

Nixon on Campus Unrest

President's View Is Seen as Consistent In Blaming the Students for Disorders

By ROBERT B. SEMPLE Jr.

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22 — President Nixon has now spoken three times about campus disorders—most recently in yesterday morning's newspapers—even though no widespread campus disorders have yet occurred in the new school year.

Accordingly, many people here have been wondering what the President is up to, and one answer frequently advanced is that he is trying desperately to blunt the impact of the report of the President's Commission on Campus Disorders, which is expected to be released this weekend. There has been much speculation, which the White House appears to believe and to be acting on, that former Gov. William W. Scranton of Pennsylvania, the chairman of the commission, and his eight colleagues will lay much of the blame for campus disorders on the Government's doorstep, particularly its inability—or unwillingness—to end the war and move bodily against social problems at home.

Therefore, it is thought here, the President is once again talking about the students to pre-empt the commission's ground by staking a claim to the opposite point of view—namely, that the fault lies not with the Government but the students themselves, who have forsaken the rational processes of democracy for terrorist tactics, and with university administrators and faculties, who have acquiesced in the behavior of their students and thus threatened the existence of the university as a citadel of free inquiry.

Various Settings

Mr. Nixon has made this point in various settings: at a news conference in Los Angeles last July, when he criticized the report of Dr. Alexander Heard, his own adviser on campus problems who in part blamed the war for those problems; in a speech at Kansas State University last week, when he assailed faculties who bow to student demands because disorder is somehow thought to be "fashionable," and most recently by mailing out 900 copies of an article

written by Dr. Sidney Hook, professor of philosophy at New York University, who shares the President's views. The article and Mr. Nixon's covering letter received widespread coverage in the press yesterday.

Nobody in the White House strenuously denies that the President wants to publicize his point of view before the Scranton Commission sets forth its own. They also concede other motives: Mr. Nixon wants to be on record as the school year opens; he also wants the voters to know where he stands with the mid-term elections only six weeks away.

Faculty Support

Another explanation offered by the President's associates is that, by adopting a tough tone, he genuinely hopes to put "backbone" into those who run the campuses and to inform faculty members who want to do something about campus disorders that the President of the United States is on their side.

The tendency in some quarters, however, is to think that what Mr. Nixon is saying is something new—that it is less an expression of conviction than a tactical and political response to opening a new school year, the approaching elections, and the possibility that his own commission on campus unrest will say something he does not like.

Although the tactical motives exist, Mr. Nixon's views have been remarkably consistent over two years. This may be more significant than the fact that he is repeating these views with increasing frequency, since it suggests that no matter what his blue-ribbon groups or the Kingman Brewsters tell him, he remains convinced that his own analysis of the causes of student disorders is correct.

Earlier Statements

For example, on March 22, 1969—only two months after assuming office—Mr. Nixon issued a long statement asserting that to allow universities to be politicized is to allow them to die, and that the preservation of the "first principles" of higher education rested not with the Government but with "the university community."

He made similar points in a speech at General Beadle college in North Dakota in June, 1969. And he is said to have

made similar comments when the White House received a letter from Calvin Plimpton, the president of Amherst, urging Mr. Nixon to change his policies.

A corollary point that the President made frequently was that the Government had no business intervening in campus

disputes. On this point some observers may now find him guilty of an inconsistency, inasmuch as he has asked Congress for 1,000 more Federal agents and authority for instant Federal action when bombings or burnings occur on college campuses.

Analysis Unchanged

But his analysis of the problem remains unaltered. Moreover, his senior aides have stood behind him on this issue with a remarkable unanimity. It was Daniel Patrick Moynihan, the liberal Democrat and the President's Counselor, who helped draft the March 22 statement and urged Mr. Nixon to resist Congressional calls for punitive legislation that would have guaranteed a Federal presence on campus. Mr. Moynihan also brought Dr. Hook's writings to the President's attention, and these writings heavily influenced the Kansas State speech last week.

But Mr. Nixon has been supplied with similar ammunition from Ray Price, the moderate speechwriter who wrote the Kansas State speech, and from H. R. Haldeman, the conservative White House chief of staff who brought to Mr. Nixon's attention an article by the chairman of The Yale Daily News, Douglas Hallett, that criticized the Heard report and that Mr. Nixon cited in his attack last July on the same report.

The result is that there seems to be nobody in the White House who is likely to be receptive to further argu-

ments that Federal policies are to blame; if anything, the Administration seems more convinced than ever that it is the universities that have failed to perceive the dangers in their own midst and that every time one of Mr. Nixon's commissions says otherwise, the gap between the White House and the campuses seems to widen.

Whatever the intrinsic merits of the President's views or those of his campus critics, it is the view of many observers here that the dialogue between them is not at its healthiest point. In this regard, it is probably not without some symbolic significance that when the Scranton Commissions report is made public, Mr. Nixon will be on his way to Europe.