

# THE MINI MUCKRAKER

THE INDEPENDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY SCHOOL STUDENTS' NEWSPAPER

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## THE MINI MUCKRAKER

### Speaks

You can tell when there is something going on at JFK. You know it by the posters on the wall and by the special student council meetings. You also know it by the Special Edition of the Muckraker. The first one came for the Student Council Elections, the second one is what you are holding in your hands. It may be a bit small but that is because we didn't plan to have an edition before January. In a hasty effort to inform, we made one because the

student demonstrations are something that affects all of us. In our school it may mean a lack of toilet paper or towels. In others it means classes that are twice as large as the ones in our school and teachers that are missing through the whole semester. Whatever happens this is one of those issues that you can't ignore. You must make a decision: will you support the protesters or should we push for reforms other than those students are now demanding? Who is to blame for the current state of German education? Can you improve the situation? Remember, not making a decision is saying you like it the way it is. We think this is worth an extra edition, thousands of students think it is worth demonstrating. The least you can do is come to decision. Whatever conclusions you draw, act upon them

or else they may not be considered when officials make their final decisions on the matter. If you decide to protest, make sure you know which issues you are protesting against - are you fighting for the right to have toilet paper or for the right of a 30-year-old to continue his studies?

There is no "Hero of the Week" in this edition, however, we would like to give credit to the ISA for all its work in promoting awareness of the current demonstrations. We thank them for donating their time and money in making a banner for our school!

Have a lot of fun during Christmas break - whether you're freezing your butt off at a protest or sitting at home drinking hot chocolate by the fire place!

## Special ★ Edition

# STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS

## WHAT IS IT ALL ABOUT?

BY SETH HEPNER

It is seldom these days that we can walk through the city without being practically bombed by protesting students waving flyers, signing petitions and generally encouraging an atmosphere of rebellion. These are the biggest student demonstrations in Germany since the 1960's, and the question that arises is: Just exactly why are they striking, protesting and demonstrating? The German students are protesting tremendous overcrowding of universities, low quality of education and reductions in government-sponsored student stipends (BAFOEG). The current problem can be traced back to the educational reforms of the

1970's, when the government guaranteed every student with an Abitur a place in a university, and at the same time reduced the difficulty of the Abitur. Of course, after the reunification, there were more people with Abiturs than there were funds available. Since then, the amount of students attending universities in Germany has more than doubled. The student to teacher ratio has grown to 55 to 1. Of course, this makes the students, as well as the professors, unhappy. Many students are merely attending university because it is easier than trying to find a job, and the professors aren't always super-motivated, either. After a gradual process of government

reductions over the last few years, the German students decided that they've had enough and took to the streets in Hessen, and the demonstrations spread from there. Last week alone, there were at least three official demonstrations in Berlin. Every political party in Germany has its own idea of how to solve this problem, some feel that the answer is to have student evaluations of professors, others to introduce selective admissions policies and to charge tuition. But everybody agrees on one thing: The German education system is in high need of reform.

## The LSK in Action

CONTRIBUTED BY SIMON WEBER

On Friday, December 12, way over 100 students from almost all Berlin schools met at the Kottbusser Tor to perform a 'Landes Schuler Konferenz' (LSK), to which all interested students were invited. This time four J.F.K.S. students participated. After a long introduction, we split up into groups and discussed topics like how to protect oneself at demonstrations, or the things we as students should demand. In the end we voted on a 'Forderungskatalog' (a list of our demands). It was voted that the LSK, speaking for all 16 striking and 48 demonstrating schools, demands:  
-a right to strike

- recognition of the LSV and all its organs
- more involvement of the students in the planning of the lessons and the 'Lehrplan'
- a general democratization of school and more rights for the students
- smaller classes
- younger teachers
- practicing of alternative teaching methods, reality related instruction, and group work
- money for necessary repairs
- no sponsoring
- education should always be paid for by the

continued — see LSK on page 2

## SC Tackles Issue

BY MIKOLAJ BEKASIAK

On Friday, during the sixth period there was a Emergency Student Council meeting. The primary issue discussed was whether or not a special student assembly should be held to deal with the demonstrations or not. It would serve to inform the students of the situation in Berlin (what we are trying to do with this newspaper) as well as gather and feedback about how JFK should react. In spite of strong support for the demonstrators the Student Council voted against the idea with a two thirds majority. Arguments against the assembly included that it would cut into valuable class time, (like the last class before a klausur), it wouldn't achieve anything as it would be unorganized, and not enough people care. Ben Morris also announced a demonstration that will be organized by all the Zehlendorf schools, the date of which will be posted later.



## LSK -- continued from page 1

government  
-system-critical instruction  
-integration of handicapped persons into schools  
-more funding for activities, student newspapers,  
and student radios, so that they don't have to  
depend on advertisement  
-new tax structures  
-and international coordination of protests.

After the LSK we went to the demonstration, together with about 3000 students, homeless, handicapped, workers and unionists, that went from the 'Rote Rathaus' to the 'Abgeordnetenhaus', where we were stopped by a massive police force of at least 20 full police busses. Still, we won't give up, and the demonstrations and strikes will continue until our demands have been granted.

**Demo-Watch**

There will a demo today at 15:00 starting at Hallisches Tor. It has been organized to protest government cuts in both education and social welfare. Posters with more information are posted around the school.

**OPINIONS****Students and the German Social System are to Blame for the Education Crisis!**

BY ADAM NAGORSKI

It is easy to denounce the government and consider yourself a victim, as students are now doing in their demonstrations. But you must first consider the broader picture of government spending before accusing it of "cutting back on basic rights." The government has actually *increased* the total amount of money allocated to universities: it is the *percentage* of the budget allotted to education that has decreased. However, the basic problem of many issues in Germany today, *including* education, is that government spending cannot keep up with the rising demands - or in the case of university education, the rising number of students. The causes behind the crippled state of German education are similar to those of the current German unemployment (12% of the labor force). An employer in Germany has to not only pay a worker's salary but also benefits - including luxuries such as annual six to eight week paid vacations, plus generous pension and health insurance plans - that nearly doubles the worker's price-tag. German law also makes it very difficult to fire a worker, even an incompetent one. Naturally, this system makes employers more hesitant to hire new workers in Germany and even drives many employers away from Germany completely. In German universities, students, like the workers, also enjoy lavish benefits and professors cannot be fired. German students don't have to pay for their education, receive discounts on most public services, receive "financial aid" (even though they don't pay for university) from the government and are able to study almost indefinitely. Students (and groups like the ISA) argue that such a program embodies the values of democracy and makes for a terrific educational system. It doesn't.

The state spends approximately 24,000 DM to send one student through one year of university. The majority of Germans who study come from middle and upper class families but their payment is covered by everybody - including lower, working class families who often don't send their children to university. How is that

democratic? Secondly, the ability of students to study for as long as they want is a terrible idea. Ten percent of German students are 30 years old or older. Those students, incidentally, are spearheading the demonstrations against plans which impose study or age limits on students. Students who complete a degree in a certain field of study (which should take about four to five years) often go on to study something else, perhaps even an altogether new degree because they don't want to join the work-force. These students use up money that *should* be used for students working on their first (and what should be their only) degree. They use up money that could otherwise be used to buy new books and to hire more professors (thereby creating smaller classrooms). The average age of student graduating from a German university is 28, as opposed to

not take classes for granted as many German students do (ask any university student how many classes he or she skips weekly). American professors are not civil servants whose position can be threatened only by criminal charges but are instead employees of their university. They cannot choose to miss many classes because "they don't feel well" as some German professors so often do. As to the cost of American universities, private universities try hard through financial aid and student loans to make their university accessible to as broad a range of people as possible. Non-private, state universities cost *much* less than private universities and can attract people from just about any financial background. Renowned institutions such as UCLA, the College of William and Mary, and Berkeley are all state schools. If German students paid a portion of their tuition (with financial aid, of course, for those who could not afford this) they would take their studies much more seriously and would not decide to stay in university for seven years (the average time a German student spends at university). German universities also have no individual application process; an Abitur is the only criteria for a spot in a German university. Universities cannot decide to attract a certain type of student and hire certain professors to teach those students. An university-run admissions office would not only create university spirit and identities (which, in turn, create alumni who give back to their school later in life) but also colleges which can attract top students and professors and thereby create a very highly-educated portion of the population. Finally, if professors in Germany faced the risk of being fired, they would spend more time with students outside of classrooms and also take their job more seriously. When deciding on whether or not you're going to cut classes and join the demonstrators in the coming weeks, take my arguments into consideration. Are you demonstrating against the right things? Or should entirely different actions be taken?

Voice YOUR opinion and respond to other people's views at the *Muckraker Online Discussion Forum!*

THE  
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about 22 in the United States.

Many Germans view the American educational system as an unfair, class-discriminating system yet many people also agree that the American colleges are, collectively, the best in the world. Because students pay to go to school, they do

at their solidarity with other, not-so-lucky schools.

There are tons of reasons why we should protest in some form. For one thing, we might get toilet paper. Furthermore, we might also get new learning materials and class trips that aren't cancelled because of money shortages. Still, our schools' problems aren't nearly as severe as those of others, so the one thing that would *really* speak for us would be getting out on the streets with everybody else and showing that we care about the bad conditions at other schools.

Currently, 16 schools all over Berlin are on strike and 48 schools are planning similar projects. In general, the students are protesting against budget cuts responsible for an increased number of students per class, less teachers, poor learning materials, etc. Up until now, our school has done basically nothing in this direction. Then again, why should we, if budget cuts only involve not having toilet paper and being made to sweep the floor? We can live with that, although in the end, it all comes down to one thing: the John F. Kennedy School has not even hinted

**Protest!**

BY ANDREA KAPELKE

Arguments against protesting don't really exist, unless you consider that you shouldn't go to demonstrations during school hours. (Giving up classes is not a sacrifice.)

Otherwise, we should stay in touch with other schools, so we know what they're planning. Based on that, we can decide on how to structure our protests, but simply pretending that budget cuts don't concern us would be a show of ignorance.

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