

OPEN AIR MEETING IN SQUARE 4

Wednesday evening 15th May 1968

NOTE BY A. BARKER

The open-air meeting in the square on the Wednesday evening (15th May), during the long long wait while Senate deliberated was an interesting chapter since it brought one of the sharpest confrontations between the radical and moderate spokesmen. About 9 p.m. (I think) Mike Gonzales climbed onto the fountain and told the meeting that it had been suggested that a meeting should take place to discuss what to do about the Senate's long delay and it had been suggested that a resolution should be proposed that the crowd move up from the square and blockade the Senate Room until Senate had come to a decision. He very democratically called for speakers on this.

His decision to do this was an interesting display of the socialisation in open methods which the radical element had, I understand, privately and at a private meeting on Tuesday resolved to follow after the fiasco of invading the Hexagon when they went out like a lion and came back like lambs on Monday evening. I understand that a meeting of some kind was held at which there was some recrimination amongst the radical element and it had been felt that they had made fools of themselves, and that they had decided to keep within the consensus even though it meant moderating the kind of actions which they personally would like to take. I myself had explained this point very fully to the Vice-Chancellor on Wednesday morning as part of my plea to him to take some action however nominal before Senate's meeting on Wednesday, in order that the moderates could continue to hold the situation.

The crowd to make

After Gonzales invitation to <sup>A</sup> speeches, several were made and it was clear again that the majority of the 400 to 500 people in the square were inclined to wait for Senate to produce its result. Radical speeches favouring a sit-in of the television room struck me as being short and rather bare, replying heavily on abuse of the Senate along the lines of "who do those people think they are sitting there and keeping us all waiting", and "they are being rude as usual".

Several of us were quite worried at the fact that the bar had now been open 4-5 hours while the students' patience ran out and quite frankly one or two of us were cursing the Senate for failing to put out an interim statement, apologising for the delay explaining that they were involved in a long and complicated discussion

on a wide variety of very important topics which could not be concluded briefly and they were sorry to keep half the University waiting in the square and that they did not expect to conclude their business that night.

After an hour or so the resolution to go up and blockade the Senate was put to a vote and was clearly defeated. The next event was the appearance of the Registrar at the door of the television room to read a statement to say that Senate would re-convene in the morning and from somewhere came the suggestion that he personally come to the Hexagon where a dance had already begun and say again through the microphone. I remember turning round, and discovering that he was no longer there. We searched for the Registrar and then gave up and found Jean Blondel who agreed to come and read the statement in his stead.

When Blondel and I arrived at the Hexagon speeches were in progress to the distress of the beat group who had been playing. John Bull made the main speech on this occasion urging all patrons of the dance to stay there all night and to demonstrate that the Hexagon belonged to them until the Senate had finished its deliberations. Keith Ives also spoke, perhaps less fortunately than other times of the week, telling people that he personally was going home to sleep in his bed that night so that he would be fresh to deal with whatever the Senate came up with in the morning. There was a good deal of jeering and cat-calling and it was my impression that the flat floor of the Hexagon as usual as in the case of the L.T.B. was largely occupied by the radicals with the moderates much further towards the back and less visible and less vocal.

Jean Blondel then read his statement and answered a couple of brief points and left. I asked Mr. Wyatt whether he had any objection to people sleeping in the Hexagon all night and he replied that he certainly didn't as long as they didn't break anything and as long as there was no more fiddling with electric fuses as there had been the night before. I thought this a most wise reaction and asked if I could communicate it to the audience through the standing Chairman, Fred Twine. This I did. There was in fact no damage, but £55 or so of food was removed from the kitchens or spoilt.