

Schools Shut, Pupils Combine Protest and Recreation

By WILLIAM E. FARRELL

Olympio Matos, a sad-faced, 16-year-old high-school sophomore, ended his first day as an activist yesterday by sitting alone on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral clutching a large homemade black flag.

Pedestrians passed by, few of them giving the boy a second glance, until two elderly women stopped in front of him and said: "Keep up the good work. If we were your age we'd do the same."

The boy nodded, smiled and made a "V" with two fingers—a salute that the two women returned before continuing their walk.

Young Matos, a student at John Adams High School in Queens, had marched earlier with a group from Central Park to the Veterans Administration Hospital at First Avenue and 24th Street. On his own, he decided to sit on the cathedral steps with his black flag "for the dead in Vietnam and to remind the people they've got something to worry about."

"I hadn't been involved," he said, "but the Kent State thing happened and that burned me up. Those kids stood for something and I've got to stand up now for them. People don't realize what's happening or, if they do, they don't care." He

squinted at the late-afternoon sun while his flag of mourning billowed in a sudden breeze.

Olympio was one of 275,000 public high-school students whose classes had been canceled by the Board of Education in memory of the four students at Kent State University who were killed this week by National Guardsmen. Many of them, as well as students in private high schools, took part in demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and the presence of American troops in Cambodia. Many others spent the day loafing or playing ball.

On West 170th Street between Broadway and Fort Washington Avenue, Kenneth Roberts, 15, a two-sewer hitter in stickball, put down the broom handle he used as a bat and said of the protesters, "They're looking for an escape." Then he swatted a pink rubber ball, which bounced off a fire escape, startled an elderly woman and was scooped up by the outfielder.

For some of the newly "radicalized" high-school students the day combined duty and pleasure. At the Trans-Lux West Theater at Broadway and 49th Street, dozen of young people waited in line for the

1:25 P.M. showing of "Woodstock," the film about last summer's historic rock festival.

"Listen," said a slender-haired girl in a tan poncho, "I've been demonstrating all week. I demonstrated on Wall Street, I demonstrated at City Hall, I demonstrated at Union Square, I demonstrated at C.C.N.Y. and I demonstrated at N.Y.U. Tonight I'm going on a candlelight procession. I figured I could take a few hours out and go see 'Woodstock.'" She said she was a student at the High School of Music and Art but declined to identify herself.

At East 10th Street and Broadway—within earshot of squealing children taking part in a fair sponsored by Grace Episcopal Church, Eric Rivera and Gregory Rexach, both 16 and both students at Canarsie High School in Brooklyn, said they had spent the morning distributing antiwar leaflets and were now "just taking in the sights."

In Union Square, Peter Embler, 16, and Kenneth Jaffee, 15, both of the Walden School, had bought bus tickets for Washington, where they will go today, and were wandering around looking for "action." Peter, wearing a leather jacket with a red fist emblazoned on

it, said events this week "radicalized a lot of us."

Late in the afternoon about 600 protesters, many of high-school age, sat down on 43d Street between Fifth and Madison Avenues and chanted "Peace now" as executives and office workers looked on. After a while the group moved to Grand Central terminal, where they exchanged taunts with some commuters.

On Fifth Avenue, an 18-year-old senior at Springfield Gardens High School in Queens, carried several shopping bags and searched for a taxi. She would say only that her name was Diane, and she seemed embarrassed to be caught doing anything as frivolous as shopping. "I'm very concerned with what's going on," she said. "I marched around a little on Wednesday."

Not all the political gatherings held yesterday were in opposition to the Nixon Administration's policies. At the Overseas Press Club, 54 West 40th Street, a small group of high-school students, from the High School Mobilization for Freedom in Vietnam and Southeast Asia, held a news conference to express "faith in the system."