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Hickel Welcomes Students in Politics

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WASHINGTON, May 21—Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel welcomed today the movement of thousands of college students into the political process, saying that, regardless of its effect on political parties, "it will help the country."

In a speech before the National Press Club, Mr. Hickel said that "the triumph" of the antiwar rally here on May 9 was that it opened up "new lines of communication" with the Government and elected officials.

"The tragedy would be if they dried up," he said.

Mr. Hickel, believing there was a lack of communications between the Administration and the young and that the Administration lacked sympathetic understanding of the motives behind much of student dissent, wrote to President Nixon on May 6, urging him to "listen to their ideas and problems."

In his speech today and in reply to questions, Mr. Hickel was conciliatory in his references to the President, but he did not retreat from the thesis of his letter that "youth in its protest must be heard."

Sees Violence Opposed

"Today's college students, with a few exceptions, do not want to be pushed into the corner of violence," he said. "Peace is more than their motto, it is their instinct, and will remain so unless they are radicalized by isolation and hostility."

In response to questions, Mr. Hickel said the President had responded favorably, though indirectly, to his letter. Soon after the delivery of his letter, he said, he received a phone call from the White House. The caller—whom he did not identify—told him, "the President says you're on the right track."

He said the President had not spoken with him personally about the letter, and then added: "I don't think there would be any doubt about the fact that the President is as concerned about that [the alienation of youth] as I am."

When asked whether he saw any indication that his letter had produced any changes in White House attitudes, Mr. Hickel said, "You'd be as good



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Walter J. Hickel, Secretary of the Interior, addresses the National Press Club.

a judge of that as I would." He added that the most effective way of communicating with Mr. Nixon was to "write a letter."

Questions About Future

Questioned whether he would remain a Cabinet member, he said, "that's not for me to decide."

There has been considerable speculation here and in Alaska that Mr. Hickel would resign and run either for the Senate seat now held by his appointee, Theodole F. Stevens, or run for Governor.

He dismissed today the idea of running for the Senate, saying that "my good friend, Ted Stevens, will win." Mr. Stevens must run this year for the remainder of the term of the late EL. L. Bartlett, and gain in 1972 for a full term of his own.

On the question of running for the Governorship that he surrendered on coming to Washington, Mr. Hickel said, "We have two good men running [for the Republican nomination] So I guess my place is right here in Washington for right now."

The two declared Republican candidates are Gov. Keith M. Miller (former Lieutenant Governor under Mr. Hickel) and Representative Howard W. Pollack. Many Alaskan Republicans who came here a few weeks ago to lobby for the Trans-Alaskan pipeline criticized Governor Miller as inept and inexperienced. Mr. Pollack is regarded as a good vote-getter but not nearly as popular as Mr. Hickel.

Mr. Hickel would have to move soon if he decided to run for Governor because the filing deadline is May 31.