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Youth's Faith...

The loss of faith by countless thousands of young Americans in their Government will not be easily remedied. More is required than President Nixon's promise yesterday that he and his associates will henceforth refrain from hostile comments on campus personalities and events. Students deeply concerned about issues of war and human dignity are not likely to be satisfied by reluctant silence or benign neglect.

The break between them and the Administration moved toward irretrievability last year, when Mr. Nixon said he would not be influenced by their mass outcry against the war. This policy of deafness to the voices of concern eventually led to the tragedy of Kent State University.

The insensate violence of a radical fringe on campus should not obscure the extent to which the Administration's intransigence and verbal provocations have driven great numbers of moderate students from frustration to radical activism. Yesterday's resignation of Anthony Moffett from his liaison post between the Government and American youth underscored those frustrations, particularly Mr. Moffett's declaration that he could no longer serve an Administration bent on discrediting nonviolent protest.

But the task of rescuing the nation's young from their growing disaffection cannot be abandoned. The increasing resort to violence by some students is not only morally and legally unacceptable; it is a self-destructive drive toward even greater personal tragedies and ultimately toward wholesale repression. By alienating many who share the students' quest for peace, it scatters and defeats the anti-war forces.

The continuing contagion of strikes and university shutdowns, divorced from any specific acts directed at a speedy end of the war, obscures the academic community's indispensable role of keeping alive rational inquiry and debate. There must be, as Kingman Brewster Jr., of Yale University, has said a less irrational way of shaking the political system to its senses than to curtail education.

There are better ways. The direct pressure of appeals made to the White House by university presidents and student leaders can be reinforced by similar efforts to sway other important figures in the Administration and on Capitol Hill. Individual students and faculty members can organize sustained nonviolent campaigns of education and persuasion in their own communities. They can make their voices heard in support of candidates committed to making the Congress a force for peace abroad and conciliation at home. They can put their research skills to work in a massive drive against the politics of unreason and deceit.

Theirs could be a powerful political force. Mayor Lindsay, Senators McGovern and Hatfield and many others stand ready to work with them. Representative Frank Horton, Republican of New York, announced that students have persuaded him to abandon his support of the Administration's Indochina policy.

The President and those who isolate him from the realities of the national mood may still believe that the doubts and anxieties of the young can be ignored. They are not nearly so likely to ignore their voices if they begin to speak through the electorate.

But the students draw much of their strength from the fact of being students, part of the academic community. Even so late in the academic year, there is greater symbolic value in keeping the universities open than in letting their lights go out.

...Sons and Fathers

Too late to prevent one ghastly tragedy, but perhaps not too late to avert a catastrophic explosion of youthful frustration, the nation has been offered an example of intergenerational communication where it is most natural, most needed, and potentially most effective—between father and son. That recognition of youth's need for dialogue, for understanding, shines through the eloquent appeal on behalf of young people addressed to President Nixon by his Interior Secretary Walter J. Hickel, father of six sons.

It is time that more Americans recognized that their sons and daughters are asking the right questions—questions about poverty and prejudice, pollution and peace that too many complacent adults have ignored or brushed aside in their selfish pursuit of the affluent life.

It is not necessary, of course, to agree with all that the young people have been saying and doing. It is too much to expect that the young, in their immaturity, will arrive at all the right answers—although, as Secretary Hickel pointed out, it was mainly young men who freed and forged this nation.

The nation's children are in the streets today because their parents have remained for too long deaf, blind and mute in the false security of comfortable homes. It is not our sons and daughters who should be laying their bodies on the line in the streets of the nation's capital tomorrow in a great—and one fervently hopes—nonviolent plea for a reveille in Washington. It is their parents who should be there, in the corridors of Congress, demanding of their elected representatives a forthright return to the principles of peace and justice that are being trampled.