

The Crime That Haunts a Nation

Was there a civilian sniper in the area or wasn't there? How can a military commander maintain that "the decision to use a weapon must be reserved to the individual"? Is it really the National Guard's policy that the only defense against a rock is a rifle?

These are a few of the wrenching questions that persist in the aftermath of the fatal shooting of four students at Ohio's Kent State University by National Guard troops. It is apparent that an aroused nation will not accept evasive, pious answers. A diligent, independent inquiry is imperative.

It is the opinion of Senate Majority Leader Mansfield (D-Mont.) that such an investigation should be carried out by a special national commission — named by President Nixon. Thus far the President, who met yesterday with several Kent State students in a belated gesture of recognition of the impact of the killings, is said to be awaiting a report from Mr.

Mitchell's Justice Dept. But neither Mitchell nor Gov. Rhodes has exhibited any notable impartiality on the subject of antiwar demonstrations. Rhodes was threatening in advance to overwhelm the Kent State protest with Guardsmen and Attorney General Mitchell's views of college youth reflect Vice President Agnew's.

Amid the confusion and division prevailing in the Administration—highlighted by Interior Secretary Hickel's remarkable and courageous outcry against the treatment of dissident youths—there appears to be nothing to prevent Sen. Mansfield and his colleagues from designating a select Senate committee to make a responsible inquiry. The investigative powers of Congress are broad and they could be applied in this tragic instance to reassuring effect. It is even possible that some answer might be found to the sternest question of all: why were our children slain—by our children?