

Communication Among Constituencies:  
The *Brown Alumni Monthly* Representation of the Events of 1975

Not until the twentieth century did alumni truly become an important constituency of the university, one of great concern to the other constituencies more immediately involved in campus life. The faculty, the administration, and the students began to pay attention perhaps in no small part because, after the rapid growth in the student body during the 1890s, there were simply more alumni to make their voices heard. The *Brown Alumni Monthly* published its first issue in June of 1900, proclaiming as its purpose “to bring the university and its graduates into closer touch and sympathy.”<sup>1</sup> It was a recognition that “the undergraduate publications, while serving well the purpose for which they are published, have been inadequate to cover the alumni field in addition to their own special province.”<sup>2</sup> The very idea that such an “alumni field” existed, that the graduates of the university had their own special province which merited a monthly newsletter, was a new one, having come to fruition only after organizations of Brown men sprung up independently in major cities such as Boston, New York, Chicago, and Hartford. The alumni were now, in a country larger both in terms of geographic area and population, sufficiently spread out to need the news of their classmates sent to them in printed form; no longer could they simply stop to chat on the corner of Waterman and Brown streets.

From the beginning, the *Brown Alumni Monthly* occupied the liminal space between the university as an institution concerned primarily with its current campus affairs and daily operation, and her alumni. More and more the university began to depend on the alumni, and their contributions to the nascent Brown Fund, both to support those daily operating expenses

and to undertake larger capital projects such as the “new classrooms, new dormitory accommodations, better faculty salaries” for which the first volume pleaded.<sup>3</sup> In return, the alumni evidenced more concern for the nature of those classrooms, dormitories, and faculty members, and the events concerning those. In laying out its purpose, the *BAM* set itself up as a mediating force between the alumni and the other constituencies. It was an organ of communication intended to work in both directions, but its role was deliberately defined as vague: “The Monthly hopes to represent the university in a semi-official way, and yet retain its independent character as an alumni publication.”<sup>4</sup> A tension between these two complementary aims was inevitable.

Seventy-five years after its first tentative issue, the *Brown Alumni Monthly* had a role no more or less clearly defined than when it first began. It’s challenge, as it always had been, was to portray the university to her alumni, in terms of content, of sympathies, and of character. For all that one alumnus criticized the *BAM* for “trying to emulate the *New Yorker* magazine,” noting that he “preferred it a bit more ‘folksy,’ i.e. concentration on campus people and events” it was still essentially a distillation of Brown news, albeit more broadly construed than earlier in the century.<sup>5</sup> The question, then, of how exactly the magazine was presenting the university, both in terms of content and in terms of its sympathies within that chosen content, is particularly relevant during times of turbulence on campus.

The year 1975 was one such period of turbulence. On “one snowy, agitated day in March,” March 14<sup>th</sup>, the students “shed their much-heralded apathy, dropped their frenzied pre-professional pursuits for a while, and indulged themselves in the first serious campus

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<sup>1</sup> “The Purpose of the Monthly,” *The Brown Alumni Monthly* 1 (June 1900): 4.

<sup>2</sup> “The Purpose of the Monthly,” 4.

<sup>3</sup> “The Purpose of the Monthly,” 5.

<sup>4</sup> “The Purpose of the Monthly,” 4.

demonstration in five years.” The editors of *BAM* indicated a decided preference for “a balmy, rather placid day in late February” of that year, a day in which they had staged a large scale photographic essay of the life and times of the university. The essay warranted a “special issue” and clearly had been in the works for some time. A pictorial representation of campus life was precisely the type of interesting and eminently forgettable task that alumni magazines often undertook. There was little controversy involved and a good time was had by all. Instead, the situation on campus changed. It changed so dramatically that, conscious of their duty to present the news of the university, the editors found themselves “upstaged by a major campus news event and . . . forced to begin with a description of one snowy, agitated day in March.”<sup>6</sup>

The weather, in the editors introduction to the lead article, serves as a convenient metaphor for the state of the university. The photo essay, now moved to the second half of the magazine, is full of Brown students, staff, faculty, and administrators doing business as usual, albeit “frenzied pre-professional pursuits” and a great deal of work.<sup>7</sup> It portrays a world focused inwardly, from the athletic teams at practice to the theater rehearsals, from the sleepy students hitting snooze buttons to the professors leading classroom discussions, the photographic essay looks at elements of Brown captured in still frames. The end result is one of a serene campus wherein people are engaged in their daily pursuits on this day, as on every other day not memorialized on 35mm film.

Two weeks later the scene on campus was anything but serene, anything but business as usual. A crowd that was estimated to approach 2,000 people at its peak was in an uproar over the proposed budget for the following year.<sup>8</sup> The *BAM* hailed it as “the opening gun of a

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<sup>5</sup> A. John Kohhepp, Jr. '57, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 55.

<sup>6</sup> Sandra Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities – and how?” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (April 1975): 1.

<sup>7</sup> *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (April 1975): 6-59.

<sup>8</sup> Sandra Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities – and how?” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (April 1975): 1.

confrontation between Brown's administration and the student body over who determined University priorities and how."<sup>9</sup> In the face of a poor national economy, the university was having trouble meeting its previous commitments on funding for the concerns of black students, particularly in the related areas of admissions and financial aid.

March 1975 was the first real sign of unrest among the student body at Brown in five years, since news of the deaths at Kent State had provoked reactions on college campuses across the country. For all that Sandra Reeves, writing for the *Brown Alumni Monthly*, evidenced a measure of sympathy for the student perspective on the budget, she had also found herself caught unawares by the students' rapid departure from their pre-professional pursuits. In the beginning of her article, she voiced what were likely common sentiments:

One cannot help imagining that, for some, the day is a re-enactment of a more exciting collegiate experience that history, by only five or six years, has denied them. . . . On the surface at least, the first face-off in this unusual battle of the budget seemed to many to be only a pleasant, and perhaps naïve, replay of an earlier student activism. After all, not only were these students orderly, polite, and good-humored, but they were also woefully short on protest rhetoric, especially the musical kind.<sup>10</sup>

Reeves found it worthy of note that, when the leaders of the demonstration tried to start a group song, no one knew the lyrics to "We Shall Overcome."<sup>11</sup> The implication of her comment was that this re-enactment failed in its attempts to recreate that more exciting collegiate experience. It would have been unthinkable for students in 1968 to be unfamiliar with the quintessential song of protest.

Sandra Reeves began her article voicing sentiments that resonated with many of the older alumni. They were skeptical of the students' motivations and aims, suspecting that they were really playing around more so than offering a serious critique of the university's priorities. In

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<sup>9</sup> Reeves, "Who sets Brown's priorities," 1.

<sup>10</sup> Reeves, "Who sets Brown's priorities," 1.

describing the course of her reactions to the unfolding events, however, the author led the alumni readers onto a more nuanced understanding of the student position: “The illusion of naiveté began to vanish as the dedication and the organizational skill of Coalition leadership became more apparent, and as the deeper implications of their protest started to emerge in the weeks following the opening protest gesture.”<sup>12</sup> Her portrait of then-President Donald Hornig and his “bluntly worded refusals to release a detailed breakdown of the budget” was not particularly sympathetic.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, she depicted the individual student leaders, particularly “articulate senior spokeswoman Cathy ten Kate,” as motivated and committed individuals.<sup>14</sup>

The situation, as Reeves presented it, was too complex to end there, with a simple tale of the little students against the big administration. Once April arrived, “inside Sayles, student speakers are showing what just one month of political maneuvering can do for rhetoric. . . . Others sling figures around lightly and erroneously. The reasoned atmosphere that prevailed at the first demonstration (one month ago to the day) has been replaced by the hollow sounds of confrontation politics.”<sup>15</sup> Then again, the administration was behaving no better. At the end of the day, or at least when this first article went to press, it was unclear what the end result of the budget disputes would be. Reeves closed her article with a disclaimer that “understanding the budget dispute at Brown is by no means simple. Unlike past student protest movements which argued society’s problems from a university perspective, this crisis is confined to the operation and philosophy of the University itself.”<sup>16</sup> She never addressed in any substantive way this operation and philosophy of the University itself, but the *Brown Alumni Monthly* had done its

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<sup>11</sup> Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 1.

<sup>12</sup> Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 1.

<sup>13</sup> Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 2.

<sup>14</sup> Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 2.

<sup>15</sup> Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 4.

<sup>16</sup> S Reeves, “Who sets Brown’s priorities,” 4

duty in putting the breaking campus news to the forefront, even over its long-awaited pictorial essay of campus life.

The alumni response was immediate and varied. The first letter in the “Carrying the Mail” section of the following issue of the *Brown Alumni Monthly* was precisely what would have been expected from an older alumnus. Stephen A. McClellan, Class of 1923, wrote a long letter and outlined all his reasons why students should realize that “they are jeopardizing the education that they presumably came to Brown to get” and ought to be grateful to those contributing to their education. He furthermore characterized the strike as the “immature actions of an appreciable percentage of the student body”<sup>17</sup> One can hear the echo of his voice proclaiming that back in the day, when he was a lad, he walked six miles to school, uphill both ways in three feet of snow with a pack of wild dogs chasing him. The tone was one of summary condemnation for the evident ingratitude of the student body.

The next letter offered no surprises, either. It was from a younger, rather recent alumnus, who proclaimed that Hornig should have seen this coming and should resign. Jeremiah Davis ’74 was “proud that Brown has a student body with enough gumption not to allow the dismantling of the New Curriculum, the deterioration of minority matriculation, and the stripping of younger faculty.”<sup>18</sup> What emerged instantly in the alumni letters to the editor was a large generation gap. Fifty-one years had separated the graduations of McClellan and Davis, and each man then framed the questions in different, and predictable, ways. For McClellan the question was one of education, opportunity, and maturity. For Davis, it also had to do with gumption, the commitment of the students, but it was for larger, community-wide causes rather than something so specific as the education of any particular student. Davis had gone to Brown in an age where

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen A. McClellan ’23, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 48. McClellan was a frequent contributor to the “Carrying the Mail” section of the *Brown Alumni Monthly*.

college attendance was as high as it had ever been in the history of the United States and all the demographic disparities were patently obvious. He felt assured of his education in the America of the 1970s, and thus had great freedom to advocate exactly how he felt that education should look. It was no longer a question of whether or not he and his ilk would attend Brown, as it likely was for McClellan and his contemporaries, but of the content of that education. His generation was not content to leave such important matters for their administrators to administrate. The first two alumni responses showcased were then what would be expected, evidence of a dramatic generation gap amongst the Brown alumni. The older alumni would fully support the administration as guardians of the status quo, and the younger, hipper alumni would side with the students. Indeed, at least one alumnus, after following carefully the *BAM* letters to the editor, was quite clear that he perceived just that very generation gap: “

What struck me as the most interesting aspect of the editorial flurry that surrounded the issue of the strike was the emerging polarity between writers who graduated before and after the New Curriculum was introduced. It seems that the old guard will forever regard an education at Brown as a ‘privilege, not a right’ . . . As much as I loved Brown as a student and continue to support *my concept of her* as an alumnus, I certainly hope the administration wakes up in time to realize that Brown has stiff competition that will not hesitate to attract prospective applicants away from Providence. At this point I am no longer sure I would come again as a freshman. And I say this with deep dismay. But it is the truth and I daresay I am not alone in my disillusionment.<sup>19</sup>

The most striking phrase in his letter, as he well realized when he italicized it, was “my concept of her,” an unabashed admittance that Brown did not mean the same thing to all of her graduates. Indeed, his observation was all too clear throughout the letters.

Reading further, however, into the many pages of alumni letters, the picture is no longer so clear. Many alumni evinced feelings that the events which had recently transpired on Brown’s

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<sup>18</sup> Jeremiah J. Davis ’74, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 48.

<sup>19</sup> Stephen A. Glassman ’72, “Letter to the editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 76 (September 1975): 54.

campus affected them personally. The position of many of the older alumni is succinctly stated in a letter by Roger G. Smith, Class of '53, the entirety of which is reproduced here:

For ten years it has been a disgrace to be a Brown man as the barbarians have degraded the University. Now it is more humiliating as it becomes evident they own it. One could respect Brown if the hijackers were expelled and scholarships only provided for scholars. But just as America doesn't have the guts to be a world power, Brown lacks the guts to be a university.<sup>20</sup>

For some of these alumni the issue is not in any one of fiscal matters, it is entirely a matter of pride and honor in one's alma mater.

A more recent alumna (indeed, all the alumnae of Brown were recent), belied the strict categorization by generation that at first seemed so evident. No stranger to the walk-outs and demonstrations of the late sixties and early seventies, Constance Sancetta '71, '73 Sc.M., congratulated the administration in a stance diametrically opposed to that of most of her contemporaries. Her own experiences at Brown mad her "vividly aware of the volatility of such situations, and I am proud to have gone to a school where reason and a willingness to listen generally prevail over extremist responses."<sup>21</sup> Her letter begs the question of precisely where she got the impression that such reason and willingness to listen were part of the process. The *BAM* article to which she was responding presented a campus at a stalemate, with the administration and corporation presented as a brick wall, unwilling to compromise or negotiate after trying to appease the students with "a resolution which supported the general idea of a student budgetary review committee, but which set nothing in cement."<sup>22</sup> It was that very resolution which set into motion the strike proceedings of which she did not approve. Nevertheless, her letter stands out because of her recent graduation date, if not for its resonance throughout other letters whose authors were concerned with matters of pride.

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<sup>20</sup> Roger G. Smith '53, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 51.

<sup>21</sup> Constance Sancetta '71, '73 Sc.M., "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 50.



The area chairman and regional director of the National Alumni Schools Program in Nashville, Tennessee wrote of his anger and confusion after the strike. J. Richard Chambers '69 felt it a personal affront that his work in recruiting students had been "undermined." To Chambers, the threat to the university was two-fold, and entirely external. Brown had to manage her affairs "before her future both in terms of alumni support, and in terms of her image with her consumer group, the outstanding high school senior, be destroyed."<sup>23</sup> If Brown was a product, Chambers was the salesman, and his concerns were for the viability of the university, a viability he perceived as being dependent on the support from once and future students. Chambers' letter showed no favor for either the administrative or student positions, addresses no questions of the internal campus debate. As far as this alumnus is concerned, the issue was one of Brown's image, an image which was of immediate concern to him even after he had long since graduated. Discord on campus had a spill-over effect for this alumnus rather far off campus, both emotionally and in terms of more practical, that is fiscal, matters.

It must be noted that not all who framed the question in the manner in which Chambers framed it shared his opinions. His fellow Brunonian suggested that perhaps the strikes were indicative of a school that had lost its way: "Perhaps Brown now needs to return to what it has always done best, providing a quality, traditional liberal arts curriculum, and needs to advise its present and prospective clientele that this is the course being taken, so that current and prospective students may decide for themselves whether or not they wish to participate in such a program."<sup>24</sup> Brown, according to this view, should only take the students who desire what Brown has to offer, not those who would seek to change it.

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<sup>22</sup> Sandra Reeves, "Who sets Brown's priorities – and how?" *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (April 1975): 3.

<sup>23</sup> J. Richard Chambers '69, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 49.

<sup>24</sup> Miner Patton '32, "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 76 (September 1975): 54.

A great many letter writers joined Chambers in approving neither of the administration nor of the students. An alumnus from the Class of 1965 blamed the administration for failing to communicate that “attendance at Brown, or any other institution for that matter, is a privilege and not a right” and the students for not also reaching that conclusion.<sup>25</sup> Both parties were at fault. In another letter, Phillip Baram ’59 echoed those sentiments about privilege, and expounds upon that idea with a great deal of posturing as to his Brown experience. He then stated his intention to take action in an area he felt would affect the university: he would withhold his financial contributions.

Baram was not the only one who saw financial recourse as a way to expand the force of his opinions as he voiced in his letter. He articulated his reasoning in that he would stop his contributions to a school “which shifts with every fad and every threat; it had become liberal in the worst sense – liberated from leadership, decisiveness, and self-respect.” Although for Baram “Brown was never a paradise,” it was not his grievances from his student days which diminished his pride in his alma mater, but because the university caved to the “black and Latino racists on campus and to their mugging tactics.”<sup>26</sup> The business ethic of twentieth-century America provided practical answers to his grievances. As a member of the Class of 1945 put it, “For \$6,000 a year, certainly the students should be heard—and also the bill-paying parents and alumni. The administration . . . [has] the long-range challenge of preserving a financially solvent Brown University for future generations.”<sup>27</sup>

The sense that money talks, particularly when the crisis was one predicated on budget woes, resonated throughout a great many letters, even one from a student who was actively

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<sup>25</sup> Eric D. Kohler ’65, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 48.

<sup>26</sup> Phillip Baram ’59, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 49.

<sup>27</sup> Louis H. Hofman ’45, “Letter to the Editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 51.

caught up in the midst of the campus financial woes. He attempted, in a letter to the *BAM*, justify the student voice on campus in a way that might appeal to alumni:

A large portion of the University's income is from alumni. Five years from now almost everyone who is here as a student now will be an alumnus/a. On what do we have to base our feelings toward the University? We have for a basis our four years here. If we are so totally frustrated with the administration, are we likely to feel so kindly to them when they start asking us for money? I am a senior, and sometime between now, when I am writing this letter, and June 3 something magical is going to happen to me so that after June 3 the University is going to at least put on the pretense of listening to what I have to say. This happens every year. As soon as one has left Brown, the University says it wants to hear what you think about the way things are at the University. I hope they listen well this year.<sup>28</sup>

A cynical commentator might note that perhaps he should have spent more of his four years at Brown learning the basic rules of person and number in grammatical subject-verb constructions, but his point is germane.

The problem with this senior's argument is that, while it is clear that many contributions were affected, it is not clear that they went in one direction or another. People on both sides of the issue expressed their favor or disfavor with their checkbooks. One alumnus who had always contributed to scholarship funds continued to contribute, but only with the stipulation that his money be "devoted for the general purposes of the University and none at all for scholarship aid. The students are proclaiming their 'rights' which must be considered privileges rather than rights."<sup>29</sup> A certain generational tendency is evident in that older alumni graduated from a Brown with considerably more discipline and considerably less freedom than was the norm by the 1970s. For men who remember the electricity being shut off at 10 PM to indicate bed-time in the dormitory, or the days before Brown had a codified system of financial aid or scholarships, the student protestors were living in the lap of luxury.

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<sup>28</sup> Michael A. Golrick '75, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 50.

<sup>29</sup> Maurice M. Pike '21, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 50.

Members of many classes, from 1921 to 1960 to 1974, withheld contributions because they did not support the administration's handling of the crisis. These came from all points of view, in favor or not in favor of the student demands. One of the more creative, and angry, letters told the university in no uncertain terms just how he proposed to give away what had formerly been his contributions to Brown: "Until further notice my contributions to Brown will be funneled to the Audubon Society as a protest against this malevolent undercurrent of insurgency prevalent within our undergraduates."<sup>30</sup> At the same time, a Providence resident with no apparent connection to the University made her first financial contribution as a "way of showing my support."<sup>31</sup> Similarly, an alumnus who regrets that his current financial situation did not permit him to contribute "as often or as fully as I might wish," enclosed with his letter a check "to be used towards the necessary financial aid to implement the commitment towards increasing minority enrollment at Brown."<sup>32</sup> The idea that alumni contributions can or should be earmarked for certain things, that the money itself, or the givers thereof, carry the donor's stipulations is not necessarily a new one. However, in a situation such as faced Brown University in 1975, it could quickly deteriorate. The Director of Development, Richard Seaman, noted that the campus unrest in the spring of 1975 "alienated a sizable portion of potential donors." He was quoted as distressed that "not only have those of a more conservative persuasion chosen to show their disfavor by withholding money, but also those of a liberal persuasion. They just disagree with different things."<sup>33</sup> In the midst of this campus budget crisis, the cacophony of so much money talking made impossible a clear and unified donor-driven direction for the university.

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<sup>30</sup> A. Mark Pope, '71, "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 76 (September 1975): 53.

<sup>31</sup> Caroline T. Stewart, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 51.

<sup>32</sup> Stuart M. Flashman '69, '69Sc.M., "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (July/August 1975): 56.

<sup>33</sup> Sandra Reeves, "Brown and the Third World. . . Putting a price on promises," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975):4.

The cacophonous nature of the dialogue in the back of the *Brown Alumni Monthly* was due in no small part to the framing of different questions. It wasn't simply that different alumni were arriving at different answers, rather they were not even addressing the same topics. In certain letters, however, multiple interests intersected and questions of pride and honor were related to issues of finance were often mixed into one statement: "I am not withholding my support from Brown for just this outrageous toleration of unacceptable conduct and lack of civility by the undergraduates. . . . Added to this is the fact that my son and many sons and daughters of alumni and others, who could afford and would benefit from and advance Brown's cause, are denied admission apparently so that students, such as those who took over the office of the president, may disrupt the orderly process of the University."<sup>34</sup> It seems that there is a little personal animosity on the part of this particular alumnus, but his judgment of the undergraduates stands as a strong condemnation of their ungentlemanly conduct. Implicit in his concerns is the idea that the students at the university at any given time are directly responsible for the level of alumni contributions.

One recent graduate of Brown and current graduate wrote in with a creative solution to the fund-raising question. Jeffrey Austerlitz suggested that, since "the students wasn't more money to keep up the caliber of the educational experience at Brown, so I believe it is the responsibility of the students to assist in fund-raising." He would send the students on the circuit of alumni clubs to give them a chance to debate the strike and occupation with the alumni and convince them to open their wallets.<sup>35</sup> As a corollary to the idea that students themselves share in the responsibility for the university's ability to attract funds is the idea that they should present themselves in such a way as to attract donations. To at least one alumnus, "it seems that some of

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas D. Burns '43, "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (July/August 1975): 54-5.

<sup>35</sup> Jeffrey Austerlitz '74, '78M, "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (July/August 1975): 54.

the energy spent on strikes, protests, and occupying University Hall could better be spent convincing people that the University and its community is worthy of support. Present yourselves to society in such a manner that the individual donor will be encouraged to give of his efforts for the benefit of Brown.”<sup>36</sup>

Although students themselves manifested little desire to put themselves in the position of fund-raisers, it is evident that the students the *Brown Alumni Monthly* had often portrayed as overtly pre-professional were also thinking of their Brown education in fiscal terms. Reeves noted that Brown was a campus “bracing for another round of battle on the question of whether students, as consumers, have a right to protect their investment.”<sup>37</sup> Indeed, the students themselves had begun to think of themselves as consumers, in direct contrast to their predecessors who exhorted them to think of their privileges and not their rights. Cathy ten Kate was one of the student leaders of the Coalition. In excerpts of hers that were published in the *BAM*, she was explicit: “If you look at education as a kind of market, there is no way to deny that a Brown degree is not a Yale or a Harvard degree. Yet there has to be a reason that I chose to come to Brown rather than go to Radcliffe or Yale. The reason that I did is that I thought there was some difference in attitude.”<sup>38</sup> Ten Kate sought, in her conception of higher education as market-driven, to define Brown as somehow removed from strict assessments based on finances. There was something else about Brown, something more elusive in its attitudes, and yet it was still quantified in a way so as to make a comparison with Yale or Radcliffe. This senior had performed exactly the kind of mental comparisons which led many of her predecessors to now withhold their financial support from the university.

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<sup>36</sup> Charles A. Banks '62, “Letter to the editor,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (July/August 1975): 55.

<sup>37</sup> Sandra Reeves, “Brown and the Third World. . . Putting a price on promises,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975):8.

<sup>38</sup> Cathy ten Kate, “Brown now has neither leadership nor vision,” *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 5.

The alumni making their decisions about sending Brown money were doing so informed by the *Brown Alumni Monthly*, the semi-official and yet still independent representation of university life to all the graduates. In making their decisive judgments, they relied almost exclusively on first, Sandra Reeves' interpretation of the positions of the students and administration, and later, the comments of their fellow alumni. Reeves had presented her work, in the beginning of her second article, as "a synthesis of fact, first-hand observation, and informal interviews with high-placed officials at Brown. It is an attempt to put recent disruptions into some perspective and to answer the unanswerable—why did it happen and what does it mean? Candid views of the University's leadership have been incorporated but not attributed."<sup>39</sup>

The official policy on letters to the editor was printed in each edition of the *Brown Alumni Monthly* as follows: "Letters to the editor are welcome. They should be on subjects of interest to readers of this magazine with emphasis on an exchange of views and discussion of ideas. All points of view are welcome." Thus the veritable flurry of letters on the issues surrounding the budget crisis of 1975, and subsequent student strike and University Hall takeover, certainly fit into all the above categories. The alumni then, over the course of several months, communicated their views to their former classmates, as well as those who graduated before or after them. In the midst of these exchanges, a few writers commented specifically on the *BAM* and its adequacy to the task of reporting on strike. A senior writing from campus considered their article to have done "an adequate job of covering the basic events leading up to the strike, and the strike itself," before elaborating on certain minute factual points from his privileged eye-witness perspective.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Sandra Reeves, "Brown and the Third World. . . Putting a price on promises," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 3-4.

<sup>40</sup> Michael A. Golrick '75, "Letter to the Editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 75 (May/June 1975): 50.

An alumnus from the Class of 1941 was more enthusiastic in proclaiming his admiration for what he considered “a truly remarkable piece of highest-quality journalism.” But Carl Barus did not stop there:

There is at least one advantage to sharp controversy within the University —when it is coupled with the kind of superb reporting that you have given it—namely, it stimulates alumni concern with University affairs. That doesn’t necessarily mean better fund-raising, but it does expand participation in the growing debate as to just what purpose a university is supposed to serve in our hard-nosed society. . . . it was disturbing to me that so many of the older alumni are intellectually detached from the educational concerns of current undergraduates. Perhaps they will be less hasty to make judgments after reading the current issue of *BAM*. The University is subject to many pressures. It could at least hope that alumni pressures are well informed. *BAM* is working on that.<sup>41</sup>

The articles in the *Brown Alumni Monthly* were an expression of the editors’ original professed purpose to bring the campus news to the alumni scattered across the country. The responses, the letters to the editor, represent a dialogue of several months duration during which those alumni responded to the articles and the news it contained, from the perspective of their Brown experiences. Many of the alumni graduated from a radically different university than Brown had become by 1975, and they responded as such. Even so, they had lived in the world for the time intervening between their graduations and the campus unrest, and brought to the table perspectives formed also by their takes on the changing American culture. It cannot be said of an alumnus of 1921 that only Brown influenced his thinking.

Across these pages, “Carrying the Mail,” is nothing short of an argument about the fundamental nature of the university, about its purpose. Some authors are explicit when addressing the kind of place Brown should be. Others rail against what it should not be. And others seem only to address immediate or surface concerns. Taken in totality, they were playing



a zero sum game. The constant was not a certain opinion, or even a gender gap, rather it was proscriptive ideas as to what Brown should do to realize her ideals, and descriptive ideas as to exactly what constituted those ideals. Whether the *BAM* was effective in transmitting the voice of the university to the alumni, or if the alumni voices were heard through these pages is uncertain and beyond the scope of this present examination. But there are a great many people who read magazines and feel no compulsion to write a letter to the editor. Those who do are thus the most impassioned voices on every side, voices which come through with clarity as alumni stake their claim and define their role in their alma mater. As Carl Barus had summed it, the controversies, and their presentation in the *Brown Alumni Monthly*, served at least one purpose, and that was to stimulate concern among the alumni for their alma mater.

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<sup>41</sup> Carl Barus '41, "Letter to the editor," *Brown Alumni Monthly* 76 (September 1975): 53.