

NYTimes APR 2 1969

The Voice of Youth

The planners of the White House Conference on Youth were aware of President Nixon's dislike for dissident demonstrations. They therefore wanted young Americans to be heard—but not too loudly. That is why they took the 1,500 delegates to the mountains of Estes Park, Colorado—out of sight and earshot of sensitive Washington. What started as a policy of caution was turned into a virtual parody of maximum security through isolation, when nature dumped masses of snow on the meeting.

Aside from the physical precautions, the conference was clearly planned to give the youth sector of the Silent Majority the lion's share of the representation. The voices of Middle-America and the South were assured a volume that would preclude domination by the Eastern "establishment." The non-white minorities were given an extensive representation to make is evident that they were not riding on the coattails of white middle-class radicals.

It is therefore of extraordinary significance that this deliberately non-radical composite of American youth, who emphatically rejected initial efforts by a few radical interlopers to take over the conference, sent to Washington an eloquent message of concern about the nation's present course. These youths of mainstream America have implored President Nixon to end the war in Indochina—not by Vietnamizing the fighting but by stopping the bloodshed and bringing the troops and the prisoners home.

One need not agree with all the conference recommendations nor accept the obvious oversimplifications. But it would be callous as well as politically suicidal not to heed the anguished call for leadership of courage and hope, rather than of expediency and fear. Young Americans have not—as the radical fringe sometimes proclaims—given up on the representative system of government or on the promise of the American dream. They plead instead—as they did in the preamble of their report—for a leadership that understands that the young are "motivated not by hatred, but by the disappointment over and love for the unfulfilled potential of this nation." This cry from the heart calls out for an honest, compassionate response.