EDITORIALS

Confrontation: Again, Time to Think

I.
It is one of the unhappy things of many crises that they brew for a long time with very little progress and then, when a calm solution seems almost near, they erupt into tense boiler-makers.

Today the issue is blacks at Northwestern. Black students have issued demands on the university; the university has responded to but not satisfied those making the demands; today the blacks say they will outline a plan for a "confrontation."

We can understand the frustration of the black community in hearing what has been said to them for many long years: "Give it time."

But what else is there to say?
You give it time and you work — you work strongly — for what you believe in. You let your views be known and then work, within the context of the community, to get your views established. You work in the context of the bargaining table.

"Confrontations" are not conducive to bargaining.
We say "wait" because we believe the university has been bargaining in good faith. We believe the university is aware of the blacks' needs and is conscientiously trying to help work them out. If it were not so, perhaps other steps would be necessary.

Surely the response of the university indicates that it is completely opposed to racism of any kind. The response — offering on-campus rooms and hiring a black to the office of admissions and dean of students staff — indicates it is trying to meet the blacks' needs.

The tragedy this time is that communication has been lost: if there was communication it at least might be progressive.
The Daily Northwestern advocated yesterday on this page that what is most needed now is communication. We had planned meetings, to follow up on previous meetings, with both the blacks and the administration to hear their views.

But the idea of confrontation is now preventing communication.

In all the confusion, Dean Roland J. Hinz has met only once with the blacks as a group — last Wednesday night, after the demands were issued, in a meeting with Director of Admissions William I. Ihlandfeldt.

On Friday, he handed 75 copies of the university's formal response to a black spokesmen. As of last night, he had not talked to a black student since.

The only responsible course is for administrators and students to sit down together and work on method. The end result — fairness for all Northwestern students — should already be agreed upon by both groups.

II.
And what of the rest of us, white and black, not actively involved with developments to this point?

First, we must realize that this is not only the administration's problem. The grievances this group of black students have voiced are grievances against Northwestern — against many of the ways in which this place runs. It is not as "easy" as parietal hours — a matter in which the "old, conservative administrators" are thrown against "young-thinking" students as a whole. The administrators are no small band of enemies, alone in that big fortress of Rebecca Crown. They are not bigots or racists. They are simply not convinced that the controversial demands made by the blacks are all in the best interests of the university.

That is where we come in.
Every person must evaluate those demands for himself, because it is those demands which allegedly will be behind any "confrontation."

We agree that some are reasonable.
But parts must be rejected. It is understandable that the black students want more black students at Northwestern: but is it reasonable to assume that black students must have sole responsibility for determining exactly how many?

It is reasonable to look for a place to meet on campus as a group, but separate living units for black students is not reasonable. It has been the policy of this paper to advocate open housing in the city of Evanston; we feel even more vehemently that open housing must exist on our own campus.

These are two examples of demands which we strongly urge the black students to modify.

Until they do — until they indicate a willingness to talk some more to administrators who seem willing to listen — we cannot condone a "confrontation." We hope such a confrontation will be avoided — by everyone.

III.
Let us quote, in closing, from a portion of the black students' demands.

"Northwestern was wrong," the statement says, "to assume that in bringing us here, we would be able to disassociate ourselves from the injustices, sufferings, and mounting frustration of our people."

We don't think Northwestern made such an assumption. We didn't. We hope, in fact, that the fact our black students are involved in the "injustices, sufferings and mounting frustrations" of blacks everywhere will help the whole cause. We want them to be involved; we want them to help us see what can be done.

In closing: We again urge rational thinking at this crucial time. Some has been gained in racial understanding on this campus, but we have miles to go. Rash actions now will set this cause back immeasurably.