

Spring Snowstorm Isolates 1,500 Youth Conference

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— As if the White House Conference on Youth were not isolated enough in this mountain retreat 1,500 miles from Washington, heavy snow fell this morning, marooning the conference and its delegates.

For hours, the snow even cut off the 1,500 delegates from the town of Estes Park, which is 7,500 feet above sea level. The conference is being held several hundred feet higher in a Y.M.C.A. camp on a steep hillside, where it snows harder and longer.

Power lines were down and telephones were cranky or non-

responsive. A bus lurched into a nearby stream.

Frantic leaders of the conference ordered in extra buses, jeeps, tire chains, 4,000 plastic grocery bags to be used as snow boots and 1,000 parkas from a military base because many of those who came here thought April in the Rockies meant springtime.

The delegates, some of whom arrived yesterday in sandals, plodded through snow drifts to widely scattered camp houses where panels were holding discussions

Stephen Hess, the conference chairman, smiled weakly as he commented that, to such words in his keynote speech as the "diversity" of participants and

the "complexity" of topics should be added "adversity."

The discussion groups were disagreeing on almost everything—a development that Mr. Hess termed encouraging — forming dissident caucuses.

The study group on race and minority group relations splintered into many caucuses — black, Asian, Euro-American (mostly those of Eastern European descent), Spanish-speaking and "others" American Indians — while the rest formed non-ethnic caucus No. 1 ("human

beings) and nonethnic caucus No. 2 ("just plain folks"). It was impossible to pinpoint the differences between the last two caucuses.

The study group on the environment had scheduled a "sunrise ecology hike" for tomorrow. "Chances are you'll spot coyote, bighorn sheep, mule deer, elk and abundant bird life," the poster said. But chances are the hike will now be canceled.

Yesterday had been brilliantly sunny and cool, with snow

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Delegates at Remote Mountain Retreat in Colorado

only on the peaks of the highest mountains, which are about 14,000 feet high. Today not only the distant mountains but the nearest hills were obscured by falling snow.

The environment group had also placed a large container on the camp grounds in which the delegates could throw their paper, to be recycled at a plant in Denver. Meanwhile, the conference staff was grinding out tons of printed reports, program schedules, texts of speeches

and memorandums with which the delegates were being inundated. "Wow, what a busy time that plant is going to have," one young participant said.

At the opening session of the conference last night, the main speakers were Mr. Hess and Elliot L. Richardson, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. The audience of 1,000 young delegates, whose ages range from 14 to 25, and 500 who were older received Mr. Richardson's remarks with

politeness and a fair degree of warmth.

They broke into laughter and applause when he said: "I dare say that at some point each of you have asked yourself: Why this conference?" He continued, "Does anybody care? Is anybody listening?"

"Right on!" shouted someone back in the packed auditorium. "We are listening. We do care. We want to know what you thing," Secretary Richardson said. He promised the dele-

gates that, at the "earliest" Cabinet meeting, he would report to President Nixon and his colleagues the recommendations of the conference. Mr. Richardson also said that the recommendations would be submitted to the proper agencies in the executive branch and that they would be accountable to the conference members by telling them honestly which proposals could be carried out and which would not be feasible.