

President Richard Nixon told reporters today that he talked with a small group of students this morning at sunrise beside the Lincoln Memorial. The President said he went to bed last night around 2:30 but could not sleep. He got up around 4 o'clock and asked his valet whether he had ever seen the Lincoln Memorial at night. Then they drove with a group of Secret Service men to the Memorial. The President said no unusual security arrangements had been made and the Secret Service was "petrified."

About eight students were there when the President arrived and by the time he left there were about 50. He said he told the group, "I know you think we are a bunch of so-and-so's." He said he used a stronger word to them. He continued, "I know how you feel. You want to get the war over. Try to understand what we are doing. Sure, you came here to demonstrate. Go shout your slogans. That is all right, just keep it peaceful."

Some of the students said they were concerned about air and water pollution and the President replied, "We're going to clean up those things. But you can clean all those up and have clean, sanitized cities but no warmth, no color, no quality. The real problem is finding some meaning to life." The President also said he is concerned (in the AP's paraphrase) about the way blacks are separating from whites. He told the students, "You must find a way of communicating with them." He added that Indians are "the most mistreated of all our people even though they have never known the bonds of slavery."

Mr. Nixon commented on his encounter with the students and said, "They were fine kids from all over the country. I was trying to relate to them in a way they could feel I understood their problems." He added, "I told them to have a good time here in Washington and not to go away bitter."

Several students from Syracuse, New York, gave their impressions of the meeting with the President. One said, "It was unreal. He was trying so hard to relate on a personal basis, but he wasn't really concerned with why we were here." Another student commented, "I hope it was because he was <sup>tired</sup> ~~tired~~, but most of what he was saying was absurd. Here we had come from a university that's completely uptight, on strike, and when we told him where we were from he talked about the football team." A third student said Mr. Nixon "did not make sense. People would ask him questions and he would talk about something else."

See: Nixon Chat With Demonstrators Contained a Lesson, Aide Said. This file, 1 Jun 70.