

TO: President Cole

FROM: Mr. Parsons

SUBJECT: SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HANDLING OF THE ADMISSIONS ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE PRESS

The statement on admissions policy which had been authorized for release only to the Ring-tum Phi was presented to Stephen P. Smith, editor of the Tuesday edition, on the morning of Tuesday, October 27. There were no further inquiries from any source. The editor of the Lexington News-Gazette, alumnus Matt Paxton, Jr., was informed that the Ring-tum Phi would carry the announcement and that no further elaboration from a Washington and Lee source would be possible. Mr. Paxton has been most cooperative with Washington and Lee in delaying any news mention of admissions policy until the wishes of the Board of Trustees became clarified.

-Because of production delays in the print shop, the Ring-tum Phi did not appear as usual on Tuesday afternoon, but came off the press early Wednesday morning. Mr. Smith had used the authorized statement in its entirety on Page 2, along with a long editorial comment. A Page 1 "banner" story told of a forthcoming discussion of the "integration statement" by the ODK forum. The lead sentence in this article referred to "the announcement made today by President Fred C. Cole that Washington and Lee will lower racial barriers in admissions policy." The article also mentioned "imminent integration" and stated flatly that the faculty "had favored integration previously."

By 10 a.m., M. Timothy O'Keefe, a senior journalism student who is the Richmond News-Leader correspondent for Lexington and area, telephoned his newspaper with a story based jointly upon the authorized statement, the editorial, and the student newspaper Page 1 story. His article, which subsequently became the basis for stories carried by the Associated Press national wire, stated in its lead paragraph:

"Washington and Lee University President Fred C. Cole announced today that race will not enter into W & L's future admissions policies."

The News-Leader immediately passed a copy of the O'Keefe story to the Associated Press, whose offices are in the same building in Richmond.

An Associated Press man telephoned Frank A. Parsons, director of information services at Washington and Lee, for background material, but was informed that no one at Washington and Lee was authorized to speak further on the matter. When Mr. Parsons learned from the AP man that a statement relative to John Chavis (a free-born Negro alleged to have studied at Washington Academy) would be attributed to "university records," Mr. Parsons suggested that the information source be cited as a historical journal, not university records.

The Associated Press proceeded to move numerous versions of the admissions story. In virtually every instance, the AP writers undertook to rewrite the O'Keefe story, "punching up" the lead, and apparently coincidentally choosing the words of the Ring-tum Phi Page 1 story, "lower racial barriers." Again the announcement of this was attributed to President Cole, although in no case was President Cole quoted directly, except from authorized comments contained in the authorized statement.

Mr. O'Keefe says he based his original lead on the Ring-tum Phi news story because he wanted to "punch^{up}" the lead to say what the authorized statement meant. He said that he knew his editors would rewrite any lead based on the "reaffirmation" of faculty authority in admissions, and he wished to demonstrate his ability to recognize the meat of the story.

Another student correspondent, Charles Fishburn of the Roanoke Times, wrote a story which used only authorized statements from President Cole. His editors decided to use the more positive statement moved on the AP wire, and Mr. Fishburn's story did not reach print.

Mr. O'Keefe's story, by attributing the interpretation of the authorized statement to President Cole, relieved any Washington and Lee official from having to deal with queries asking for elaboration or interpretation. Only two calls from news media were received: the earlier mentioned call from the AP, and an

afternoon call for President Cole from CBS News in New York. Because President Cole was not in Lexington, and because Mr. Parsons was in a university self-study meeting, CBS News did not press for additional statements or information.

Associated Press stories on the matter moved on the national "A" wire, and thus became available to every Associated Press member in the United States. David Brinkley of NBC News mentioned the story on his 6:30 p.m. network news show. Editorial comment on the matter, except for the Ring-tum Phi, has not materialized.

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