

Finch Tells Ohio State Audience Backlash Threatens University

By AGIS SALPUKAS JUN 13 1970
Special to The New York Times

COLUMBUS, Ohio, June 12 — Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Robert H. Finch warned in a commencement address today at Ohio State University that universities were becoming the victims of a disastrous backlash in which they were being blamed for causing all the problems of our society and then being punished for failing to solve them.

Mr. Finch, who earlier this week was named a counselor to President Nixon, said that "we stand in a critical disaster if rejected bond issues and a drying up of alumni support were to bring our colleges and universities to their knees."

"It was a disaster last week in my own state of California, and a grievous setback to health care, when a \$250-million bond issue for medical education was crushed better than two-to-one," he said.

"Last month in Oregon," he continued, "it was the voters who lashed out, and not alone against disruptive students but against all young people" when they defeated an amendment that would have lowered the voting age to 18.

Parents in the Audience

Mr. Finch asked the parents in the audience of 20,000 seated in the football stadium to "remember that students are not some sort of aliens traveling on foreign passports, these students are the products of our conduct, our laws and our mores."

The students and parents applauded when Mr. Finch said that today's students are ready for sacrifice—that indeed they have laid on the line their

academic standing, their career hopes, even their physical safety for their beliefs. They have shown us courage and staying power."

Ohio State, famed for its football teams and agricultural studies, was the scene of violence last April when student protesters and the police clashed on the campus. Twenty-six persons were injured by shotgun blasts.

Student strikes and demonstrations led to the closing of the university from May 9 to 17, the first closing in its 100-year history. Today's commencement was peaceful with a few hundred of the 4,225 graduating students wearing yellow peace armbands over their black robes.

A Ring of Policemen

About 150 members of the state highway patrol formed a ring around the field of the stadium, which was filled with mothers in light summer dresses and fathers who loosened ties and took off jackets during the sunny morning.

During a news conference before his address, Mr. Finch was asked how the tone of his speech would compare to the one by Vice President Agnew at the commencement last year.

Mr. Finch said that there was a "constant attempt to whiplash the Vice President and myself."

"We do have different views on different things," he said. Then without implying criticism of the Vice President Mr. Finch added that "with times as tumultuous and the climate as heated as it is we have to be very discerning in what we say, especially at universities like Ohio State."