

Change of Heart...

It has taken the awful toll of four young lives to create an atmosphere in Washington receptive at last to the voices of youthful protest. But the irony which should not be lost on the campuses of the nation is that it was not the fruitless violence of students that softened the Administration's attitude; it was the violence of authority itself—and the nationwide wave of revulsion it created.

In the wake of the appalling event at Kent State University the climate in the capital is undergoing a remarkable change, at least momentarily. President Nixon, in his news conference last night, emphasized his eagerness to have a dialogue with his youthful critics and has stressed his agreement with all their objectives for peace in Vietnam. His statement came after Secretary of the Interior Hickel had pleaded eloquently with Mr. Nixon for greater understanding of young Americans. The President has sympathetically received a Kent State delegation, conferred with the heads of eight universities and named one of them as his special adviser on student opinion. And, of most immediate importance, the Administration has made preparations to receive antiwar protesters arriving in the capital for today's demonstration in a cooperative, even sympathetic, spirit—a marked contrast to last November's protest parade, which Mr. Nixon ignored to watch a football game on television. This time the President has said he would be willing to meet personally with a delegation representing the demonstrators.

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Now it is up to the students themselves to take full advantage of their improved position. They can retain their moral advantage best by keeping the demonstration free of all taint of violence. They have had no dearth of advice to that effect from those they

most respect.

Kingman Brewster, president of Yale, has reminded them that the "clenched fist and 'shut-it-down' rhetoric" have served only to help the Administration "sterilize the political influence of the universities." Mayor Lindsay and numerous others have given similar good counsel. Even such radical leaders as David Dellinger and Rennie Davis of the Chicago Seven have pointed out, belatedly, that wild rampaging is "not the way to achieve revolutionary change."

Of more far-reaching importance, campus activities are springing up that are more constructive than even peaceable demonstrations. Under Dr. Brewster's leadership some thousand Yale teachers and students will arrive in Washington Monday not to demonstrate at all but to meet and discuss issues with members of Congress who happen to be Yale alumni. Princeton faculty and students are putting together a Princeton Movement for a New Congress, pledged to work for candidates opposed to the war. Haverford's entire personnel—faculty, students, trustees and help—went *en masse* to Washington a few days ago to convey their opposition to the Cambodian adventure from office to office on Capitol Hill.

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These departures from familiar and arid forms of protest—the student strike, the seizure of buildings, the chanting of obscenities—represent an impressive advance. But they make far greater demands on their practitioners. If students are to be heard, as the President himself now concedes they should be, it is surely desirable that they speak their minds coolly and persuasively, employing and receiving the courtesies of civilized discourse.

The extent to which this essential of democratic politics is now observed on both sides of the generation line is the extent to which even the infinitely sad deaths of the Kent State students will have advanced the cause of a free society.