This special issue of the Amherst Alumni News has been prepared to inform alumni and friends about the events which took place at the College during the late spring of 1969. That these events were of unusual significance in the life of Amherst is beyond question; that they were covered completely and objectively in the national press is subject to doubt. The editors therefore hope that these words and pictures drawn from the Moratorium and Commencement will increase understanding of the processes by which Amherst is changing and growing.
The MORATORIUM

After Commencement, President Plimpton began his remarks to alumni by saying: "It was quite a year!" And indeed it was.

As early as September, undergraduates were advancing their views on parietal rules, governance of the College, representation on policy-making committees, Black-White relations. One perennial object of attack—compulsory chapel—was not discussed; it ended last May. Throughout the year, these and such other subjects as military and business recruitment, the War in Vietnam, and coeducation were topics of increasing comment. Vacations came and went, but interest never waned.

The presidential campaign tended to divert the continuing course of undergraduate interest, but with the November elections student attention returned to ongoing issues.

Often, but not always, members of the SDS took the lead in pressing "causes." But even without their leadership, an underlying, pervasive concern for the campus, the nation, the world, permeated student thought. Last spring's revolt at Columbia, chronic chaos at Berkeley, seemingly unending turmoil at San Francisco State, and finally the explosion at Harvard all left their imprint on Amherst.

The critical mass was reached at the College over the weekend of April 26—when, by coincidence, a small group of alumni on the campus for a series of meetings had front row seats as the situation developed.

Some fifty to sixty more radical students, it appeared, were making plans to take over a building—presumably Converse. Other students and faculty members wishing to avoid such action talked far into Thursday night on how confrontation might be averted. Out of their sessions an Ad Hoc Committee was formed which provided actual, if not official, leadership to discussions of the next few days.

In a special meeting on Friday afternoon, April 25, the faculty voted to suspend classes and all academic and extracurricular activities on the following Monday and Tuesday, April 28 and 29. It asked the College Council—composed of students, teachers, and administrators—to give form and direction to the two-day period and called on Student Council, on behalf of the students, to assure that participation would be college-wide. A number of students who had entered the faculty meeting room intending to stay were asked to leave; their petition to attend was subsequently voted down.

Immediately after the faculty adjorned, an all-College meeting convened in Johnson Chapel with Prof. F. Bruce Morgan, College Council chairman, presiding. For him this was the beginning of nearly a week of marathon conferences, seminars, mass meetings, and talk. He indicated that mimeograph facilities would be available for all who wished to state a position or a view in preparation for Monday's opening meeting. The result was a flood of paper, nearly 200,000 sheets, which continued to flow for the next five days—some stern, some mild, one humorous—covering almost every topic imaginable.

The Moratorium, as it was promptly named, opened with a mass meeting of some 600 students and teachers in front of the Frost Library on Monday morning at which those who had prepared position papers were invited to extend or explain their views. Like their papers, the undergraduates' words varied from vituperative to moderate. Light touches were few, but one speaker, commenting on the administration's response to student demands, observed: "If you want to stage a revolution, the College will organize it for you."
A suggestion by Prof. Leo Marx that the College send a letter to President Nixon expressing its concern over "the existing relationship between the crisis on the university campus today and the larger ills of society" was proposed at this meeting and led to positive action later in the proceedings.

Following an open luncheon at Valentine Hall, the Moratorium continued in numerous small groups scattered indoors and out around the campus, each having designated student and faculty leaders. That evening similar discussions were resumed in the fraternity houses. Participation by all elements of the community was broad, and a number of trustees was also present to join in the sessions. The day closed with an open meeting of the College Council in Johnson Chapel.

On Tuesday, attention was directed to specific issues raised during the preceding day: the budget, admission, the curriculum, college governance, financial aid, coeducation, academic requirements. At 8:00 that evening, a mass legislative meeting scheduled for Johnson Chapel was moved to the Cage before it began, in order to accommodate the overflow crowd that appeared. Attendance was estimated at nearly 1,000. A speaker's platform was set up, microphones were placed at strategic points, and the whole affair assumed the appearance and sound of a mid-summer political convention. Professor Morgan shared presiding duties with Christopher T. Greene '70, student chairman of the College Council, and Prof. Benjamin M. Ziegler undertook the hazardous duties of parliamentarian.

About half the proposals introduced by the Ad Hoc Committee were approved, some with amendments, during a four-hour session lasting until 12:30 a.m. The "convention" then adjourned until the following evening when action was taken on unfinished business in a second meeting which also went on for nearly four hours. Meantime, classes and other activities resumed on Wednesday, although there is some question about the academic nature of their content.

At the second mass meeting, the letter to President Nixon was read and approved by extended, standing applause. It was also voted, at the request of Black students, to set aside May 14 as a second day of moratorium to consider black problems at Amherst and in society which, it was agreed, had not received appropriate consideration.

That the experience was educational for all concerned cannot be doubted. In some matters, students and teachers had related interests: more control over the budget, a greater voice in government; in others their interests were quite attributed only to their stamina and dedication to the cause. Members of the so-called "Radical Caucus" were equally active and ubiquitous in their efforts to amend Ad Hoc Committee proposals or to urge their own more leftist views. Throughout the marathon of meetings, students and teachers found themselves openly discussing topics among themselves and with one another which had rarely, if ever, surfaced before. An atmosphere emerged and lingered in varying degrees until the end of classes which was often referred to as "the spirit of the Moratorium"—in fact, many a speaker introduced his remarks with just that phrase.

Treasurer Kurt M. Hertzfeld discusses Amherst's finances with Jon Weissman '69 of SDS.