

## President Cross Presents his Views

IN AN ATTEMPT to find out what the administration was thinking and doing about black students, we wrote to President Cross, asking his comments on the following questions:

1. What is your evaluation of the mood of black students at Hunter?

2. Students we've talked to don't feel that there is any real dialogue between black students and faculty and administration. Is that true? What is being done to find out what black students want or how they feel about life at Hunter?

3. Aside from SEEK, what is being done to bring more black students to Hunter?

4. What is being done to recruit more black faculty?

Dr. Cross replied as follows:

### To the Alumni Association:

Over the past few months I have talked with a good many black students at Hunter. My guess is that their attitudes on most subjects are as diverse as would be found among a comparable number of white students. I am sure that most of them are unhappy and impatient at the agonizingly slow pace with which American society is moving to redress the pattern of injustice towards the blacks.

Hunter is perceived as a white institution, and most black students would like it to move far more rapidly than it has in curriculum and admissions policy — to mention only two areas — towards the goal of serving black Americans as successfully as it has whites. Their sense of urgency in no way precludes many of them from ar-

ticulate appreciation of what Hunter has done, and is doing, for them as individuals. But they are moved by a wholly admirable devotion to the well-being of their brothers and sisters who are not likely to enjoy the benefits of Hunter, unless changes are rapidly made. As young people, they do not admire tradition very much; and they are far from reverential towards time-tried and time-consuming ways of doing things.

In response to your second question, let me say that I suspect the faculty and administration work harder at finding out what black students are feeling and thinking than they do for any other group of students. Which is not to say that we do enough. Some black students tell me that no white administrator or faculty member can ever really talk effectively with black students; I doubt this is so, at least about most subjects. But it is certain that we owe a great debt to those black people who are members of the faculty and administrative staff and who have worked as most effective interpreters between the black students and Hunter. We intend to bring more such people to Hunter. The traditional obstacle to such recruitment has not been prejudice, but, first, a shortage of black people interested in posts in the university world; second, the fact that those who were did not usually come through the familiar university doors; and third, the somewhat mechanical application of traditional criteria for qualification.

To offset the second, departments have been encouraged to broaden the area of their recruitment searches; the administration has promised money

to subsidize recruiting in less obvious and less accessible areas (while not encouraging the "raiding" of Negro colleges in the South, a much too vulnerable target at present). Departments have also been encouraged to scrutinize the ability of candidates to do the job, and not to rely on simple parchment certificates, which too often have been denied to those with talent but not opportunity. The college, rightly insisting that its leaders must be chosen on merit, is more sensitive now to the fact that merit is frequently to be found among individuals whom society may not have ceremonially acclaimed.

Our admissions policies are gradually moving towards a recognition of the same principle of rewarding merit, even if society has been laggard in recognizing it. Hunter will be admitting a larger contingent of SEEK students next year. It will certainly receive more than the token group of "One Hundred Scholars" that were interested in applying this summer. (As you probably know, CUNY has offered admission to the top 100 students receiving an academic diploma in every public high school in the city. Many of these will be students who have not achieved the regular grade-average that would have won them admission to CUNY. But many will be young people of high potential. Most of them will be from disadvantaged neighborhoods. Most of them will be black. Hunter welcomes the prospect of having many of them as students.) Hunter will also receive a larger contingent than last year of transfer students from the community colleges; most of these would not have been eligible to enter Hunter

as freshmen, but they will have proved themselves in our community colleges; many of these will be black. Finally, Hunter has been authorized by the Board of Higher Education to admit 100 students next year on more flexible criteria than a straight grade or College Board average. Students who are especially strong in one or more subjects (while weaker in others), and students who have come on strong in their later years in school, are to be given special consideration. We can't know at this point how many of those who come in under this option will be blacks; we would be delighted if the number was high.

I don't know what the percentage of black students will be next year at Hunter. Since I believe that talent and potential are equally distributed among the peoples of our city, I hope that the percentage will approximate that of the black people in New York City. Since I'm aware that many black young people are handicapped by the neighborhood they have grown up in, the kind of schooling they have received, and other circumstances, I hope that Hunter will be able to engender the resources, financial, spatial, intellectual, but above all of will and commitment, to help these people realize their potential — and the potential that Hunter can provide.

*Yours sincerely,*

ROBERT D. CROSS

## Dr. Harvey on Black Studies

BLACK STUDENTS demand black history courses for a positive reason — to give them a better sense of identity — and for a negative reason — they feel that the present teaching of history does not take proper account of black historical achievement.

*In view of their criticism of present teaching of history, we wrote to Dr. Donald J. Harvey, chairman of Hunter's History Department and asked him to respond on the following questions:*

1. *Why do black students feel there is such a need for black history courses? Has American history been taught in such a way that it has distorted their place in it? Some students we spoke to, for example, claimed that in one history class slavery was mentioned only once.*

2. *Are black students at Hunter consulted in any curriculum planning sessions about possible black history courses that might be offered?*

3. *Some black students have suggested black courses could be taught at Hunter, by graduate students not necessarily having the academic stature of a regular professor, but who, because of being black, would be able to teach such a course. Would you consider revising your hiring qualifications to meet the demands for such courses?*

*Professor Harvey replied as follows:*

### To the Alumni Association:

In response to your letter, I am delighted to make comments on the various questions you raise. On the unfolding and highly significant topic