

—Secret group exposed—

MACHINE CONTROL "SUBSTANTIAL" NOW IN CAMPUS POLITICAL AFFAIRS

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A highly secret, close-knit political machine, temporarily dismantled by Crimson-White editorial attack in 1961, has again gained substantial control of student politics on this campus.

Commonly known as "The Machine," the tightly run, all-Greek organization has had one of its members as president of the student Government Association for the past two years and has a member as an announced nominee for each of the three major SGA posts this year.

THE MACHINE, also variously called "The Group" and "The Society of Friends," is made up of secret representatives from 11 of the most politically powerful social fraternities on campus and one professional fraternity.

It commands a straight block of over 1,000 votes through the memberships of its associated fraternities.

It also strongly influences the votes of at least 1,000 more through sororities and independents, though they are not directly connected with The Machine.

This makes election of a Machine candidate practically assured unless internal squabbling splits the Machine vote. Voter turnout in an SGA election has never been more than 4,000.

The Machine can also draw as much as \$1,000 financially for major races from among its member fraternities.

THOUGH ITS membership includes some of the best-known names and leaders on campus, officers of The Machine and some of its more influential members are completely out of formal student government and are not generally supposed to have any connections with campus politics.

The existing Machine is descendant from a politically motivated fraternity since outlawed on many college campuses, Theta Nu Epsilon, which at its beginnings on this campus at least as early as the 1930s, and possibly as long ago as 1917.

Following an internal break-up of TNE here in 1941, the organization was soon re-formed and continued to operate up to 1961 as The Group, when Crimson-White Editor Jo Anne Singley exposed the organization in a front-page editorial.

At the time of that editorial, it had been four years since all three top SGA posts had been contested in a single election.

After 1961, the power of The Machine was apparently broken. Anti-Machine candidates won for several years. But The Machine keeps its organizational structure and built back into power. Zach Biggs, SGA president two years ago, was the last of the non-Machine SGA presidents.

NOW PRESIDENT of The Machine is Scott Labors, a Sigma Nu, best known as speaker of last year's SGA House who was dismissed from the legislature after having missed over the quota of absences.

The office of secretary-treasurer, the only other formal post in The Machine, is held by John Harrison, a member of Delta Chi fraternity.

Active membership of The Machine now totals 29, with three delegates representing most of the member fraternities. Names of the members, both active and some of the inactive, are found in a boxed listing on this page.

Theta Tau, professional engineering fraternity, is the only Machine organization not a social fraternity. It was brought into The Machine in 1966 to provide Machine power in the College of Engineering, the only University division with few Greeks in its student body.

Though it draws substantial financial support for its political campaigns which it engineers, The Machine takes only \$5 dues from its members — "just enough to have beer at the meetings," according to one member.

THE AVOWED purpose of The Machine is to gain complete political control of campus politics. The old TNE meant to bring this control up through its graduated members to state, and then national, politics.

The Machine had gained almost complete control in the pre-1961 years. It has restored itself to power in many areas since.

The Machine has no political philosophy as such. According to one inside source, decisions as to Machine candidates are determined solely by "who can win." Machine slates are decided not by a set platform, but by the individual preferences of The Machine membership.

However, especially in recent years, the composite of these individual preferences has been markedly conservative in terms of campus politics.

ALTHOUGH CONTROL by The Machine is not now as far-reaching as in pre-1961 years, when the organization's slate included each seat in the SGA legislature and other minor offices, according to one former to the Crimson-White The Machine is "now probably a little stronger than in 1961" in its core organization.

It is credited the new "toughness" to rebuilding which The Machine has had to go through, and the serious opposition it has seen in recent SGA elections.

In "those days" of often-uncontested elections, he said, "they didn't even have to campaign. Now they know they have a fight on their hands. They have to work harder at seeing people, having a pretty campaign poster."

MOST MEETINGS of The Machine are on Sunday nights at 11 p.m. The clandestine meetings are held almost every week while school is in session, with more unscheduled meetings coming during the election campaign period.

Most of the secret sessions are held in the basements of member fraternities or at other pre-selected sites. This year they have been held at the fraternity houses of Kappa Sigma, Phi Gamma Delta, Delta Kappa Epsilon and Sigma Nu.

The Machine makes up its slate of formally endorsed candidates soon after the start of the second semester each year.

This year, final selection of candidates came on the regular Sunday night meeting following registration — nine weeks before SGA elections.

ACCORDING TO inside sources, a struggle for Machine backing for SGA president this year came between J. R. Brooks, a member of Beta Theta Pi and executive assistant to SGA President Don Siegelman, and Joe Espy, a member of Kappa Sigma and the SGA Senate.

Siegelman attempted to turn Machine backing to

Brooks, but rank and file members thought Brooks too liberal, and that Espy would be a stronger vote-getter, especially among girls.

Final backing went to Espy although the Beta and Deke delegations were unhappy over the situation.

This spilled over into the vice presidential race among the Machine, where another Beta, Bill Moody, was pitted against Paul Clark, a more conservative member of the Senate and member of Kappa Alpha.

Again, a majority favored Clark's more conservative politics and clean-cup looks — a "better image." A minor split came as the Betas and Dekes put their final support behind Moody.

This was allowed by The Machine since there was no serious non-Machine competition for vice president. Moody was allowed to run "on his own."

For secretary-treasurer, no one received The Machine nod, although a Machine member, Newman Strawbridge, declared he would be in the race. The Machine decided simply not to run anyone against Strawbridge.

The objection here was again because of the liberal

views held, as was the case with Brooks and Moody.

But, according to a source from within The Machine, "No matter how distasteful Newman may be to them, they'll end up supporting him. They don't have a choice — he's a Greek (Pi Kappa Alpha) and Williams (Mike, Strawbridge's opposition in the general election) is an independent."

The secretary-treasurer race remains clouded, however, since Espy has since promised support for Williams, outside The Machine, because of his more conservative stands.

THE MAJOR SGA posts are not the extent of Machine control, however.

According to one source, The Machine has placed men under its control as officers of the Interfraternity Council for at least the last three years. The immediate past-president, Richard McGill, a Beta, is a voting member of The Machine.

An attempt is also made to control school officers, although there is no direct political power gained from such offices. One inside source said the offices are wanted "just for the prestige of it. They try to get power anywhere they can find it."

And, with the exception of this past year, The Machine has been able to control a majority of the SGA legislature from among its member fraternities and "sway votes," although no formal listing of Machine candidates is now drawn up for the legislature.

THOUGH THE situation varies from fraternity to fraternity, many rank and file members of Machine fraternities know next to nothing of the workings of the secret organization, and many honestly deny its existence.

Fraternity delegates to The Machine are chosen by their predecessors, subject to approval of Machine membership. The membership of Machine fraternities have no voice in their Machine delegates, and the delegates act on an individual basis once selected.

Tapped by their fraternity's previous members, the "neophytes" are chosen because of their promise as future politicians and potential vote-getters. Membership in The Machine usually remains permanent.

An already-strong campus politician is seldom invited to join The Machine, unless his personal power is a threat to Machine power. If Machine-backed candidates are not already members of The Machine, it rarely bothers to bring them in, even if they are members of a Machine fraternity.

PERHAPS THE major reason for the Machine's being, outside of the gaining of raw political power, is its ability to distribute political appointments once it has its man in office.

The appointments theoretically pay the member fraternities back for their votes and money. The big appointments — chairman of Homecoming, etc. — go to the big houses and money raisers. Lesser appointments go to the small houses and to independents — "Just to keep them happy and keep things looking right," said one inside source.

The appointment system is also used in grooming selected Machine members for future office, giving them a list of "credits" for use in future campaigns.

Also a factor is the "prestige" desired by Machine fraternities — being able to say one of their men was last year's chairman of Bama Day, or some such choice appointive position.

The Machine has, however, only the "loyalty" of the man it put in office to insure that the appointments will be forthcoming. Particularly in the administration of Ralph Knowles, appointments went indiscriminately to a number of non-Greeks. This caused more than a little grumbling from The Machine.

THE MACHINE employs "open meetings" to get independents and girls in on its side of the campaign.

Here, in what one informant called a "standard tactic," influential independent leaders and prominent women students are invited to supposedly "ground floor" planning sessions and to the opening rally of a major candidate.

In some cases they are confidentially told that they are now members of what suspicious people would call "the machine."

Said one source, "The thing that's really so sad about it is that so many independent leaders are so naive about it. The Machine makes them think they are really important people on campus, and of course they are all too ready to believe it. They are sucked right in."

Sorority votes are garnered on an individual basis, with the membership of Machine fraternities persuading their girl friends and pin-mates to "talk up" the Machine candidate in their house.

IN MACHINE fraternities, the chapter president if he is himself not a member of The Machine, is directed to read The Machine slate at chapter meetings and at meal times to acquaint the membership of "the one to vote for."

Often this is in the form of saying that the Machine candidate will be "good for the house," or that the opposition candidate is anti-Greek, with no actual mention of The Machine. The situation again varies from house to house.

Although members of The Machine are sworn to absolute secrecy, in the know campus politicians usually have some idea of its activities.

Said a former member, "I never leaked information myself, but a lot of it does leak. Some Machine members are always wheeling and dealing, trying to build up prestige on the other side too. Word gets out."