

SDAY, SEPTEMBER 22, 1970

Letter

President on Dissent

To the Editor:

President Nixon spoke here at Kansas State University on Sept. 16, supposedly narrowing the gap between himself and American students. In fact, an experiment was carried out by the President. What he learned was that appeals to the recognized prejudices of a crowd will bring tremendous applause.

Appeal for civility to a basically homogeneous crowd raised on the white middle-class American dream, and the response is applause. Speak with the air of a moralizing preacher in fundamentalist country and ovations follow.

Mr. Nixon's speech was a carefully worded attack on dissent, not disorder. His initial examples of extreme violence and murder evoked a sentiment which was then focused on political dissent in general and especially on campus dissent.

His message was clear and simple: evil is among us. His solution was equally simple: root out the evil. He has apparently picked up Mr. Agnew's rhetoric of crusade and polarization.

But one alternative solution was suggested—that dissidents should speak only when no one else is speaking, make their requests reasonably, and then wait patiently for a decision from impartial judges. Here Mr. Nixon asks the man with a boot on his neck to wait while the relatives of the boot-wearer decide whether and when that foot shall be moved.

The President would not propose this solution on most college campuses, more representative than Kansas State of various oppressed minorities and urban dissatisfactions.

Mr. Nixon spoke against murder, cancer, and irrationality. He had nothing helpful (i.e. concrete) to say about either order in our society or campus disorders. The local student newspaper has made this all quite clear.

Those who attended the President's rally seeking food for thought went away empty. Those who sought emotional reinforcement were sated.

BRUCE S. EASTWOOD

Manhattan, Kan., Sept. 17, 1970

The writer is an Associate Professor of History at Kansas State University.

•