

# Panel Discusses Underlying Reasons for Loras Situation

By David Cushing

Three Loras College professors and a handful of students met last week to discuss what had happened at the college during the traumatic week and a half before—and why.

A panel and discussion program, sponsored by the Student Senate and entitled "Loras to America: White vs. Black", was the first in a series of programs being planned to help the Loras community "understand the black and white co-existence in the United States," according to Ralph Navarro, a senior from Chicago who is chairman of the program committee.

The purpose of the discussion, he said, was "not to pass judgment on the events of the past week, but to give possible causes for what happened."

The group heard Dr. Thomas Auge, chairman of the Loras history department, explain that "the history of the United States is a history of racism."

In large part it's a history that doesn't get into the textbooks because "it's a history that is in each one of us." "It's evident that in every white man, more or less, racism is living," he explained, and added: "In every black man today there is this tradition as well."

According to the Rev. Lawrence Burke, of the Loras philosophy department, a person who intends to break the law for any reason can make that decision only after much soul-searching. "It takes a man of great heart and great head to say he's going to enter that shady area of breaking the law," he said.

## A Better World?

A person who intends to break the law must ask himself if the world will be better for his actions. "What do you think?" he asked, "if everyone in the world burned his draft card, would the world be better?"

The Rev. James Barta, Loras psychology professor and the third panel member, explained that hostility between two people results when one feels his security or needs are threatened by the other. "Whenever we see ourselves being very worked up against any person," he said, "we must ask ourselves which of our goals or needs that person is frustrating."

Navarro and Patrick Winn, vice-president of the Loras Student Senate, were also on the panel. Navarro explained what it's like to grow up and live in a ghetto from his personal experience in Chicago.

Winn explained the need for a black culture house, stating "blacks in this lily-white city have a definite need" for a culture house.

"The white man has America for his culture house; the black man in a totally white community has nothing," he said. At Loras the black student has been looked upon primarily as an athlete, Winn charged. "He is nothing more than a paid performer for the enjoyment of white collegiates."

"What is needed," he said, "is the education of the white man of the culture of the black man."

According to Dr. Auge, "racism has been a part of the American culture from its beginning." "It is not a southern commodity," either, he stated, "but an American commodity."

Although it flagrantly violates the principles on which the U.S. was founded, the history professor stated, racism has existed from the very beginning, in separate schools, churches, separate laws. The Civil War, he said, ended slavery but it did not end racism and the Second World War, in part a crusade to end racism, was fought with segregated troops.

Things have not gotten better with time, either. Dr. Auge stated. They have gotten worse as the black man fled from the South to the Northern cities only to find "another cruel deception."

Racism "hasn't ended at all," he said. "Even the liberal white people do not accept, and

historically have not accepted, the black man." Blacks today are the living testament to our history, he said, and the events of Loras must be put into the context of the historic tradition.

A person who decides to break a law must decide if he is merely breaking a law or if in doing so he is "adhering to a higher law so that a new law will emerge with a higher sense of justice," according to Father Burke.

He must ask the philosopher said, if all recognized means of change have been tried, if an honest attempt has been made to remove selfish, personal reasons, if the existing order is seriously wrong, if he is willing to accept the consequences and if a better order will replace the old.

If a person can answer yes to these questions, Father Burke said, then he has "the head and heart to civilly disobey." "Thank God there are some men who are willing to enter this area," he added.

Until recently "the black man has been forced to play an inferior role," Father Barta stated, and that in part may psychologically explain why many blacks have apparently lost the capacity to feel.

"You can play a role but that doesn't mean you like it," he said, and to avoid being labeled an "uppity nigger", black man has to suppress his feelings of anger and fear resulting from his inferior role. When a person constantly suppresses feelings, he loses the capacity to feel, the potential for affectivity and emotions," Father Barta explained. As a result, "some ambivalence would be realistic" in today's black man.

A idealistic approach to life is also realistic in today's black man because of the gap between his aspirations and the reality of his low economic and social position. He "builds up an inability to plan prudently, realistically."

The individuals who are most strongly anti-black are usually those individuals who "have the least cause for self esteem or self security," he stated.

Extreme anti-white feelings in the black man result from the frustration of his goal of self esteem also, a frustration "most blacks feel most keenly," according to Father Barta.

He also pointed out that "It is good for us to consider the possibility that when we attempt to communicate with someone else we should not assume that we are all speaking the same language."

Following a principle of black power which Navarro explained as "whites must educate whites", there were no black students on the panel.