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## President, Cabinet Shun the Campus

WASHINGTON — This is the season when the President and members of his Cabinet usually show up at the university graduation exercises to explain the facts of life to the departing scholars, but this year things are a little different. The graduates are explaining the facts of life to *them*.

The President and most members of the Cabinet, accordingly, are not committing themselves in advance, and avoiding the main academic war zones this year. Vice President Agnew is speaking at the West Point commencement, Secretary of Defense Laird at the Air Force Academy, and Secretary of HEW Robert Finch, in an adventure of unexampled bravery, will be talking at Arizona State, San Diego State, and Ohio State. But Attorney General Mitchell, and Secretaries Rogers, Kennedy and Romney are sitting this one out, and the rest of them are avoiding the rebellious liberal Eastern front.

Who can blame them? Commencements used to be merely a bore; now, with the attorney general on the platform, they could be a riot. The

**Pie Dufour is on vacation.**

Vice President and the Secretary of Defense should be safe enough at the military academies, where they can get air cover, but even the President could have a hard time at most of the large universities in the nation.

Considering the level of past official commencement oratory, most of it constructed out of old department handouts by weary press agents, this year's drought could be a welcome relief, but it really is disgraceful that the President and the members of his official family can no longer go on to most large campuses in the land with assurance of civility or even security.

This is one of the oddities of our present legal system. In recent years, the Congress has enacted specified federal remedies for interference with the right to employment, to housing, to vote—but no adequate remedies for interfering with the citizen's most fundamental rights under the First Amendment.

When the Eisenhower Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence in America recently made an extensive compendium of federal civil rights laws, it found that there was only one ancient statute that even attempted, however inadequately, to deal with government denials of the First Amendment rights of free speech and press, the right of

peaceable assembly and the right to petition for the redress of grievances. And there was no statute whatever to deal with the private bully-boys who break up or shout down cabinet members or private citizens making perfectly legal public speeches.

Fortunately, there is now a bipartisan effort to correct this oversight. Rep. William M. McCullough, the wise ranking Republican member of the House Judiciary and Rep. Hale Boggs, the Democratic whip from Louisiana, have agreed on a bill that would authorize federal court injunctions and damage suits against both official and private interference with the exercise of First Amendment rights.

This bill, entitled the First Amendment Freedom's Act, would authorize federal court suits for damages and injunctive relief against any official or private person seriously preventing another person from exercising his constitutional right even to talk nonsense.

Thus, under the Boggs-McCullough bill, a sheriff's posse would be liable if it broke up a legal meeting of the Black Panthers, and equally the Black Panthers would be subject to damages if they broke up a speech by a member of the President's Cabinet, or Gov. Madox of Georgia.

No doubt the bill would make allowance for any poor citizen who couldn't stand it any longer and shouted "nonsense" occasionally — there being so much nonsense around these days—but disrupting meetings by physical violence, or stopping a meeting by verbal violence, or hustling professors out of classrooms or drumming Spiro Agnew off the stage or throwing deans down long flights of stairs, or denying students the right to hear irregular or even subversive doctrine—all this would be punishable under the new law. Reps. Boggs and McCullough have in mind.

This may be going a long way to protect such things as commencement speakers, considering that we used to think there should be a law against all of them, but the present guerrilla warfare against free speech has clearly gone a bit far.