

HICKEL, IN NOTE TO NIXON, CHARGES ADMINISTRATION IS FAILING YOUTH; PROTESTS CLOSE OVER 80 COLLEGES

SECRETARY SHARP

Fears Contribution to Anarchy and Revolt —Agnew Criticized

*Text of the Hickel letter
appears on Page 18.*

By **MAX FRANKEL**

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WASHINGTON, May 6 — In an extraordinary letter of protest, Secretary of the Interior Walter J. Hickel complained to President Nixon today that the Administration was turning its back on the great mass of American youth and thereby contributing to anarchy and revolt.

Mr. Hickel warned that further attacks by Vice President Agnew on the motives of young Americans would solidify their hostility beyond the reach of reason. Communication with them is still possible, he said, and alienation of them is wrong both politically and philosophically.

'Youth Must Be Heard'

Though carefully avoiding any frontal criticism of the President, Mr. Hickel complained that Mr. Nixon was ignoring his Cabinet officers, failing to make contact with experienced community leaders and overlooking the lessons of history.

The lesson of the American Revolution by such "youth" as Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and James Monroe, he wrote, was that "youth in its protest must be heard."

The Hickel letter, which became available to newspapers within hours of its transmission to the White House, betrayed a deep-seated sense of frustration that is known to be shared by several members of Mr. Nixon's cabinet. It was symbolic also of an even deeper discontent that is evident in the lower ranks of the Government and is inspiring widespread talk of resignation and protest.

Impact of Cambodia

Many different events, policies and examples of Presidential style have fed this discontent. It has been fueled by feelings of dismay over the handling of racial issues, the President's heated confrontations with Congress, the tone even more than the content of Mr. Agnew's speeches and the feeling that Mr. Nixon was slipping even further into isolation and under the influence of a parochial group of advisers.

It came to the fore here after the sudden decision to move troops into Cambodia, the President's denunciation of some campus radicals as "bums" and the wave of student protest culminating in the death of four students at Kent State

Continued on Page 18, Column 6

Hickel Says Government Fails Youth

Continued From Page 1, Col. 8

University in Ohio.

The director of the Administration's Office of Students and Youth, Anthony J. Moffett Jr., and several members of his staff were planning today to resign tomorrow with statements condemning the President and Vice President. Morale at the State Department has been described as particularly low and several young Foreign Service officers report a widespread interest in resignation.

There is discontent in the White House, too, though it is usually expressed as unhappiness with Mr. Agnew's rhetoric. Aides say Mr. Nixon was disturbed by the Vice President's recent call for the ouster of President Kingman Brewster Jr. of Yale. But they think Mr. Nixon has also been impressed by the signs that Mr. Agnew's oratory is politically popular and advantageous.

Over the last 48 hours, however, there have been indications of a White House response to the discontent. The Justice Department was instructed to take an unusually conciliatory attitude toward the students massing here for protest marches this weekend. And Mr. Nixon today scheduled his first televised news conference since Jan. 31.

Mr. Hickel is the father of six sons — aged 8 to 28 — including two in college and two at home. Like other Cabinet members with children of college age, he has been gaining insights into young people's thoughts that he has found lacking at the White House. He is known to have discussed his concern with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and other Cabinet officials, though he wrote to Mr. Nixon on his own behalf.

He put his complaints in writing apparently because he despaired of the opportunity of speaking privately with the President about the mood of the nation. In the more than 15 months since the inauguration of this Administration, Mr. Hickel has talked privately with Mr. Nixon on only two occasions, aides report.

Though he came into office under a cloud of suspicion from liberals that he was more interested in the exploitation than the conservation of the nation's resources, Mr. Hickel has slowly established himself as a man of deep concern

about environmental issues and one who rarely hesitates to speak his mind forcefully.

He reminded Mr. Nixon in his ten-paragraph letter that he had wanted Earth Day on April 22 to be declared a national holiday so that the Administration could be more directly aligned with young people on an issue of joint concern. He did not add what is known here, that he felt himself unable even to get a full hearing for the idea at the White House.

Other members of the Cabinet, in different degrees at different times, have felt the same sense of isolation, although the President and his aides have been available for urgent consultation on specific policy questions. What they have missed is a sense of common purpose commonly arrived at. Mr. Hickel expressed the point as follows:

"Finally, Mr. President, permit me to suggest that you consider meeting, on an individual and conversational basis, with members of your Cabinet. Perhaps through such conversations, we can gain greater insight into the problems confronting us all, and most important, into the solutions of these problems."

The implication in this passage was that Mr. Hickel was in fact speaking on behalf of several of his colleagues, though there was no other evidence of collaboration in this approach. Secretary Hickel left his office soon after word of his letter leaked out and indicated that he did not wish to discuss it further.

Later, in a one-sentence statement, Mr. Hickel said: "I was and am extremely dismayed that a letter which I considered to be a private and personal communication for the President became a matter of public discussion."

Other Cabinet officers declined comment or said through aides they knew nothing about the matter.

An unspoken Rule

It has been an unspoken rule of most recent Administrations that Cabinet members should not come together for action that is in any way directed against the President's policies unless he is present. Many Cabinet members have made known their dissent or discontent in equally forceful letters to a President, but their views have rarely if ever come to light so swiftly.

Mr. Hickel left not even an intimation that he himself might contemplate resignation. On the contrary, he signed his letter "Faithfully yours, Wally" and made it clear that he was trying to contribute within the Administration to policies that would give the country "an optimistic outlook and optimistic leadership."

Yet considering the fact that he is a subordinate serving entirely at the will of the President and that relations with youth and political strategy are not among his primary duties at the Interior Department, Mr. Hickel wrote in a relatively blunt manner. He began:

"I believe this Administration finds itself, today, embracing a philosophy which appears to lack appropriate concern for the attitude of a great mass of Americans — our young people."

Obligation of Leadership

He did not spell out what he viewed as the shortcomings of that philosophy or the ways in which he would alter it. He said that in any case, regardless of the Administration's policy views, it had an obligation of leadership to communicate with young people, to convince them of the wisdom of their Government rather than ignore their proposals.

The last time young people felt ignored by the Republican party, Mr. Hickel recalled, was in the 1930's, causing a whole generation of leaders to turn to the Democrats instead. Feeling cut off from both parties now, he said, the young are heading down the road to anarchy.

The Vice President was the only person identified in Mr. Hickel's criticism, though the letter plainly held the President responsible for Mr. Agnew's speeches on behalf of the Administration.

Mr. Hickel said he thought Mr. Agnew had begun by answering a "deep-seated mood of America" but that continued attack on the young, and especially their motives, "can serve little purpose other than to further cement those attitudes to a solidity impossible to penetrate with reason."

The Vice President's office refused to comment. White House aides said that Mr. Nixon has given no special instructions to Mr. Agnew about his speeches. It is said also that Mr. Agnew and Mr. Hickel have not discussed the Secretary's complaint.