

# Mail to Congressmen Registers Anguish

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WASHINGTON, May 27—If Congressional mail is any gauge of the mood of the country—and most Congressmen have to doubt that it is—there is a feeling of quiet anguish simmering in the big cities, the suburbs and the small towns across America.

A sampling of the mail by several members of the House of Representatives this week turned up the same opening sentence time and again:

"I am a member of the silent majority who can remain silent no longer."

The concerns expressed in the letters after this line ranged from national issues (Cambodia, protesters, inflation and postal reform) to local issues (mink imports and farm prices) to purely personal requests ("What can you do to get my son a draft deferment?")

And the writers were diverse—students, housewives, businessmen, farmers and elderly shut-ins.

The letters were almost all temperate, but the thread running through the mail of nearly every Congressman was the intensity expressed.

Congressional aides, whose job it is to read and answer the mail, said they cannot remember a time when such a general feeling of unrest existed among constituents. And they sense that thousands of people are writing such letters now who never wrote in the past.

## Uneasiness Sensed

"There's this tone of uneasiness," said an assistant to Representative David Pryor, Democrat of Arkansas. "It began with Cambodia and the protests that followed, but it covers other issues too—race, the economy—and some people are writing just to gripe in general about the state of things."

The most desperate letters came from students and other young people. A young man, for instance, wrote Representative Ogden R. Reid, Republican of Westchester:

"I have been sick with despair—I pray to God and the war goes on. I demonstrate, and the war escalates. I scream out in agony and frustration, and four of my brothers are shot at Kent State. . ."

And a student from Camden, Ark., wrote Mr. Pryor:

"For God's sake, for the world's sake listen now. Look around you. Look at pollution, war, hatred, killing and much more. I didn't do it, my generation didn't do it, but we want to change it. But we can't because your generation has all the power. Don't you see, we're helpless."

A similar concern was expressed by parents. A New Rochelle mother wrote to Mr. Reid:

"We have harped on the sub-

ject of reform and change taking place at the polls according to the true processes of Democracy ever since our children have been old enough to understand. Help us prove to our children now that ballots and not bullets are the American way."

## Midwest Merchant Responds

A merchant from Topeka wrote Representative Chester L. Mize, Republican of Kansas, of a letter he had received from a Kansas University student he had "known since he was in grade school."

"If a young man has truly become so concerned about his country and has taken of his time to contact me in an orderly fashion," the merchant wrote, "then it is time that I, a 48-year-old adult, be concerned about his concern."

The merchant urged Mr. Mize to "end the war immediately," oppose additional money for welfare programs and "stop the Government from looking the other way in the enforcement of laws against violators of order, be they adults, students, Communists, black or white."

There were many other letters opposing the war but taking strong conservative stands on other issues:

A woman in Haskell, Ark., wrote Mr. Pryor:

"I don't understand why Congress hasn't stopped the war before now. I don't see where going to the moon benefits anyone when there are so many needy people in the world. As you know, Arkansas went for Wallace for President last time. If he runs again, I for one will vote for him."

For every letter from an adult supporting the student protesters, there were other letters condemning the young.

"This letter may not do any good," said a man from Pine Bluff, Ark., in a letter to Mr. Pryor, "but I feel better letting you know that I have had enough of the pinks and punks who are trying to destroy our country from within."

And a man from Newport, Ark., wrote:

"Almost everyone deplors this disgraceful and horrible war [but] I say the college disrupters do not have the right to destroy our colleges."

## Tide Turning on Cambodia

While torrents of mail against the Cambodia operation poured onto Capitol Hill in recent weeks, the tide now seems to have turned slightly. Fewer letters are being received, and some Representatives reported almost as much mail supporting the President as opposing him.

A typical letter came to Mr. Reid from a man in Larchmont who said: "I don't have time to demonstrate, riot or join the marches. I'm too busy making a living and doing my share to keep America solvent. But I'd

like the Administration to know that I am behind them 100 per cent."

Most members of Congress have been receiving considerable mail complaining about inflation and the state of the economy, especially from persons with fixed incomes.

An elderly pensioner wrote Mr. Pryor:

"I need every cent I draw. I can't hardly pay my bills as it is. I am more interested in my financial affairs than in all the talk coming out of D.C."

And a man from Chicago wrote to Representative Roman C. Pucinski, Democrat of Illinois:

"Am 51 years old and a factory worker. Have saved what I could and bought stock, which was supposed to be a wise thing according to all I could read and hear. Today if I sold out I could get back about 60 cents on the dollar invested. Am in great danger of being laid off work any week now. This Nixon anti-inflation policy is making me most bitter."

Another issue was what many correspondents believed to be biased news reports on television.

"I simply wanted you to know that the people of your district are getting fed up with the lies and misinformation that is being spoon-fed on TV," a woman from Green Lake, Wis., wrote Representative William A. Steiger, Republican of Wisconsin.

And a man in Chicago wrote Mr. Pucinski that "the news media seems to have the nation pretty well by the throat."

Countless letters were similar to that from a housewife in Kansas City. "It seems to me," she wrote, "as if everyone and everything is fast becoming so divided that they may never be joined again."