

Nixon, in Pre-Dawn Tour, Talks to War Protesters

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.

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WASHINGTON, May 9—President Nixon left the White House shortly before dawn this morning, drove to the Lincoln Memorial and spent an hour chatting with young people who had come to protest his war policies.

The extraordinary visit, which caught his staff unawares and left the Secret Service "petrified," was Mr. Nixon's first direct exchange with students massed here for a weekend of protest.

As he stood on the steps of the Memorial and talked, the crowd around him grew from eight to 30 to 50, and near the end of what appears to have been more monologue than dialogue, he asked the students "to try to understand what we are doing."

Breakfast at Hotel

Afterwards he drove to the Capitol, ate breakfast at the Mayflower Hotel—his first visit to a restaurant here since his inauguration—then returned to the White House. Then he spent the rest of the day with his family, protected from the demonstrators on the Ellipse but within earshot of their cheers, chants and taunts.

His excursion was brief, lasting three and one-half hours. But it provided a revealing glimpse of a man who has been under exceptional strain for the last few weeks, who has been forced to improvise rapidly to deal with the consequences of

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Nixon Makes a Pre-Dawn Tour And Meets Group of Protesters

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his own policies and the unexpected tragedy at Kent State, and who is said to have enjoyed few restful nights since he decided, on the evening of April 27, to send American troops into Cambodia.

Mr. Nixon was accompanied to the Lincoln Memorial only by his longtime valet, Manolo Sanchez, and several Secret Servicemen. The President gave an account of what happened to Garnett D. Horner, White House correspondent for The Washington Star, who arrived at the White House shortly after Mr. Nixon returned from his trip at 7:30 A.M.

As Mr. Nixon described the events, he remained awake until 2:30 this morning, accepting calls from old friends here and on the West Coast who telephoned him with comments about his appearance last night. He slept fitfully for an hour, rose, and called Mr. Sanchez and asked him whether he had ever seen the Lincoln Memorial at night. Mr. Sanchez never had, so the President said, "Let's go."

Before leaving, Mr. Nixon placed a telephone call to Helen Thomas, a White House reporter for United Press International. Miss Thomas was asleep at her apartment at the time. Only five hours earlier, the President had ended his news conference with a moment of silence for the late Merriman Smith, White House correspondent for U.P.I.

The President and Miss Thomas had what was described as a rambling conversation about Mr. Smith and other matters, and then Mr. Nixon summoned Mr. Sanchez.

The two men toured the Memorial, and when they emerged at about 5 A.M. they met about eight students on the steps.

They began talking about the war. "On the war thing," Mr. Nixon related to Mr. Horner, "I said I know you think we are a bunch of so and sos—I used a stronger word to them. I know how you feel—you want to get the war over."

"I told them that I know it is awfully hard to keep this in perspective. I told them that in 1939 I thought Neville Cham-

berlain was the greatest man living and Winston Churchill was a madman. It was not until years later that I realized Neville Chamberlain was a good man, but Winston Churchill was right."

"I doubt," he added, "if that got over."

Continuing his account, the President said:

"They were fine kids from all over the country and I told them, sure, you came here to demonstrate and shout your slogans on the Ellipse. That is all right. Just keep it peaceful. Remember, I feel just as deeply as you do about this."

Judging by the President's own account, he ranged over many subjects, including the race problem, the poverty of the Indians, the environment, the places he had seen and visited in his years as Representative, Senator and Vice President.

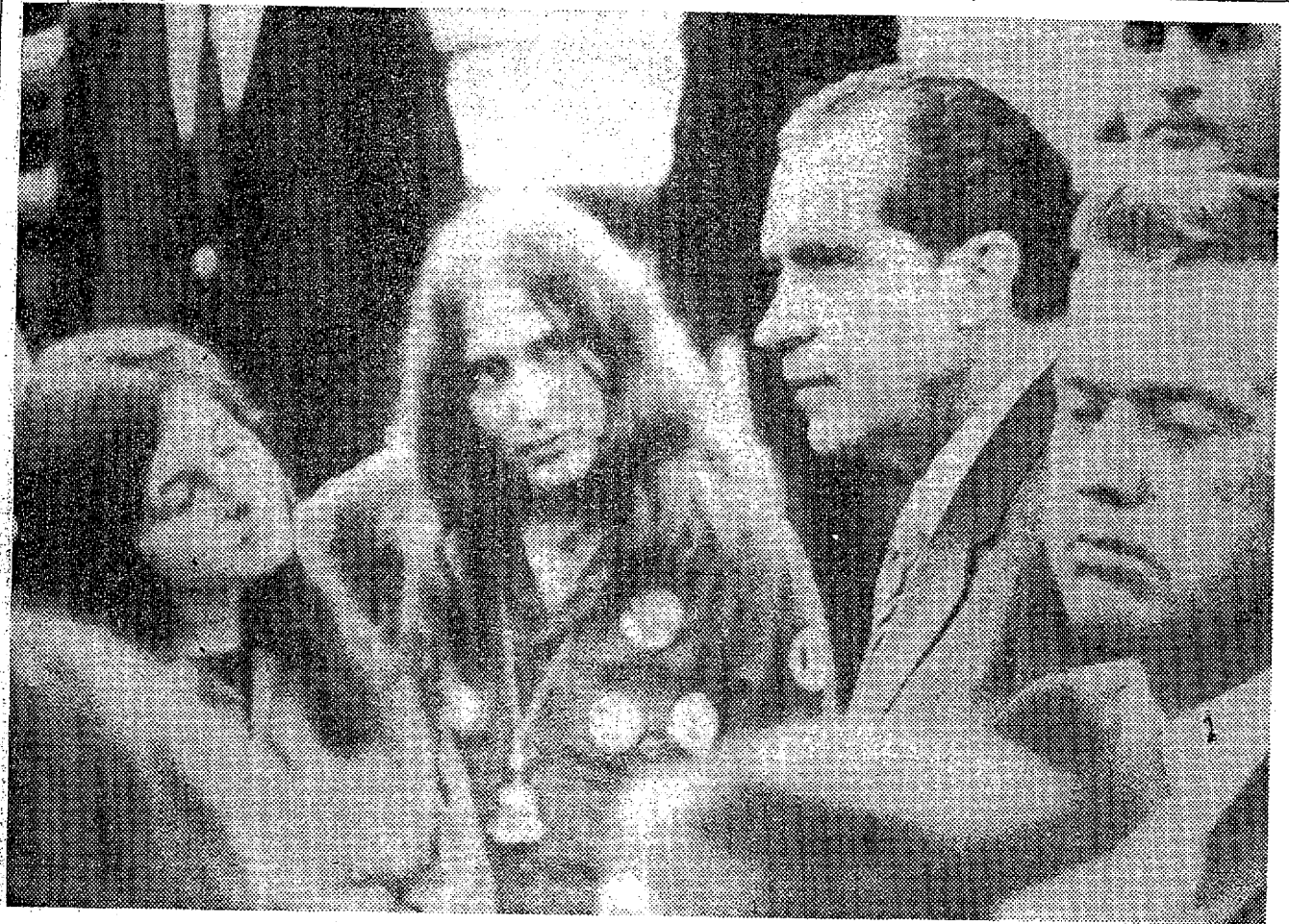
Mr. Nixon did not mention it in the account he gave Mr. Horner, but apparently he could not resist his penchant to talk about sports.

Joan Pelleier, a 20-year-old coed from Syracuse University who said she was among the 50 or so who eventually gathered to hear the President, told newsmen later:

"Here we come from a university that's completely upright, on strike, and when we were told him where we were from, he talked about the football team, and when someone said he was from California, he talked about surfing."

When the conversation ended, the President drove to the Capitol, where the President showed Mr. Sanchez the House chamber, by then, three of his aides had caught up with him—Ronald L. Ziegler, the press secretary; presidential assistant, H. R. Haldeman, and a special assistant, Dwight Chapman—and the five men then went to breakfast at the Rib Rodn of the Mayflower, where the President, in Mr. Ziegler's words, "had corned beef hash with an egg on it."

Mr. Nixon told Mr. Ziegler that it was his first corned beef hash with poached egg in five years.



SURPRISE VISITOR: President Nixon chatting with Barbara Hirsch, left, of Cleveland and Lauree Moss of Detroit at 5 A.M. at the Lincoln Memorial, where several demonstrators gathered. Secret Service agents are at the right.

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