

Students Turn to Politics in Effort to Change System

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Two years ago, when the nation's college students propelled the Presidential campaign of Senator Eugene J. McCarthy, Jeannie Kemper could not have cared less. "I was a home economics major," she recalled the other day. "All I worried about were recipes and parties."

But last week Jeannie Kemper, a junior at Long Beach State College was sitting at a long table in the headquarters of Representative George E. Brown Jr., addressing envelopes. Miss Kemper, a deeply tanned girl with streaked blonde hair, explained why she was there:

"We're all faced with a decision in this country, whether to break off from the Establishment completely or to try to change it. I just think the system is too strong to go outside it, but we can change it by electing the right people. The people on the far left accomplish nothing except to polarize the country."

Miss Kemper is typical of the thousands of young people who are turning to politics—within the system—in the aftermath of Cambodia and Kent State. Interviews here and by New York Times correspondents across the United States show that the new student activists tend to be new to the game, frustrated by the pace of peaceful change, yet opposed to violence.

And many of them do not come from the liberal, well educated homes that had traditionally produced student activists. Like Jeannie Kemper, a sizable number are children of the silent majority.

"My father is a military man and I just can't talk to him any more," said Miss Kemper. "He's ready to kick me out of the house. He still believes it's all a Communist conspiracy."

There are still plenty of students who would rather canvass a beach than a precinct, and many radicals feel electoral politics is a fraud. But for those who occupy the middle ground between apathy and anarchy, politics provides a chance to overcome their sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

"Student who were never involved before now suddenly feel they've got to do something," said Hal Mickelson, a student leader at Stanford. "This Cambodian thing is insane to them."

Congressional Races

Probably the most ambitious political development has been the Movement for a New Congress, whose basic aim is to mobilize students to work for peace candidates. Since the organization was started at Princeton two weeks ago, chapters have been formed at more than 100 campuses.

Princeton has already agreed to allow students to take time off next fall to work in the election, and students are pressuring other schools to follow suit. But in some areas, young people have already plunged into critical primary campaigns.

Here in California, students are turning out for Representative Brown, who is competing for the Democratic senatorial nomination. For instance, several departments at the University of Southern California have each taken an assembly district to canvass for the candidate, one of the first Congressmen to

vote against funds for the Vietnam war.

Other candidates receiving youthful support include Norval Reece, Senator McCarthy's campaign manager in Pennsylvania, who is running for the Senate in that state; the Rev. Andrew Young, an aide to the late Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a House candidate in Atlanta; and Gary Hart, who worked in Representative Allard K. Lowenstein's campaign on Long Island in 1968 and is now running for the House in Santa Barbara, Calif.

Coordination Sought

Student interest has been running so high that some people are already trying to coordinate

what threatens to become chaos. Mark Talisman, an assistant to Representative Charles A. McNamara, Democrat of Ohio, is organizing a telephone clearing house to give prospective workers information about candidates in their own areas. The Democratic National Committee has announced a similar operation.

While the new political concern has produced a massive lobbying effort in Washington against war spending, students are also invading state capitals from Madison to Sacramento, urging passage of bills that would prohibit local residents from fighting in undeclared wars.

The young people engaged in

these efforts are united by more than a desire to "do something." Many of them oppose violence and resent the popular image of the students as rock-throwing radicals.

"Violence might get rid of frustration, and it is understandable, but it only brings on more repression," said a U.C.L.A. student handing out literature for Representative Brown.

Moreover, many of them do not want merely to vent their feelings. A key word in their vocabulary is "effective."

"It is about time," said Mary McCormack, a senior at the University of Illinois, "that something was done for effective political action rather than just standing around at a rally."

A Lingering Faith

Perhaps most important, the students who choose politics maintain a lingering faith in the system, or at least an appreciation of its influence. Susan Salisbury, a law student at Southern California, said:

"In 1966, a lot of people said it would not make any difference whether Pat Brown or Ronald Reagan got elected. But I was working for the Welfare Department, and I saw a lot happen. After Reagan won, there was tremendous pressure to cut people off welfare and cut back on other benefits. Elections do make a difference."

Most of the new activists have never been involved in politics before. "These are the fence-sitters, not the long-haired crazies," said Susan King, a staff member for the Committee for an Effective Congress in Washington. "A lot of them don't even know who their Congressman is, but all of a sudden they're radicalized."

Others Oppose Position

Other veterans of the political wars have given up. The Daily Cardinal at the University of Wisconsin reacted to the Princeton plan this way:

"No; the political position of Princeton students can perhaps be most kindly described as oblivion. In the face of crisis at home, a murderous war abroad, and rioting in the streets they are talking about 'doves' and 'hawks' and Congress. We have been there and back. We will not retrace our steps again but right now we'll move in the only way we know how—by bringing our anger to the streets."

The new activists also have their doubts. "I don't know if the political system can work," said Andy Schwartz, a law student at U.S.C. "I'd like to give it a last try, but none of us are sure."