

# 'No Present or Future Thinking in This Field'

*In a joint venture with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, four recent graduates have formed the Student Advisory Committee on International Affairs. Their purpose: to generate student action on foreign policy issues at a time when they see declining interest in international affairs. Aided by grants, they have been holding meetings across the country in an effort to bring students into contact with business, labor and government officials whom they feel have power to influence foreign policy.*

*The members of the committee are Wendy Witherspoon, a 1971 graduate of Duke University; Grif Leshner, Tuft's Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, 1970; Michael Krepon, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, 1970 and Michael Conlee, University of North Iowa, 1971.*

*In the following taped and edited discussion, the members of the committee discuss their own attitudes toward U.S. foreign policy and their assessment of the mood around the country.*

**Question:** Why has there been this decline in interest in foreign affairs?

**Conlee:** The threats are less direct... Vietnam affected people very personally.

**Leshner:** I would say it was the war but in addition it has a awful lot to do with the education offered to people coming up in this field. If you've ever sat in a class of diplomatic history or international economics or developing nations and

their political problems, you fall asleep. The people who run them are about 10 to 20 years behind the times. There's no present or future thinking in this field at all.

**Krepon:** You have students taking courses from teachers whose value systems they completely reject: that objectives or goals in foreign policy are achieved by the application of various degrees of force.

**Conlee:** And deception as a diplomatic tool.

**Krepon:** Students don't accept the application of force to achieve objectives in foreign policy, specifically overt military force, especially in white/nonwhite situations.

**Krepon:** And who are the people who are teaching?

**Witherspoon:** The architects of the various structures that the students really can't relate to.

**Conlee:** While the policy maker is talking strategy the students are talking values, and you have the student asking him about values and the policy maker asking the student about strategy.

**Leshner:** Some of the students (who talked to policy makers) were from Washington's establishment foreign relations schools and they talked with the same kind of vocabulary and interests and critique of some of the State Department people.

**Krepon:** We call them I.H.'s—"incipient heavies." You know, in another 10, 15 years, after they've worked their way up through whatever bureau they decide to go in, they'll be talking exactly like the ones there now.

**Conlee:** A lot of young people have turned to "globalism", meaning a transnational, person-to-person relationships. That means a reduction in importance of sovereignty as a concept.

Perhaps it was justified for the Indians to go into East Pakistan because of the butchery of the West Pakistanis.

Perhaps government doesn't have any right to make policy towards corporations affecting their investments in Southern Africa, but students are saying there's got to be something done there. These corporations either have to live up to certain standards or they've got to get out.

**Krepon:** One of the ways we're trying to bridge the gap between a purely domestic orientation on the part of a lot of students and foreign policy is that we see a very clear relationship between domestic attitudes and what happens to U.S. foreign policy. We see, for example, a very clear relationship between what individuals think about the race question in the United States and U.S. policies abroad.

**Conlee:** Foreign policy making has gone underground. I'm still bitter. They can carry on 2½ years of negotiations and not even tell us about it.

**Leshner:** Change is going to overwhelm the Kissingers and the Nixons. I don't want to sound too philosophical about this, but there is such a thing as mortality, and if we don't have anybody around 10 or 20 years from now in this field, then we are going to be in trouble.