

Washington's Weekend: The Tumult and the Talks

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WASHINGTON, May 10— Everything that happened in Washington this weekend didn't happen in the streets or on television. The public demonstration by the students against the Government's war policies made the news, but on the side there were a lot of private conversations that may prove in the end to be far more important than all the public tumult.

News
Analysis

What the student march on Washington did was to dramatize the Cambodian invasion and the tragedy at Kent State University, and open up a genuine debate within the Nixon Administration, within the antiwar movement and even between the two on the alarming divisions in the country over the war.

Even before the Cambodian invasion there was some muffled dissent within the Nixon Administration against Vice President Agnew's provocative verbal violence. There was also, within the antiwar movement, widespread but ineffectual opposition to the fist-and-bullet activists. But this opposition to the Spiro Agnews and the Jerry Rubins finally broke into the open here these last two sweltering days.

Hickel Not Alone

It is not only Secretary of the Interior Walter Hickel who is questioning the Government's attitudes toward its critics. Other members of the Cabinet and the White House staff are now expressing their opposition to the Cambodian invasion, and particularly to the way in which that decision was reached and carried out.

For the last few days, faculty and student delegations from the universities have been closeted with Henry Kissinger, Patrick Moynihan and other members of the White House staff, and also with members of the Cabinet. These have led to some brutally frank ex-

changes in which Administration officials, while continuing to support the President, have conceded the need for change in the relations between the Administration and the antiwar critics.

Two incidents here in the last few days indicate the rising opposition within the Government itself to the President's foreign and defense policies.

Last Friday, The New York Times received in a plain envelope through the mail a copy of a top secret memorandum from Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and other high Pentagon officials, containing Mr. Laird's views of the United States' negotiating position in the strategic arms limitation talks with the Soviet Union in Vienna.

Actually, the memorandum contained nothing particularly new or startling and The Times did not publish it, but the incident suggests that the opposition within the Pentagon has now reached the point where even highly classified documents are being purloined and distributed to the press.

'Divisiveness at Home'

The other incident was a letter to Secretary of State William P. Rogers from over 200 officers and employes of the Department of State, protesting the invasion of Cambodia and the United States bombing of North Vietnam. There are, of course, always opponents of current United States policy within the State Department, but in this case the letter to the Secretary was made public.

"Our sense of responsibility to you, to the department, and to ourselves," it said in part, "precludes our remaining silent on these critical issues. As the advice you offer the President reflects your judgment and conscience, we, in the same spirit, offer our views to you.

"In our opinion, the expansion of military activity should be reversed. We fear that this expansion threatens the prospects for an early peace and

heightens the serious problem of divisiveness at home. For these reasons, we question the recent military decision. We urge you to seek reconsideration of the apparent direction of American policy in Southeast Asia."

President Nixon is now being urged, not only by Secretary of the Interior Hickel but by other members of the Cabinet, to improve communications between himself and the Cabinet. In fact, there is now some talk in the White House about urging the President to bring the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, Robert Finch, into the White House as chief of staff in order to bring about easier relations between the President and the rest of the Administration and Congress.

Organizing for November

On the other side of the controversy, while most of the demonstrators had gone home today, there were still a lot of them around talking, not so much about more demonstrations as about organizing to support peace candidates in the midterm Congressional elections in November.

In particular, they are trying to set up some kind of skeleton organization that will keep in touch with political developments during the summer vacation period, so that they will be able to act effectively in the autumn, when all universities will be asked to follow Princeton's example of giving time off for student political activity just before the November voting.

As an example of the private discussions that have been going on here in recent days, 39 members of the Stanford University faculty and student body met with Henry Kissinger for an hour and a half and with Under Secretary of Defense David Packard for over an hour last week.

They reported that Prof. Joseph Sneed of Stanford, who is regarded as a conservative member of the law faculty, complained to Secretary Packard about the Cambodian in-

vasion and told him bluntly, "This just can't go on."

When Dr. Kissinger met with a delegation of his former colleagues on the Harvard faculty, they went so far as to insist that everything they said to him and all his replies should be on the record. In the end, they respected his confidences, but it is clear from all this that there is now a much more open and pragmatic debate taking place here than at any other time in the Nixon Administration.

Role of Heard

Alexander Heard, the chancellor of Vanderbilt University, who has just been appointed as the President's liaison with the universities, is likely to see that this new open dialogue goes on. Mr. Heard is not only well respected in academic circles, but he is a good politician who has made a detailed study of the finances of American politics. His appointment is only for two months, but he has made the point that he will regard himself as an ambassador of the university community to the Administration rather than the other way around.

Also in a way, he is obliged to carry on the dialogue started by himself and six other university presidents who had a long and very open and frank discussion with the President last week. Accordingly, anyone in the universities who has any grievance to bring to the attention of the Administration now has an open channel of communication.

Accordingly the situation at the beginning of the new week is quite different from what it was even a fortnight ago. What has happened is that both the Administration and the antiwar movement are beginning to realize that they are getting in trouble with the use of violence. It has not worked for the Administration in Vietnam or in Southeast Asia and is now for the first time being really seriously challenged within the protest movement.