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PRESIDENT BACKS RIGHT TO DISSENT

President Says He Backs Students' Right to Dissent

Asserts He Shares Goals of
Students—Denies Curbs
on Agnew's Comments

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WASHINGTON, May 8—President Nixon told the nation tonight that he shared the goals and concerns of student protesters.

He defended their right to dissent and said, at his news conference, that he would allow the members of his own Cabinet full freedom of speech. [Questions 3 and 7, Page 8.]

Contradicting reports from a spokesman for eight university presidents who conferred with Mr. Nixon yesterday, the President said that he would not "censor" Vice President Agnew. But he said that, when "the action is hot," he hoped his colleagues in the Government would "keep the rhetoric cool."

Earlier in the day, the Administration agreed to permit a mass antiwar rally tomorrow on the Ellipse, an area south of the White House that was previously declared out of bounds.

And, in another move to portray concern over campus dissent, Mr. Nixon appointed a prominent university administrator, G. Alexander Heard, chancellor of Vanderbilt University, as his personal adviser on campus problems.

At the news conference, Mr. Nixon also suggested that he would make no effort to restrain Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel, who two days ago accused the Administration of insensitivity to student con-

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cerns and criticized Mr. Agnew. Nor, he suggested, did he intend to retract some of his own statements.

Asked whether his assertion last Friday that some campus radicals were "bums" was consistent with his professed desire for "cool rhetoric," he replied that he had been referring only to students who engaged in violence and terrorism and he added, "Perhaps bums is too kind a word." [Question 9.]

Attitude Is Conciliatory

On the whole, however, he seemed to take a relatively conciliatory attitude toward students, while insisting that their purposes were the same as his.

"I have not been surprised by the intensity of the protest," he said, referring to reaction over the sending of troops into Cambodia. "I realize that those who are protesting believe that this decision will expand the war, increase American casualties, and increase American involvement. And those who protest want peace. They want to reduce American casualties. And they want our boys brought home."

"I made the decision, however," he said, "for the very reason that they are protesting."

The President spoke even as hundreds of demonstrators, some carrying empty coffins, massed outside the White House fence to protest the Cambodian venture as senseless, dangerous and a re-escalation of the war.

Repression Is Denied

Later, Mr. Nixon said of the students and himself: "I agree with everything that they are trying to accomplish." But at the same time, he gave no indication whatever that he would accede to the demands of any students for quick withdrawal from Vietnam.

Asked whether the country was headed for "an era of repression," he said that as long as those in authority tolerated "the right to dissent," thus providing "safety valves" to protesters, "you are not going to have revolution, which comes from repression."

He described as "nonsense" the charge that his own policies were repressive and cited as evidence his decision today to allow the weekend demonstra-

tion to take place on the Ellipse, near the White House, "where I could hear it."

Mr. Nixon's appointment of Mr. Heard as an adviser on campus problems earlier in the day was viewed as yet another move to reopen lines of communication with the academic community.

The President said Mr. Heard's task would be to keep him "fully and currently informed on the thinking of the academic community."

Mr. Heard will not be paid by the Government but will occupy an office in the Executive Offices Building near the White House. His appointment was disclosed in a White House news release issued while Mr. Nixon was at his mountain retreat at Camp David, Md., preparing for his news conference tonight.

Meanwhile, Mr. Hickel had yet to receive a call from the President after the disclosure that he had written the letter to Mr. Nixon accusing the Administration of insensitivity to student concerns.

Mr. Hickel was asked by the White House to make no further statements until after Mr. Nixon's news conference. But Interior Department sources reported that he remained concerned about the Administration's posture and, in conversations with White House aides, had offered his counsel. As yet, the offer had not been picked up by the President.

The Presidential statement announcing Mr. Heard's appointment reflected the conciliatory mood. It began: "I recognize the profound concerns that are rending many of our campuses today. However, this is a time for communication rather than violence and above all for mutual understanding."

Mr. Nixon went on to say that, besides Mr. Heard, he would consult "regularly in the future" with seven other university presidents: William C. Friday, University of North Carolina; Fred H. Harrington, University of Wisconsin, who resigned today, effective in October; Charles J. Hitch, University of California, Berkeley; Edward H. Levi, University of Chicago; Malcolm Moos, University of Minnesota; Nathan M. Pusey, Harvard University, and W. Allen Wallis, University of Rochester.