freedom and the requirements for ROTC training. If they were given the freedom to learn what they wanted, were they not given the choice to do as they believed? Furthermore, students saw a contradiction between Catholic teachings of peace and ROTC. How could a university, sponsored by the Catholic Church and its views on peace, support in good conscience a program that prepares men for war?

Vietnam and Its Early Support at the University of Dayton

From 1941 to 1973, Americans experienced lengthy periods of war. From 1941-45, they had fought in the World War II. Later, the U.S. was involved in the Korean War,

¹ "Army Presents Honor for Service to Fr. Roesch," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 7, 1969.

² "Roesch Gets Army's Top Civilian Medal," *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 5, 1969.

and, now, Vietnam. Americans were initially patient with the buildup of Vietnam. The first anti-war marches were not until 1965.³ In fact, despite the popular images of the anti-war movement, the war had extensive support from the American people during its earlier stages. The majority of Americans trusted their government.⁴ They believed that the U.S. would only be in Vietnam if it was truly necessary. Most Americans, including many Catholics, supported the war because they believed it was part of the fight against the spread of Communism. This anti-Communist sentiment discouraged newspaper editors from showing sympathy to leftist groups out of fear that an antiwar position would equal support for the Vietnamese Communists.⁵

Indeed, through the mid-20th Century, American Catholics proudly supported American foreign policy in the fight against Communism as proof of their patriotism.⁶ American Catholic support for the Vietnam War was evident at the University of Dayton. In November 1962, three men that were originally from University of Dayton's military ROTC program returned to campus after tours in Vietnam. They described the situation in Southeast Asia to *Flyer News*. "Citizens must take active part in our government to maintain moral and physical strength to stop the spread of communism," one of them said.⁷ While not explicitly supporting foreign aid towards Vietnam, *Flyer News* columnist Michael Kennedy made the claim that American foreign aid "is a bulwark for democracy and against the spread of communism" and believed that this program should be continued.⁸

Following John Kennedy's assassination, President Lyndon Johnson increased military involvement in Vietnam. As the severity of the Vietnam War increased from 1965 to 1968, some younger Americans became uneasy. In 1965, the first protests against the war took place at Columbia, Wisconsin-Madison, and Harvard as students took over

³ William Jeynes, *American Educational History: School, Society, and the Common Good*, (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 309-311.

⁴ Roper Organization, *Trends in Public Attitudes Towards Television and Other Mass Media, 1959-1974* (New York, Television Information Office, 1975), 12.

⁵ Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1980), 114.

⁶ Helen Marie Ciernick, "Student Life on Catholic-College Campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s (doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2003), 262.

⁷ "Three Men in UD's Military Department Back from Vietnam," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 30, 1962.

⁸ Michael Kennedy, "Kennedy's Korner: Foreign Aid," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 13, 1963.

university buildings.⁹ Many Catholic-college students joined the anti-war movement early and remained active for the entirety of the movement. Much of their involvement was spurred by the developments coming out of the Second Vatican Council.¹⁰

At Dayton, however, these students were in the minority. Support for Vietnam on Dayton's campus became more apparent during the early years of the Johnson administration. *Flyer News* played a significant role in fostering support by reporting pro-Vietnam student activities and opinions. The student newspaper ran a survey of the student body's opinions regarding Johnson's air strikes on North Vietnam after the Pleiku U.S. airbase was attacked by the Vietcong in February 1965. Most students believed the action was justified.¹¹ Support for the Vietnam War was often justified by the need to stop the spread of Communism. Later, in October, Student Council passed a resolution supporting Johnson's policies in Vietnam with no dissenting votes.¹² The Young Democrats Club of the University of Dayton ran a poll of 2,300 students that revealed 76% of students supported Johnson's policies in Vietnam. Subsequently, a group of students sent a telegram to the White House to tell President Johnson of their support.¹³

Dayton Daily News did its part in fostering the impression that the students at the University of Dayton mainly supported the Vietnam War. Support for Vietnam was so great on Dayton's Campus, *Dayton Daily News* reported, that the Young Democrats and Young Republicans united to hold a pro-Vietnam rally on December 7, 1965 in front of Kennedy Union. They then marched through downtown Dayton, reported the *Dayton Daily News*. About 800 students gathered for the rally and included both faculty and local Daytonians.

In case there was any ambiguity of where the *Dayton Daily News* stood on the matter, the march included both columnist and editor of the *Dayton Daily News*, Jim Fain.¹⁴ Fain's presence at the pro-Vietnam rally represents a larger nationwide trend among members of the press. The American media, including *Dayton Daily News*,

⁹ Jeynes, "American Educational History," 312-313.

¹⁰ Ciernick, "Student Life," 251-252.

¹¹ Denny Grason, "Student View Viet Nam Crisis," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 12, 1965.

¹² "Vietnam Policy Supported by SC," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 29, 1965.

¹³ "UD Students Back LBJ's Policies," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 5, 1965.

¹⁴ "UD Rally, March to Support U.S.," *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 7, 1965.

supported military involvement in Vietnam. There was little critique of U.S. policy in Vietnam early in the conflict.

Despite the apparent overwhelming support for Vietnam on Dayton's campus, there were dissenters. The actions of the dissenters were rarely mentioned in the press and, when it was, they were criticized heavily. In November 1965, student Chuck Ricksecker wrote a letter to the editor of *Flyer News* in which he opposed the Vietnam War. "I cannot morally uphold the U.S. policy in Vietnam nor can I see why those who agree with me should be forced through the draft to go to Vietnam to kill other human beings," Ricksecker said.¹⁵ In two weeks after the letter was published, another student panned Ricksecker's viewpoint, hinting that he was an isolationist and a Communist. In March 1966, Herbert Creech declared in a letter that we must become "less tolerant of sick viewpoints from the pacifistic leftists who are unable to comprehend the meaning of 'United we stand-divided we fall.'"¹⁶

Doubts Emerge

Events over the next two years shifted attitudes on the University of Dayton campus and across the country. By mid-1967, the major news media were now becoming skeptical of the progress being made in Vietnam. They were now calling the conflict a stalemate. Their experiences in Vietnam were causing journalists to question the ethics of the war effort. Some journalists began to question the words and motives of military and political leaders who were leading the fight in Vietnam. Across the nation, the news revealed in graphic detail the reality of the war. The American public also began to question the war.¹⁷

At the University of Dayton, the final days of the Heresy Affair came to a close in February 1967. The event had caused students to start thinking more deeply not just about academic freedom, but about their own freedoms on campus. Students at the University of Dayton were now questioning long-held beliefs and re-examining their opinions on various issues.

¹⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 5, 1965.

¹⁶ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 25, 1966.

¹⁷ James Brian McPherson, *Journalism at the End of the American Century, 1965-present*, (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 1-2, 4.

At the University of Dayton, students began to question the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC). The university's two-year compulsory ROTC requirement for all males had been in place since the 1920s. This was not unusual at many Catholic colleges and universities. American higher education in general had been a consistent advocate for ROTC. But in the early 1960s, more colleges and universities had begun to drop compulsory ROTC.

One reason for this was because more students were able to defer from the draft than in the past. During the Vietnam-era, the number of exemptions and deferments had increased. This allowed males to better avoid service. College students were granted a student deferment. Perhaps for this reason early in the conflict, students did not appear to be concerned about serving overseas. But, as the war continued, more college students became concerned they would eventually need to serve. As this took place, many Catholic-college students viewed ROTC with suspicion and also questioned whether a Catholic institution hosting a ROTC unit was moral.¹⁸

As far back as March 1963, columnist Jim Herbert mentioned that "many freshman and sophomore men would agree" that mandatory ROTC is "unnecessary and incompatible with academic pursuits."¹⁹ There were no signs that the program would become voluntary despite some early misgivings about compulsory ROTC. After Roesch signed a new contract for the ROTC program in March 1965, student attitudes appeared unchanged. *Flyer News* reported that a poll conducted by the university's Young Democrats had found 82% of the 2,300 students polled were in favor of compulsory ROTC.²⁰ Support for the 2-year requirement was still strong, amongst both the administration and the students, it appeared.

Elsewhere, however, newspapers were reporting on a growing anti-Vietnam War movement. By mid-October 1965, *New York Times*, one of the premier American newspapers, ran front-page stories on the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The organization opposed the war. Not only were established newspapers reporting on organizations such as SDS, but those who opposed the conflict were creating "alternative newspapers." Almost all of these alternative newspapers were politically liberal and,

¹⁸ Ciernick, "Student Life," 256-257, 283.

¹⁹ Jim Herbert, "A voice...in left field," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 29, 1963.

²⁰ "UD Students Support LBJ", *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), November 5, 1965.

outside of the war, they also focused on racial equality, women's rights, sexual openness, and socioeconomic issues.²¹ The existence of these papers were undoubtedly known to the staff of the *Flyer News*.

The Growth of the Anti-War and Anti-ROTC Movement

At the University of Dayton, support for the war and mandatory ROTC began to waver after 1965. In April 1966, a letter to the editor of *Flyer News* described an incident where a ROTC cadet refused to salute the American flag during his drilling. This cadet did so in order to voice his disagreement with the war and with mandatory ROTC. The writer of the letter concluded that, "The ROTC instructors are wasting their time with him and his academic record is suffering because of this course."²² The writer appears to make an argument for the student's academic freedom. A few months later, in November, another student letter echoed a similar argument. The ROTC program was a waste of time, it claimed, for those who did not wish to become an officer. The author acknowledged he was for a minority group at the University of Dayton, but also asserted it was "nonetheless, a recognizable group."²³

In the coming months, that group would become more recognizable as *Flyer News* reported on their opposition to the ROTC program and the war. In November, a student named Jack Cline announced the start of a Vietnam Peace Vigil. Every Wednesday from 12:30 P.M. to 1:30 P.M, Cline and his fellow students led that peace vigil in front of the Kennedy Union. It would not end, he claimed, until the Vietnam War stopped. There were no speeches and no posters, the *Flyer News* reported, but rather a quiet protest conducted to "display sorrow for the killing" and to "awaken the campus conscience."²⁴ Significantly, the editorial board of *Flyer News* was not critical of the vigils. They wondered how effective it was, however.

By January 1967, these students were becoming openly critical of the conflict. In his editor's choice, a student named Bernie Murray accused his schoolmates of being "foolish" because "they're afraid to think" and "they cry out 'Un-American activities'

²¹ James Brian McPherson, *Journalism at the End*, 25.

²² Letters to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 1, 1966.

²³ Letters to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 4, 1966.

²⁴ Jan Golab, "Vigil Protests Vietnam War," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 18, 1966.

(Peace Vigils)” even though they don’t state “any positive ideas of their own.”²⁵ The next week, one writer supported Murray’s position in a letter. Another writer defended the war. Interestingly enough, Murray wrote in a letter to the editor that his column was not criticizing Vietnam. It was merely defending the right to dissent, he claimed. In fact, Murray states that he is in favor of “escalation of the war in Vietnam,” not withdrawal.²⁶

These letters to the editor of *Flyer News* reveals that there were signs of wavering support for mandatory ROTC and Vietnam at the University of Dayton. On the other hand, in March 1967, one of the *Dayton Daily News* reporters, Benjamin Kline, wrote a story on the “positive side” of ROTC service at the University of Dayton. Kline described the Dayton chapter as well as Ohio State’s. He also described the overall program as one that “actively prepares” men for military service.²⁷ Jim Fain returned to the University of Dayton to give a lecture about his visit to Vietnam. While others in American media were beginning to have doubts, Fain believed the situation was “much improved,” and perceived that the South Vietnamese hated the Viet Cong and admired the American forces. Furthermore, Fain invoked the Cold War domino theory by saying that Laos and Cambodia could “fall” to Communism if South Vietnam is defeated. *Dayton Daily News* was still in support of the Vietnam War.

Back at the University of Dayton, however, in April of 1967, the Campus Peace Committee (CPC) was founded on campus. The committee described itself as “patriotic young American students who are concerned about their country and their involvement in Vietnam.” *Flyer News* actively reported on CPC activities. For instance, the CPC sent members to the newly-created UD Forum to discuss Vietnam. The UD Forum had been created to stimulate open and free exchange of ideas among students. The committee also organized a Candlelight Procession for peace in Vietnam on Dayton’s campus.²⁸ The next week, the committee specifically protested against mandatory ROTC. During one of Fr. Roesch’s military reviews, the CPC attempted to bring attention to a petition calling for an end to mandatory ROTC that was created by the Theology Department and sent to the Administrative Council. CPC members carried a sign that read “Voluntary ROTC.”

²⁵ Bernie Murray, “Editor’s Choice,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 13, 1967.

²⁶ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 27, 1967.

²⁷ Benjamin Kline, “ROTC: Positive Side of Service,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 19, 1967.

²⁸ Carol Giver, “Candlelight Crowd on Peace March,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 14, 1967.

The protest turned into a controversy when Bro. Sheehy, Dean of Students, witnessed the group and their sign. Sheehy confiscated the sign and destroyed it because, he told *Flyer News*, the sign would “embarrass UD.”²⁹ Since this incident was reported in the last edition of *Flyer News*, there were no student reactions to it in the letters to the editor. However, in what may be seen as a significant shift, the editorial board was outraged at Sheehy’s actions, saying “The Dean-turned-hero did more harm to the name of the University than any of the peaceniks” and defended the student’s right to dissent.³⁰ The impact of the earlier Free Speech Movement was becoming increasingly evident.

Dayton Daily News also covered the sign-tearing incident extensively. It was at this point that the local newspaper could be said to have begun to pay more attention to the ROTC issue at the University of Dayton. Benjamin Kline, who wrote “ROTC: Positive Side to Service,” reported on the incident. But while the student newspaper saw Bro. Sheehy as an obstacle to their freedoms, Kline sought to mitigate the offense by shifting blame. Kline quoted the head of the CPC, Andrew Hollywood, who defended Bro. Sheehy by claiming he acted “not so much anti-Peace as much as that he felt we were deliberately trying to embarrass the university.”³¹ Another consequence of Kline’s defense was to minimize the fact that tensions were starting to develop between the students and the administration at the University of Dayton. His article also seemed designed to deflect public outrage against the protest away from the administration. The university had a strong, cooperative relationship with the Dayton community and it is likely that *Dayton Daily News* had a vested interest to not damage that relationship.

The incident nonetheless caught the attention of the Dayton community residents. Many of them wrote letters to the editor. A good majority of the letters sided with Bro. Sheehy. These were the most vocal residents. They supported Sheehy and his actions and were not totally on the side of the students, commending Sheehy for making a stand against the “peacenik demonstration” and calling for more men like him.³² Others called him a hero for his actions. He was a defender of law and order and was against chaos, it

²⁹ Sue Baker, “Unrest Mars Pres. Review,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 21, 1967.

³⁰ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 21, 1967.

³¹ Benjamin Kline, “UD Dean Rips Banner of ROTC Protesters,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), April 20, 1967.

³² Letters to the Editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), April 26, 1967.

was suggested. Dayton residents, however, were not entirely unsympathetic to the students. There were a few letters that criticized both Sheehy and compulsory ROTC, with one letter finding it “ironic” that, as a Marianist brother, Bro. Sheehy “gives his support to the ROTC program which trains men to kill.”³³

The End of Mandatory ROTC

In the academic year of 1967-68, criticism of ROTC and Vietnam mushroomed on the University of Dayton’s campus. In early September, the Dayton chapter of the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) passed a resolution that endorsed voluntary ROTC. Prof. Alfred Bannon, president of the chapter, and other members believed that the mandatory aspect of ROTC hindered “academic freedom” as it limited students’ freedom of choice for their courses.³⁴ With the Heresy Affair behind them and a reaffirmation of academic freedom made by Fr. Roesch back in March, more students appear to have begun to see a connection between their freedom to choose philosophy courses and their freedom to choose whether to take ROTC courses. This, as well as concurrent events surrounding the war, could have played a role in the students’ changing perspectives on ROTC. Both *Flyer News* and *Dayton Daily News* help shape these changing perspectives among the students and the Dayton residents.

Calls for voluntary ROTC rose during this year. This year, the university continued a series of informal discussions between students and administration officials that was originally called “fireside chats.” Now, it was renamed “U-Views.” The first one in September 1967 featured Fr. Roesch and many students asked him questions about voluntary ROTC. Fr. Roesch reacted defensively, saying “You didn’t have to come to the University of Dayton.”³⁵ It appeared to have the opposite of the intended effect on students. After this, more letters to the editor appeared calling for voluntary ROTC. One in October echoed the arguments advanced by the AAUP. It is at this point the *Flyer News* editorial board made a significant turn in its views on the morality of ROTC at a Catholic university. When Colonel Uel French of the Military Science Department tried to defend ROTC in a “Faculty Feedback” column, some students criticized his views in the letters to the editor in the next edition. The overall opinion of the students appears to

³³ Letters to the Editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), April 28, 1967.

³⁴ Dan Troy, “Student Congress Oks Voluntary ROTC at UD,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 29, 1967.

³⁵ “Talks on Tuition, ROTC Given,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 29, 1967.

have changed by this point. Even the Young Americans for Freedom (YAF), a conservative organization who supported the Vietnam War, was calling for an end to mandatory ROTC.³⁶

Whatever the situation in the fall of 1967, the next semester, the spring of 1968, the mood on campus had clearly changed. The outcry in *Flyer News* in the fall of 1967 for voluntary ROTC had opened the floodgates of student criticism. As a result, student government announced in March of 1968 that they were going to conduct a survey on students' opinions on ROTC in conjunction with CPC.³⁷ In April, when the results came back, they certified that the *Flyer News* editorial board's opinions matched those of the student body. Nearly 72% of the 1,000 students polled were not in favor of the two-year mandatory ROTC requirement. Furthermore, more students preferred a voluntary four-year program over either one or two years of a compulsory program, a stark change from the survey a couple years before which had found 82% of respondents were in favor of mandatory ROTC.³⁸

This major shift in the attitudes of the University of Dayton students was most likely the result of both the students' discontent with the Vietnam War and the growing campus support for academic freedom. The *Flyer News* editorial board influenced this shift by publishing editorials that had supported Fr. Roesch and the four professors in the Heresy Affair and that had called for voluntary ROTC. These editorials were echoing the broader anti-war movement that was growing nationally. Although the anti-war movement started small, it grew exponentially as the Johnson administration continued to escalate the war and send more troops over to Vietnam.

Before the results of the April 1968 poll at the University of Dayton were made public, Fr. Roesch had already clearly observed that attitudes on ROTC had changed on campus. He brought the issue of mandatory ROTC to the Academic Council on March 18, 1968. He signaled an interest in exploring options for substitutes for the 2-year ROTC requirement. The Military Science Department gave the council alternatives to the current program: end the program entirely, make only the first year mandatory, make the program voluntary as the students wanted it, or make the program part of the professional

³⁶ "Group Urges Voluntary ROTC at UD," *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 21, 1967.

³⁷ "Students to Consider ROTC Policy View," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 1, 1968.

³⁸ "Poll Proves Dissatisfaction in Current ROTC Policy," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 19, 1968.

or pre-professional curricula.³⁹ After a month of deliberation, on April 16, the council decided to attempt to cater to both sides. It recommended that only the first year of ROTC be mandatory.⁴⁰ By the academic year of 1968-69, however, the reduction to one year of mandatory ROTC did not satisfy University of Dayton students nor the *Flyer News* editorial board. Both, it was made clear, wanted the completely voluntary ROTC. As a result, ROTC became a major target for student protests at the University of Dayton.

By that time, wider events taking place in the U.S. and Vietnam were undoubtedly having an impact. The Tet Offensive back in January had disillusioned many Americans. Victory in the Vietnam War did not appear as near as its defenders said. During the summer of 1968, the bad news continued with Robert Kennedy's assassination in June. This accelerated student protests nationwide against Vietnam. The new militancy in students at Dayton was evident as soon as they returned to campus. Demands that mandatory ROTC end began right away. A group of about 11 students, including Bernie Murray, went to ROTC orientation for freshmen men and passed out pamphlets that called for voluntary ROTC.⁴¹ About a week later, on September 4, nearly 1,000 students gathered outside of Kennedy Union to begin a "new" campaign against mandatory ROTC. A number of faculty showed up to the rally as well, including one of the "heretical" professors John Chrisman. Chrisman overtly linked these protests and the Heresy Affair when he spoke. Just as he had questioned Thomism before, he was now asking why students could not choose if they wanted to take ROTC? "What academic qualifications does this subject have in order to be required of every male student?" To everyone's surprise, Fr. Roesch appeared at the rally. He told the crowd that ROTC policy was continuing to be reviewed. He then suggested that ROTC could be made voluntary.⁴² Emboldened, the editorial board of *Flyer News* again made the argument that mandatory ROTC is wrong academically and morally. The editorial quoted Bernie Murray's stinging rebuke of Fr. Roesch's earlier comments at the rally, "I didn't have to come here but I did and I'm going to stay because I care."⁴³ In his own column, Murray

³⁹ University of Dayton, "Academic Council Meeting Minutes," March 18, 1968.

⁴⁰ University of Dayton, "Academic Council Meeting Minutes," April 16, 1968.

⁴¹ "ROTC Leaflets Bring Early Police Action," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Aug. 30, 1968.

⁴² Dona J. Walter, "Students Stage Rally for Voluntary ROTC," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 6, 1968.

⁴³ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 6, 1968.

made clear his opposition to ROTC and now, unlike a couple of years before, his opposition to the Vietnam War.

Student body president Chris Kerns now created an Emergency Commission to Effect Voluntary ROTC. The commission's purpose was to mobilize and coordinate students and faculty in the fight for voluntary ROTC as well as to urge students to call on members of the Academic Council to readdress the issue. They also created a study group consisting of commission members John Judge and John Chrisman to formulate a scholarly report on the reasons for voluntary ROTC.⁴⁴ The next week, *Flyer News* reported that steps were now being taken to present the issue to the Academic Council. Additionally, Student Council passed a resolution that not only called for voluntary ROTC, but also called for the issue to be addressed at the next Academic Council meeting.⁴⁵

Just as *Flyer News* was covering ROTC protests and providing a forum for student opinion on the matter, *Dayton Daily News* reported on the debate and published residents' opinions on the issue. The local newspaper ran multiple stories on the rally as well as a story on the scholarly report that was being written for the Academic Council. On the stories about the rally, reporter Dan Geringer included quotes from some of the participants. Kline wrote an article that described the scholarly report, detailed the administrative procedure that would take place, and recognized just how much the University of Dayton was involved with ROTC.

Opposition to the student position among the Dayton residents appeared to be weakening. Soon after the rally for voluntary ROTC, *Dayton Daily News* ran an editorial titled "Required ROTC Out of Place," which was short and not detailed but supported the students' opposition towards the requirement.⁴⁶ While the *Dayton Daily News* editorial board had at one point supported Bro. Sheehy's actions in the sign-tearing incident, in the fall of 1968, the board now sided with the students. The administration was responding to the changes in student attitudes and thus *Dayton Daily News* reporters could not criticize the students without criticizing the administration. Regardless of what the editors actually believed about the ROTC program and Vietnam, it appears that the *Dayton Daily News*

⁴⁴ Susan Baker, "Commission Formed for Voluntary ROTC," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 13, 1968.

⁴⁵ "ROTC Question May Go Before Council Monday," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 20, 1968.

⁴⁶ Editorial, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 6, 1968.

had determined the University of Dayton was an integral part of the Dayton community and the newspaper did not want the public to have a bad view of the institution.

In October, the newly-formed United Students organized a teach-in on October 7 in front of Kennedy Union to create an open dialogue about ROTC and to await a decision by the Academic Council whether to reopen the ROTC issue.⁴⁷ The students got part of their wish as the Academic Council voted 12-0 with one abstention to reopen the issue.⁴⁸ The editorial board of *Flyer News* praised the decision, calling the decision “sound judgement” and “open-minded.”⁴⁹ Simultaneously, *Dayton Daily News* withheld judgement and merely reported the decision with no comment.

The Academic Council’s decision to reopen the topic did not prevent students from protesting further. To mock the ROTC program, in a parody of its annual military ball, a group of students held an anti-military ball the same night. The ball exposed a rift between the more leftist students of the University of Dayton and the more moderate students within *Flyer News*. In their coverage of the dance, *Flyer News* critiqued the “pulsating far-left atmosphere,” of the parody.⁵⁰ The beginning of the next semester, students marched for voluntary ROTC to reemphasize the importance of the issue and maintain the positive momentum of the previous months. Perhaps sensing the fight was already won, only 400 students participated in the march, far less compared to the rally back in September.

During the ensuing months, the Academic Council had been debating whether to heed to the students’ demands. At a December 2 council meeting, Paul Peters, executive vice president of Student Council and the student representative on the Academic Council, voiced his own personal opposition to mandatory ROTC and called for voluntary ROTC by September 1969, just as many of his fellow students had demanded.⁵¹ Peters’ role on the Council was jeopardized when it was discovered he participated in the demonstration in January. However, these concerns were overruled

⁴⁷ Pat Chapla, “Academic Council Reopens Mandatory ROTC Question,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 4, 1968.

⁴⁸ University of Dayton, “Academic Council Meeting Minutes,” Oct. 7, 1968.

⁴⁹ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 11, 1968.

⁵⁰ “Balls: Anti-Military vs. Military Simply a Difference in Style,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 15, 1968.

⁵¹ University of Dayton, “Academic Council Meeting Minutes,” Dec. 2, 1968.

when the Theological Studies Department joined Peters' opposition to mandatory ROTC on January 20 based on moral grounds. In the end, the Council voted 10-7 in favor of voluntary ROTC.⁵²

The *Flyer News* edition that came out after the vote revealed the student body and the editorial board were jubilant. "We commend the Academic Council's decision...for new academic freedom at UD is more of a reality than a hope," said the editorial board and a letter to the editor thanked and congratulated everyone who played a part in making this decision happen.⁵³ A few weeks after the announcement of the decision, another letter to the editor praised the decision, saying it was "a wise move in the direction of academic freedom." Then, the writer, Dennis Ryan, took it a step further by calling for the end of ROTC entirely, an idea that was shot down by a later letter.⁵⁴ However, not everyone was enthusiastic about the decision. One letter to the editor that came a week later claimed the end of voluntary ROTC was a step towards the elimination of discipline and that rebelliousness will lead people nowhere.⁵⁵

The *Dayton Daily News* coverage of events was more guarded and seemingly focused on reducing friction between the University of Dayton and the residents of the surrounding Dayton community. When it came to *Dayton Daily News*' coverage of the decision, Benjamin Kline portrayed the decision as a matter of "educational philosophy," rather than a response to the student protests on campus, as the deciding factor in making ROTC voluntary. Kline also emphasized that the University of Dayton's students were "generally conservative," despite the result.⁵⁶ Here, Kline depicts the administration making a decision as an educational issue and not in response to student pressure. By portraying the students and the administration this way, the *Dayton Daily News* seems to preserve the image of a strong administration and non-radical student body in order to maintain support for the University of Dayton among Dayton residents.

On February 28, a little over a month after the Academic Council's decision, Fr. Roesch announced that the decision was accepted by both the Administrative Council and

⁵² University of Dayton, "Academic Council Meeting Minutes," Jan. 20, 1969.

⁵³ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 24, 1969.

⁵⁴ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 7, 1969.

⁵⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 28, 1969.

⁵⁶ Benjamin Kline, "Make ROTC Voluntary, UD Council Recommends." *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 22, 1969.

the Board of Trustees. ROTC was officially entirely voluntary. In a letter to the editor of *Flyer News*, John Judge, one of the writers of the scholarly report, commended Fr. Roesch and the councils for their decision and stated his hope that this decision begins a trend against “militarism” on Dayton’s campus.⁵⁷

Conclusion

In span of less than a decade, the University of Dayton students had shifted from large support for a mandatory ROTC to large opposition against the program. The national debate about ROTC among Catholic-college students represented the changes and developments that had occurred in the American Catholic community during the 1960s. Initially, ROTC was considered the symbol of American Catholics’ patriotism as they supported the U.S. Army in their fight against Communism. However, as the Vietnam War escalated, some American Catholic students, fueled by the spirit of Vatican II, began to see ROTC as a symbol of institutional complicity with the war.⁵⁸ Specifically for the University of Dayton, the promise of academic freedom that had come from Fr. Roesch after the Heresy Affair had inspired the students to fight for their freedom with regards to ROTC.

Flyer News reflected this transition. It changed its views from overall support for Vietnam and mandatory ROTC to opposition to both. Few Dayton residents and *Dayton Daily News* writers were sympathetic with the students. And yet the *Dayton Daily News* began to shift their opinion as the University of Dayton administration, led by Fr. Roesch, acquiesced to the students’ desire for a voluntary ROTC. As a result, *Dayton Daily News* sought to depict the move to voluntary ROTC not as a result of student protests, but rather as a result of change in what was considered essential education. This reveals a desire to minimize conflict on campus and blunt criticisms of the school within the community.

⁵⁷ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 7, 1969.

⁵⁸ Ciernick, “Student Life,” 324.

Chp. 3: St. Mary's Sit-In

Introduction

During the social and countercultural movements of the 1960s, students demanded changes in the structure of higher education. They demanded more say in how universities operated as well as freedom of speech and action. The ideas of the Scottish philosopher A.S. Neill on education were endorsed by some students. Neill advocated for a more student-centered approach in education. He believed in an educational system that placed the students on equal footing with the administration in decision-making. This system emphasized freedom and rejected a more religious education.¹

At the University of Dayton, there is no evidence that Neill's school of thought directly influenced the students. But the action taken by some of the University of Dayton students in the late 1960s reveal they supported these goals. After years of faithfully supporting the University of Dayton values as a Catholic institution, in the late 1960s, the events surrounding the Heresy Affair reveal many students wanted a more secular education. For example, many students revealed they desired the ability to choose their own courses. In another example studied here, not long after the Heresy Affair, the students demanded the freedom to choose whether to take ROTC courses. As the 1960s neared its end, students also began to demand more control over their personal lives as well as a greater say in campus affairs.

One place this became evident was in the students' continued press on influencing what was being taught. In 1968, Dr. Phillip Grant of the History Department was terminated without any clear explanation. Students were outraged upon hearing about this. News of Dr. Grant's fate set off a student protest. On February 6, 1969, ten students, including Bernie Murray, staged a sit-in and a week-long hunger strike in St. Mary's outside Fr. Roesch's office. Their aim was to call to attention to "the violation of our most basic right to intelligently determine our education environment."² While the sit-in

¹ William Jeynes, *American Educational History: School, Society, and the Common Good* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 2007), 332.

² "Administration Proposition Prompts Grant Walkout," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 7, 1969.

was small, the demonstration foreshadowed a larger sit-in in St. Mary's in March the next year. That sit-in involved more participants, included more demands, and caught the attention of both the Dayton campus and the Dayton community. It was, in essence, the culmination of the effects of the Heresy Affair and the ROTC protests in terms of the awakening of the student body to larger issues of student freedom.

The Call for Student Responsibility

By the early 1950s, American Catholic higher education, which its leaders believed it needed to “protect” students from the secular world, had created a system that did just that. This was evident in the student-life and disciplinary policies of Catholic colleges and universities. Many university administrations had schedules that dictated when students woke up, ate, studied, attended religious services, and went to bed.³ Most Catholic-college students followed this mandatory regimen enthusiastically. Nonetheless, there were some students who quietly rebelled against these rules. They called for a relaxation of curfews policies, dress codes, and compulsory religious practices. These students believed that the university administration needed to recognize their emerging maturity and their autonomy as individuals.⁴

In the 1960s, American Catholic institutions of higher education started to move away from a draconian approach and embrace the post-Vatican II idea of personal responsibility.⁵ More students began to demand an end to these strict student-life policies and push for greater autonomy. The students of the University of Dayton were no different from other Catholic-college students. Between 1963-1964, Lucia Gattone, a *Flyer News* columnist, called for University of Dayton students to assume more adult responsibility. Part of this was taking a more active role in campus life. “We who’ve murmured and grumbled so long are going to have to show that we can accept the responsibility to do something,” said Gattone.⁶ Other students soon echoed her sentiment. In his regular column, Jim DeFeo, another *Flyer News* journalist, criticized the idea of the “University family.” This was the term used by those who characterized administration as

³ Helen Marie Ciernick, “Student Life on Catholic-College Campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s,” (doctoral dissertation, The Catholic University of America, 2003), 10.

⁴ Ciernick, “Student Life,” 84.

⁵ Ciernick, “Student Life,” 83.

⁶ Lucia Gattone, “It’s Waiting for Us,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 20, 1964.

parents and the students as children. According to DeFeo, this created a counterproductive emphasis on “child-like obedience” at the University of Dayton.⁷

In early 1965, it seemed apparent that students were, at least partially, ready to demand greater responsibility. The Student Council was considering a bill that would make the election of the “President of the Council” a direct vote by the students. The President was currently determined by the Student Council members themselves. Students as well as the *Flyer News* editorial board supported this bill. According to one student, it was needed because “more active participation is necessary in campus politics.”⁸ Student Council did not want to give up their power and voted the bill down. They rejected it again when the idea was brought up the next year.

But the demand for greater student control was gaining momentum elsewhere. The *Flyer News* editorial board increasingly asked “what is the student’s responsibility,” not just in relation to Vietnam or the Heresy Affair, but in their own lives?⁹ Students demanded for collaboration with the university administration and gained institutional support. In September 1967, Fr. Roesch announced that fifteen students and twenty-two lay faculty members would be appointed to the University councils and committees that made some of the bigger decisions on campus. The editorial board praised the announcement.¹⁰ The next year, in September 1968, the student body created a new organization called “Students for Mobilization,” which was intended to produce a “unifying voice on matters which directly or indirectly affect their personal, social, and/or academic lives.”¹¹

Sexual Freedom and Birth Control

Another avenue in which University of Dayton students were struggling to win more independence was their sex lives. At most Catholic colleges, there were systems in place that controlled sexual behavior. Visitation hours were regulated and the admittance of the opposite sex into housing quarters were controlled. Additionally, social pressures

⁷ Jim DeFeo, “The Family Myth,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Dec. 3, 1965.

⁸ “Student Want to Elect SC President,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 22, 1965.

⁹ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 3, 1967.

¹⁰ Carol Giver, “Student Delegates Appointed to Councils for First Time,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 8, 1967.

¹¹ “Students Mobilize to Solve Pressing University Problems,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 13, 1968.

made public affection on campus taboo.¹² These conditions characterized life at the University of Dayton in the early 1960s. In November 1962, a letter to the editor in *Flyer News* asked if kissing and embracing in public was acceptable at the University of Dayton.¹³ Public displays of affection like that were “unchristian and disrespectful,” responded another student. Students must check their sexual impulses, it was argued.¹⁴

But times were changing. As the 1960s progressed, students began to question these strictures. In 1964, two years later, the question was raised again. Student Michael Thiel complained in the letters to the editor of *Flyer News* about couples kissing on the steps of the Marycrest dormitory.¹⁵ Unlike the previous occasion, however, a number of letters to the editor criticized Thiel’s position. In November 1965, another complaint about displays of affections at the Torch Room in Kennedy Union also elicited critical responses. By September 1966, at a Fireside Chat on the topic of love, sex, and marriage, one student asked, “Why should sex be reserved for marriage?”¹⁶

This shift in attitudes towards sexual behavior corresponded with ongoing changes amongst the American Catholic community. After the Second Vatican Council had examined the Catholic Church’s position on birth control and Pope John XXIII had created a papal commission on the issue, sexuality began to be more openly debated in the American Catholic community. In another example, in 1965, some students expressed their opposition to birth control in *Flyer News*. The then-traditional view of birth control held by the Church and Catholic community was that birth control was immoral. In his October column, Bob Vertes wrote that birth control was “immoral, and it’s that simple.”¹⁷ In November, student Robert Acker claimed that “only moral theology” can determine “which human act is moral and which is immoral.” Not any biological or philosophical perspective can justify birth control, according to Acker.¹⁸ But these onetime commonplace assertions did not go uncontested in the coming years. After the Heresy Affair questioned whether birth control was actually immoral, student

¹² Ciernick, “Student Life,” 156.

¹³ Andrew Ewwaraye, letter to the editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 2, 1962.

¹⁴ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 16, 1962.

¹⁵ Letter to the Editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 13, 1964.

¹⁶ “Love, Sex, Marriage Discussed by Fireside,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 30, 1966.

¹⁷ Bob Vertes, “It’s Immoral,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Oct. 29, 1965.

¹⁸ Robert M. Acker, letter to the editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 12, 1965.

government passed a resolution that called for the accessibility of “family planning and birth control information at the Health Center” and for the “availability of birth control measures.”¹⁹ Dr. John Rock, inventor of the oral contraceptive pill, came to speak on Dayton’s campus about planning one’s parenthood and using his pill to do so.²⁰ When Pope Paul VI’s encyclical *Humanae Vitae* reaffirmed the Church’s opposition to birth control, the *Flyer News* editorial board criticized the decision.²¹ Columnist Bernie Murray also criticized the decision and what he saw as the Church’s refusal to update its teachings on the matter.²²

Student and Personal Freedoms

The University of Dayton administration began to give student more personal autonomy. Throughout the 1960s, the administration relaxed dress codes, and shortened curfew hours for certain groups of students. In September 1967, Marycrest Hall, a women’s dormitory, was given a co-ed recreational room where the women could entertain male guests at certain times of the day.²³ Relaxation of control by the administration, however, coincided with student demands for more personal freedom. For instance, Bernie Murray wrote in his column that the rules of the student handbook treated students as if they were “incapable of making any real decision” for their own good.²⁴ Students such as Murray had been pushing for the relaxation of control by the administration for many years and, at times, the administration relented.

The student-run radio station, WVUD, became another issue in the 1964-65 academic year. WVUD’s programming featured mostly psalms, news, classical music, meditation, and the Star-Spangled Banner.²⁵ The radio’s program did not broadcast modern, secular music. The ability to listen to more contemporary music became an issue among some of the student body. In 1965, students criticized a campus prohibition of songs by folk artist Bob Dylan in the Music Listening Room in Kennedy Union. This suppression of contemporary music became connected to the WVUD programming issue

¹⁹ “Family Planning Bill Gains Congress Okay,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 22, 1968.

²⁰ Mary Hymans, “Dr. Rock Stresses Urgent Need for Intelligent Parenthood,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 5, 1968.

²¹ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 13, 1968.

²² Bernie Murray, “O’Boyle and Birth Control,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 13, 1968.

²³ Barb Cicciollo, “Doors Open to Male Guests,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 29, 1967.

²⁴ Bernie Murray, “Kampus Karnival,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 19, 1968.

²⁵ Mary Anne Kane, “Attitudes of the UD Student during the 60s,” (essay, University of Dayton, 1974), 9.

in a letter to the editor in 1968. The writer of the letter criticized the station's lack of songs by the Beatles, Bob Dylan and other contemporary songs. He suggested the start of a "new college station" that would include more modern songs.²⁶

As meaningful as these previous issues were to some, the right of students to freely express their views emerged as the most important freedom. In the aftermath of the Heresy Affair, students demonstrated not just for voluntary ROTC, but for the right to demonstrate on Dayton's campus. In January 1968, around 1,000 students marched across campus in disapproval of the suspension of twelve students who were charged with forging their advisors' signatures on preregistration forms. While not condoning the actions of the twelve students, Jack Boos, Student Government president, believed the punishment was "completely out of proportion with the offense."²⁷

After this and the ROTC protests, Student Government decided to pass a demonstration bill in September 1968. The policy upheld the students' right "to dissent and demonstrate in a peaceful manner," but, if a student's action "results in the severe disruption of classes," the student will be ordered to disperse. Failure to comply would result in the student being referred to the Dean of Students for disciplinary hearings.²⁸ The *Flyer News* editorial board called it a "practical policy." However, Benjamin Kline of the *Dayton Daily News* considered it "pabulum" compared to the strict State of Ohio's riot act law.²⁹

The bill passed in both the Student Welfare Council and the Administrative Council, but the latter amended the policy in a way that the students found ambiguous. Those amendments caused the student body to demand a document that clearly protects their right to demonstrate. This resulted in the creation of the Student Rights Commission by Student Government. The commission's purpose was to draw up a comprehensive Student Bill of Rights, to develop a Board of Appeals, and to review student rules and regulations.³⁰ Once the commission completed the Bill of Rights, the *Flyer News* editorial

²⁶ J. Brian Flanagan, letter to the editor, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Feb. 9, 1968.

²⁷ Pat Skalka, "Marchers Protest Provost's 'Unjust' Student Suspensions," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 12, 1968.

²⁸ "Congress Passes Demonstration Bill," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 20, 1968.

²⁹ Benjamin Kline, "UD Policy: Right to Dissent, Demonstrate Peacefully," *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Sept. 20, 1968.

³⁰ Carol Giver, "Student Rights Board Formed," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), April 19, 1968.

board urged students to give their opinions on the draft and to make it as good as possible. It is their future that this document would determine, they were told.³¹ Much was in the final draft of the Student Bill of Rights: guaranteed access to one's student records, freedom to run their own organizations as they saw fit, and procedural rules in case of disciplinary hearings. The Student Bill of Rights was passed in March 1969.

Not everyone supported the students' drive for more personal freedom. Reformers were opposed by a group of conservative Catholics who resisted social changes. They rejected the reform spirit of Vatican II and the corresponding struggle for social freedom. As a result, these conservative Catholics worked to undermine reform efforts.³² They opposed the reformist victories in the Heresy Affair and the ROTC protests, and began to actively resist further changes. Reflecting this, the *Dayton Daily News* depicted the student body as divided between "activist" and "traditionalist." Student activists, the local newspaper said, demanded personal freedoms, peace in Vietnam, and the right to protest. On the other hand, the traditionalist student, the newspaper contended, focused on non-controversial activities such as community service, athletics, and adhering to the rules.³³

The Sit-In

The reformist efforts at the University of Dayton in the late 1960s culminated in the sit-in at St. Mary's in March of 1970. This was not the first sit-in that occurred on the University of Dayton's campus and not even the first sit-in at the St. Mary's building, as evidenced by the sit-in in 1969 in protest of Dr. Grant's firing. However, the sit-in of 1970 was larger than any of its predecessors, demanded more than the others, and more than any other sit-in revealed pronounced tensions between liberal and conservative students.

The event also gained the attention of the local community and the *Dayton Daily News*. Undercurrents of a possible conflict between students and the administration surfaced when seven students resigned their positions in Student Government. Kevin Keefe, student body president, and the speaker of the Student Congress was among them.

³¹ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Nov. 15, 1968.

³² Kristine LaLonde, "Transformations of Authority: Reform, Rebellion, and Resistance in the Catholic Church of the 1960s," (doctoral dissertation, University of Virginia, 2000), 283.

³³ Roberta Shallenberger, "Comparative Press Coverage of the University of Dayton," (master's thesis, University of Dayton, 1970), 13.

In early 1970, they resigned because they believed the Student Government was slowly becoming less important in the “university government structure.”³⁴

Two months later, a group of about eleven students started the sit-in at St. Mary’s outside Fr. Roesch’s office on the morning of March 17, 1970. That number grew to over 150 by the evening. The demands of the students included educational reforms as well as gains of personal freedom. These demands included freely available birth control and abortion information, more students in the operations of WVUD, open hours for men and women dormitories, as well as permission to have alcohol in the dorms.³⁵ Fr. Roesch spoke to the students multiple times during the day. As the *Dayton Daily News* reported it, each time he did, he was “forced to return to his office” due to the students’ “insistent questioning.”³⁶ During the sit-in, the *Dayton Daily News* sent David Herd to observe the event firsthand. He interviewed student Robert Orth, head of the sit-in. Orth told Herd that the protest was about “increased student control of the university.” After spending eighteen hours with the students, however, Herd left because, as he said, he “did not care anymore.”³⁷

Fr. Roesch spent a good portion of the early evening with the students. When he attempted to return at 8:30 a.m. on March 18, the students had locked out Fr. Roesch as well as the other administrators. Members of the administration were furious and wanted Fr. Roesch to bring in Dayton police or even the National Guard. However, that difficult decision was avoided when, at 8:45 a.m., student body president Thomas Kehoe and seven others joined Fr. Roesch and his executive council for a meeting in Kennedy Union. After the meeting was convened, the demonstrators vacated St. Mary’s. While that meeting was underway, a clash of students began in the union lobby. Supporters of the sit-in were confronted by those who did not.³⁸ After the meeting between Roesch’s executive council and student representatives, an assembly was announced by AAUP for the next day, March 19, at the UD Fieldhouse. Around 5,000 students attended the assembly. At the assembly, Fr. Roesch explained that disciplinary action was going to be

³⁴ “7 Quit UD’s Student Regime,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 12, 1970.

³⁵ “Official Statements: Demands,” *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 20, 1970.

³⁶ “Students Stage Sit-In at UD,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 18, 1970.

³⁷ David Herd, “Reporter’s Night in ‘Liberated’ Hall,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 18, 1970.

³⁸ Carolyn Jackson, “150 Keep Up UD Sit-In; Confrontation Brewing,” *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 18, 1970.

taken against the students who participated in the St. Mary's takeover. "Militant action, regardless of how righteous the cause, has no right to trample on rights of others or they can expect no amnesty," said Roesch.³⁹

While Roesch was highly critical of the demonstrators, *Flyer News* took a more balanced position. The editorial board praised the actions of the original demonstrators led by Robert Orth but questioned the tactics of the "leftists" who heightened the protest. Nevertheless, the editorial board connected the sit-in to the protest of 1968 against the suspension of twelve students as well as the firing of Dr. Grant. *Flyer News* argued that the demands of this protest were "far more crucial" than the two previous protests and that "change is imminent."⁴⁰ *Flyer News* also interviewed randomly selected students about their opinions on the protest. A number of those interviewed disagreed with the tactics of the group, but agreed with the cause. Unlike previous protests, several said, approvingly, "it got something accomplished." On the other hand, a number of students disapproved of the movement entirely. The protesters were a "minority" of the student body, they declared. In the middle were students who seemed to support the goals but believed "nothing concrete" will come from the administration as a result.⁴¹

After the meeting at the Fieldhouse, both students and the *Flyer News* editorial board were critical of the administration's statements. The editorial board found it "unfortunate" that the students' viewpoints were "not expressed" at the meeting and that the "5,000 students left the Fieldhouse with nothing."⁴² Robert Orth, the head of the sit-in, was also dissatisfied, calling administration a "patriarchy," a view which the meeting at the Fieldhouse reinforced.⁴³ In sum, many students quoted in *Flyer News* praised the sit-in and were critical of the administration at the Fieldhouse meeting.

While *Flyer News* seemed to paint a more positive picture of the protest, *Dayton Daily News* took a different position. Their reports constantly called the demonstrators "militants" and depicted them as agitators. One article described the students' questioning of the University of Dayton administration as "insistent." While *Flyer News* painted a

³⁹ Helene Kingsland, "Students Jam Fieldhouse," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 20, 1970.

⁴⁰ Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 20, 1970.

⁴¹ Kevin Meagher and Mary Anne Sharkey, "It Brought Students Together: Students View Sit-In, Results," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 20, 1970.

⁴² Editorial, *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 24, 1970.

⁴³ Brian Quirk, "Orth, DeLuca State Dissatisfaction," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), March 24, 1970.

positive picture with a headline that declared “It Brought Students Together,” *Dayton Daily News* emphasized the divisions within the student body, the faculty, and the administration. Its headlines proclaimed: “Unrest at UD a Clash of Many Points of View.” The overall tone of the *Dayton Daily News* implied the protest was irrelevant. Lead reporter David Herd’s overt disinterest communicated this message. This dismissive tone might have been a result of the *Dayton Daily News* staff’s intention to reduce the public’s negative view of the University of Dayton. One letter to the editor called for the expulsion of the students. It incorrectly assumed the sit-in was concerned about the Vietnam War.⁴⁴ As they had before, it seemed that the *Dayton Daily News* did not want to paint the University of Dayton in a bad light and sought to limit negative public reaction because of the perceived importance of the institution to the city of Dayton.

Conclusion

The St. Mary’s sit-in of March 1970 was essentially the culmination of the movements that helped drive the Heresy Affair and the ROTC protests. The idea of academic freedom was the major factor in the previous two events. The result of the Heresy Affair had helped secure the students’ right to be taught more modern ideas in the classroom. The right to choose whether to take ROTC courses followed. The St. Mary’s sit-in of 1970 was a direct result of these earlier events.

Protests continued to take place at the University of Dayton through the early 1970s. By then, however, major changes had already taken place. Early in the 1960s, the University of Dayton had been a very quiet campus. As the decade progressed, the student body became more active and desired greater say in the way that the university was run. By 1970, students had much more freedom than they had in 1960. They could learn more philosophies besides Thomism, choose whether to take ROTC, and, in time, would gain many of the demands that they had presented to the administration at the St. Mary’s sit-in.

⁴⁴ James C. Corcoran, letter to the editor, *Dayton Daily News* (Dayton, OH), March 25, 1970.

Conclusion

In 1963, the student body of the University of Dayton had overwhelmingly rejected the presence of the National Student Association (NSA) on campus. They had deemed the organization too political. Six years later, in early 1969, the Student Congress unanimously approved to join the NSA.¹ This shift in attitudes of NSA was indicative of the major attitudinal changes at not just the University of Dayton, but at most Catholic colleges and universities. In the early 1960s, the students of American Catholic higher education mostly adhered to the academic and social standards of their colleges and universities. However, later in the 1960s, Catholic-college students began to openly challenge the traditions and rules of their universities that they thought were contrary to the reforms of the Second Vatican Council. In the eyes of some Catholic-college students, Vatican II had fused together the secular and religious spheres. It gave them an incentive to become more active and embrace a more modern world.²

Newspapers both reflected these changes and influenced the reactions to the changes, especially in the cases of *Flyer News* and *Dayton Daily News*. While the University of Dayton in the early 1960s was a quieter campus, *Flyer News* provided an excellent space for student debate and dissent on issues such as Thomism, ROTC, and student freedoms. As a result, the student newspaper helped foster the unrest about each of the three main issues.

While *Flyer News* helped influence major changes on campus, *Dayton Daily News* seemed to be focused on maintaining a good perception of the University of Dayton in the midst of change. Before the 1960s, the *Dayton Daily News* praised the University of Dayton. By the end of the 1960s, the local newspaper appeared to purposefully divert public attention away from the tensions that arose between the student body and the administration. While direct evidence needed to say with certainty, it appears that the owners and staff of *Dayton Daily News* understood the major role the university played in

¹ Dan Troy, "NSA Bill, Budget Pass; Grant Bill Waits in SC," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 28, 1969.

² Helen Marie Ciernick, "Student Life on Catholic-College Campuses in the San Francisco Bay Area during the 1960s," (doctoral dissertation, Catholic University of America, 2003), 327-238.

the Dayton community and thus seemed to minimize any outcry from Dayton residents against the institution.

Through this time period, both these newspapers reported on the three major events discussed here: the Heresy Affair, the ROTC protests, and the St. Mary's sit-in. The controversy over what should be taught at a Catholic university in the Heresy Affair helped set the stage for the University of Dayton's transformation in introducing academic freedom. Students gaining more freedom in the choice of their classes influenced them to make ROTC voluntary. Success in these endeavors encouraged their push for more freedoms, culminating in the fight for personal freedom in the St. Mary's sit-in. As a result, by the end of the decade, the identity of the University of Dayton had been altered dramatically.

Indeed, many within the faculty and the administration realized that the fundamental character of the University of Dayton had transformed. In 1968, Fr. Roesch commissioned a committee of faculty and students called the Committee on Purposes to propose an updated version of the University of Dayton's Statement of Purposes. In January 1969, the committee submitted its final draft. While recognizing itself as a Catholic institution, the statement also asserted that the university should teach and do research "in an atmosphere of academic freedom." Furthermore, it states that the university also should become more "objective" and "free from commitment" to other organizations.³ In the eyes of the administration, the University of Dayton had transformed into a more secular institution that fostered academic freedom. It would continue that way in its journey through the rest of the 20th Century.

³ "Committee Completes Statement of Purposes," *Flyer News* (Dayton, OH), Jan. 17, 1969.

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