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Redundant Commission . . .

More than a year ago, President Calvin H. Plimpton of Amherst College warned President Nixon that, while there is no magic formula for campus peace, there is no hope for a moderate consensus so long as many students feel that "the nation has no adequate plans for meeting the crises of our society."

Thirteen months, several deaths and an accumulation of reports later, President Nixon has appointed yet another commission to explore the causes of campus unrest. Even the terminology sounds like a summer re-run.

Studies have followed studies. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence had a special panel on the campuses. The American Council on Education, through an *ad hoc* committee, reported extensively on campus tensions. The American Bar Association produced a detailed analysis. The National Association of State Universities did likewise. Books on the subject have been pouring off the presses. The President's own fact-finders have done their share.

In view of the already considerable redundancy of collected evidence, it is hard to believe that the new panel, though composed of able observers, will add new insights. As the resolutions committee of the American Mayors' Conference urged only yesterday, the need now is to act on what is already known.

It ought to be clear to Mr. Nixon by now that the disastrous combination of the Cambodian adventure and the tragedies at Kent State and Jackson—and not the hallucinations of a fringe of extremist students—has aroused hitherto moderate students to a new level of anger and frustration.

Can the President be blind to the harm done by the divisive rhetoric with which members of his official family have tried to turn the so-called "silent majority" not just against violent disrupters but against concerned young people who want their government to end the war and to fight social injustice at home?

What purpose is there in one more report, when the National Guard in several states embarks on campus peace-keeping missions with live ammunition in its rifles—in direct violation of Federal guidelines?

As long as state police forces, after directing murderous fire against a college dormitory, can count on their Governor's protection, will a high-minded analysis promise peace and trust?

The campus crisis will not be conquered by some new magic. Existing laws are adequate to deal with youths, on and off the campus, who substitute violence for dissent. Only the overwhelming majority of moderates, in faculty and student bodies alike, can offer assurance—through a courageous integrity that admittedly has often been in short supply—that the extremists of the left and of the right will not diminish academic freedom.

But all campus efforts at pacification will be in jeopardy so long as the nation remains torn by officially encouraged divisiveness and well-founded fears of repression.

. . . but a Needed Inquiry

The investigations ordered in the wake of the fatal shootings at Kent State University and Jackson State College had an unmistakably simple mission—to determine what improper actions or command procedures led to the lethal use of firearms.

A dormitory and campus had been sprayed with a hail of bullets. Six students died. Charges of provocative sniper fire have never been substantiated. Given this background of the tragedy, the American people have a right to know why the Ohio National Guard and the Mississippi Highway Patrol resorted to such violence.

In view of this clear-cut and specific mission, it is appalling to find that the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been using the occasion to question Kent State students about their classmates' and professors' political views. Some radical students there had indeed been guilty of intolerable acts of vandalism, violence and arson. Existing laws surely are adequate, and should be strictly enforced, to punish those who break them. But nothing in the F.B.I.'s quest justifies a political inquisition into the "controversial character" of students or into teachers' opinions which might be considered hostile to governmental policies.

What ought to be of legitimate concern to the F.B.I. is the flagrant disdain for its investigatory powers, not by members of the academic community but by Governor Williams of Mississippi. In view of the charge of wanton killing by forces subject to his authority, it is nothing short of obstruction of justice for the state's chief executive to prevent the F.B.I. from examining such potential evidence as the weapons used by troopers at Jackson.

The Federal Government's task is to get the facts about the shootings. It can be accomplished neither by surrender to the Governor's obstructionism nor by allowing the F.B.I. to play the role of thought police on campus. The death of six students must not become an excuse for making academic freedom the next victim.