

Sigma Nu . . .

A Negative National

The casual reader of the Interfraternity Council's rationale for placing Sigma Nu on Disciplinary Probation might not fully appreciate its significance, but in that paragraph condemning the attitude of the Sigma Nu national organization lies the most significant aspect of fraternity discrimination here.

The Paragraph says simply:

"The Steering Committee (of the IFC) deplores the national fraternity's attitude, which made it extremely difficult for the local chapter to comply with the provisions of Article IX (of the IFC Bylaws)."

Article IX requires local chapters of houses having national discriminatory clauses or practices to make sincere and continuous efforts for their removal.

Opposition by Sigma Nu's national took the form of a dictum which barred local chapters from obtaining waivers from the national fraternity's racial bias clause unless they fight university pressures to eliminate discrimination. In other words, the Sigma Nu local was told it would have to fight the Cornell program for ending bias before it could get the waiver needed to maintain its good standing here.

Now that local Sigma Nu has been put on probation, it can go to its national waiving a letter from the IFC notifying it of the disciplinary action and say: "Here, most omnipotent ones, we have done your bidding and fought against the immovable sentiment of Cornell's student government and its fraternity leaders. Now please give us our 'wages' for this in the form of a waiver." Whether or not this sort of "employment" is in the best interests of the University is left for the reader's consideration.

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And whether or not the Sigma Nu national will act favorably upon the request of the local for the waiver is another undecided question. Sigma Nu has chosen to lose some chapters rather than end racial bias, but these losses occurred before the national adopted its waiver rule in 1960. No chapter has yet been granted a waiver, but no chapter appears to have faced the serious trouble which seems to be prerequisite to granting of the waiver.

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The Sigma Nu national is one of the most adamant in the country with respect to removing categorical bars to membership. But all this does not remove a certain amount of blame from the local groups. Though understandably befuddled by the conflicting demands, the local could have taken some action, rather than waiting for the IFC and the Discrimination Commission to investigate. Now that the IFC has acted, we hope that the local will recognize its responsibilities under IFC and Student Government legislation, and assume the undergraduate leadership against discrimination that is so sadly lacking in its national.