



Marquis Childs

Scranton Report To Test Sincerity

AS THE ADVANCE political barrage began, designed to shoot down the report of the Commission on Campus Unrest before it was released and even before it had been written, the chairman, William W. Scranton, was asked a pertinent question: Why did the President give you this thankless task?

"I think it was because he knew," Scranton replied, "that I want no public office, whether elective or appointive."

In short, he was expendable, and the clamor that has greeted the report from both the right and the left on this most divisive issue proves his forthrightness and his courage. What will count in the end is the stand of the No. 1 reader or a report soaring neither high nor low. Just before the report was released and shortly before President Nixon took off for Europe, Scranton and the President had a solemn confrontation.

The chairman of the commission urged Mr. Nixon to read the report without the prejudice of those White House advisers already engaged in blunting, if not nullifying, its findings. The President replied that he would take it with him and read every word. He promised that when he returned he would call Scranton in and discuss his own part in carrying out the recommendations of the report.

THIS WILL BE the test. For the report concludes in almost so many words that the President's failure to supply moral leadership has contributed immeasurably to widening the breach between the "youth culture," as the report puts it, and the established order. The test will not be an easy one, since a lot of Republicans, led by Vice President Spiro Agnew, are running against the young, the long hairs, those who opt out with ec-

centric dress and manner.

Coming in the midst of the congressional campaign, the report offers one of those momentous either/or choices that for the historian of the future will be a bench mark showing which way America was to move. It can be in the direction of irreparable division, as the report warns, with a deepening hatred and bitterness unlike that which preceded the Civil War. The small minority of extremists shouting obscenities on the fringe of Agnew's meetings are

contributing their generous share of divisiveness.

Or the nation with leadership from the President can move to bind up the wounds of the past—the wounds of Kent State and Jackson State College—restore unity to the campuses and, in a

larger context, close the gap between the generations. This course would mean foregoing the exploitation of hatred and division for votes in a critical campaign.

THE HARVEST of votes the exploiters hope to reap is the reason why weeks ago the attack was launched to repudiate the report. Scranton traces the origins of that attack to the presence on the commission's staff of John Van de Kamp. Van de Kamp, formerly with the office of the United States District Attorney in Los Angeles, was an administrator with no responsibility for the content of the report.

But he was the Democratic opponent of Barry Goldwater Jr. in the race for the House seat in April, 1969, in Orange County where the militant right, with a large infusion of Birchites, insured Goldwater's election. No matter how restricted his function, Van de Kamp's appointment, Scranton came to believe, was a red flag to the Goldwater faction of the party.

This in a curious way repeats recent history and points up once again the still-unresolved struggle for the soul of the Republican Party. In 1964 Scranton challenged Barry Goldwater for the presidential nomination in San Francisco. His challenge was belated, uncertain, and he never had a prayer in that convention so dominated by the righteous and indignant right. During the brief skirmish in San Francisco a Scranton staff member released a statement under Scranton's name saying the unsayable—namely, that Goldwater couldn't be elected President.

No matter that this was proved disastrously right. It may have been all the more reason to deny forgiveness.

The fact that the President named Scranton chairman in the first instance was an act of courage. He can now show whether this was just another report to be filed and forgotten or whether it is a signpost to reconciliation.