

President letter sent to college presidents.....

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SEPTEMBER 25, 1970

Office of the White House Press Secretary

THE WHITE HOUSE

TEXT OF A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT
TO EDUCATORS, AND COLLEGE AND
UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS AND TRUSTEES

Earlier this month Director J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation addressed an open letter to college students in which he outlined the tactics used by extremists in their effort to promote their schemes on campus. Mr. Hoover's letter is a cogent and enlightening analysis of the strategy these extremists employ as they attempt to trick college students into support of lawlessness, disruption and violence.

This letter impressed me as a worthy companion piece to the article by Professor Sidney Hook, which I sent to you recently. In view of your deep and continuing interest in these problems, I am sending you a copy of the letter. I hope that you will make every effort to see that the message it contains will reach as many students as possible.

With my best wishes,

Sincerely,

/s/ RICHARD NIXON

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THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 26, 1970

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With my best wishes,

Sincerely,



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535

September 21, 1970

AN OPEN LETTER TO COLLEGE STUDENTS

from

John Edgar Hoover, Director
Federal Bureau of Investigation
United States Department of Justice

As a 1970 college student, you belong to the best educated, most sophisticated, most poised generation in our history.

The vast majority of you, I am convinced, sincerely love America and want to make it a better country.

You do have ideas of your own - and that's good.

You see things wrong in our society which we adults perhaps have minimized or overlooked. You are outspoken and frank and hate hypocrisy. That is good too.

There's nothing wrong with student dissent or student demands for changes in society or the display of student unhappiness over aspects of our national policy. Student opinion is a legitimate aspect of public opinion in our society.

(This open letter to college students from Director Hoover pinpoints eight ploys used by radical extremists in their efforts to steer justifiable campus protest into violent and destructive channels. It was furnished to United Press International on 9-21-70 and is reprinted with permission.)

But there is real ground for concern about the extremism which led to violence, lawlessness, and disrespect for the rights of others on many college campuses during the past year.

The extremists are a small minority of students and faculty members who have lost faith in America. They ridicule the flag, poke fun at American institutions, seek to destroy our society. They are not interested in genuine reform. They take advantage of the tensions, strife, and often legitimate frustrations of students to promote campus chaos. They have no rational, intelligent plan of the future either for the university or the Nation.

The extremists are of wide variety: adherents of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) including the Weatherman; members of the Young Socialist Alliance (YSA), the Trotskyist youth group; the Communist Party's Young Workers Liberation League (YWLL). Or they may be associated with the Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SMC), a Trotskyist-dominated antiwar group.

Many are not associated with any national group. The key point is not so much the identification of extremists but learning to recognize and understand the mentality of extremism which believes in violence and destruction.

Based on our experience in the FBI, here are some of the ways in which extremists will try to lure you into their activities:

1. They'll encourage you to lose respect for your parents and the older generation. This will be one of their first attacks, trying to cut you off from home. You'll hear much about the "failures" and "hypocrisy" of your parents and their friends. The older generation has made mistakes but your parents and millions of other adults worked hard, built, sacrificed, and suffered to make America what it is today. It is their country too. You may disagree with them, but don't discredit their contributions.

2. They'll try to convert you to the idea that your college is "irrelevant" and a "tool of the Establishment." The attack against the college administration often is bitter, arrogant, and unreasoning. SDSers, for example, have sought to disrupt the colleges by demanding the right to select professors, determine the curriculum, and set grading standards.

3. They'll ask you to abandon your basic common sense. Campus extremism thrives on specious generalizations, wild accusations, and unverified allegations. Complex issues of state are wrapped in slogans and cliches. Dogmatic statements

are issued as if they were the final truth. You should carefully examine the facts. Don't blindly follow courses of action suggested by extremists. Don't get involved in a cause just because it seems "fashionable" or the "thing to do." Rational discussion and rational analysis are needed more than ever before.

4. They'll try to envelop you in a mood of negativism, pessimism, and alienation toward yourself, your school, your Nation. This is one of the most insidious of New Left poisons. SDS and its allies judge America exclusively from its flaws. They see nothing good, positive, and constructive. This leads to a philosophy of bitterness, defeatism, and rancor. I would like you to know your country more intimately. I would want you to look for the deeper unifying forces in America, the moods of national character, determination, and sacrifice which are working to correct these flaws. The real strength of our Nation is the power of morality, decency, and conscience which rights the wrong, corrects error, and works for equal opportunity under the law.

5. They'll encourage you to disrespect the law and hate the law enforcement officer. Most college students have good friends who are police officers. You know that when extremists call the police "pigs" they are wrong. The officer protects your rights, lives, and property. He is your friend and he needs your support.

6. They'll tell you that any action is honorable and right if it's "sincere" or "idealistic" in motivation. Here is one of the most seductive of New Left appeals - that if an arsonist's or anarchist's heart is in the right place, if he feels he is doing something for "humanity" or a "higher cause," then his act, even if illegal, is justifiable. Remember that acts have consequences. The alleged sincerity of the perpetrator does not absolve him from responsibility. His acts may affect the rights, lives, and property of others. Just being a student or being on campus does not automatically confer immunity or grant license to violate the law. Just because you don't like a law doesn't mean you can violate it with impunity.

7. They'll ask you to believe that you, as a student and citizen, are powerless by democratic means to effect change in our society. Remember the books on American history you have read. They tell the story of the creative self-renewal of this Nation through change. Public opinion time after time has brought new policies, goals, and methods. The individual is not helpless or caught in "bureaucracy" as these extremists claim.

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8. They'll encourage you to hurl bricks and stones instead of logical argument at those who disagree with your views. I remember an old saying: "He who strikes the first blow has run out of ideas." Violence is as ancient as the cave man; as up-to-date as the Weatherman. Death and injury, fear, distrust, animosity, polarization, counter-violence - these arise from violence. The very use of violence shows the paucity of rational thought in the SDS, its inability to come up with any intelligent critique of our society.

Personally, I don't think the outlook for campus unrest this year is as bleak as some prophets of pessimism proclaim. The situation at some colleges is serious, but certainly not hopeless.

Along with millions of other adults, I'm betting on the vast majority of students who remain fair-minded, tolerant, inquisitive, but also firm about certain basic principles of human dignity, respect for the rights of others, and a willingness to learn. I am confident our faith has not been misplaced.

October 15, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR

Honorable Elliot L. Richardson
Secretary of Health, Education,
and Welfare

As we agreed, here is a run at a Presidential
response to Scranton.

Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachment

CF/mtb

October 15, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN EHRLICHMAN

After talking with you about the need for some Presidential response to Scranton, Bob Finch and Elliot Richardson agreed that I would take a run at it.

Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachment

CF/mtb

NOTE: Original draft of SCRANTON LETTER
given to DPM - 4 Nov 70
(with list of distribution)

October 15, 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR BOB FINCH

As we agreed, here is a run at a Presidential response to Scranton.

Daniel P. Moynihan

Attachment

CF/mtb

Dear Bill:

As you will of course recall, when you submitted the report of the Commission on Campus Unrest on September 26, I was about to leave for Europe, and explained I would not have time to study the document until I returned. I very much wanted the document released at that time, however, for it is as much or more addressed to the students, professors and academic administrators of the nation, and to the public generally, as to the Federal government. The new academic year was beginning, and there was every reason to hope that your report could set the tone for that year.

Since my return I have been much preoccupied -- as is commonly the lot of any President -- with foreign affairs, specifically in the quest of a standstill cease fire, and other measures to end the war in Indo-China.

I have nonetheless had the opportunity to study the report. I should like to state formally at this time what I stated informally to you, your fellow Commissioners, and perhaps especially, the staff of the Commission. You have done an important service to your country, for which you have my sincere appreciation.

The principal portions of the report relate to the internal governance of colleges, and hence are properly the concern of college administrators, faculty members and students. In my ninth week in office, on March 22, 1969, I laid down the policy of the Administration which is to avoid at whatever cost the direct involvement of government in the internal affairs of colleges and universities. Whatever the motive -- no matter how high sounding, no matter how genuinely compassionate and concerned -- such involvement would destroy precisely those qualities of free enquiry and self-directing community which it might ostensibly be designed to preserve. That policy has not changed. It will not.

The question of the indirect influence of the Federal government on university and college affairs is a very different matter, however. It is easy to deny, or to avoid it. But increasingly it is a form of dishonesty to do so.

The Federal government has enormous influence on the life of our campuses because it provides enormous sums to finance higher education. In your final chapter you call attention to this influence, and I fully accept your judgment. It is, I believe, almost precisely parallel with the position I stated in my Message on Higher

Education sent to the Congress in March 1970.

For three decades now the Federal Government has been hiring universities to do work it wanted done. In far the greatest measure, this work has been in the national interest, and the Nation is in the debt of those universities that have so brilliantly performed it. But the time has come for the Federal Government to help academic communities to pursue excellence and reform in fields of their own choosing as well, and by means of their own choice.

I take it your analysis would very much support the establishment of a National Foundation for Higher Education, which I have proposed for the purpose of moving away from narrowly defined categorical aid programs which, whatever their original intent, have increasingly come to be seen as restrictive and undesirable.

I especially welcome the Commission's support of the student aid provisions of the Higher Education Opportunity Act of 1970, which was proposed in my Message. If enacted, this proposal would profoundly change the access of low income students to higher education. It is a fundamental social reform that is long past due. Again, I refer to the March 1970 Message for the facts behind the bill and your endorsement of it.

No qualified student who wants to go to college should be barred by lack of money. That has long been a great American goal; I propose that we achieve it now.

Something is basically unequal about opportunity for higher education when a young person whose family earns more than \$15,000 a year is nine times more likely to attend college than a young person whose family earns less than \$3,000.

I have read, as many will read, Chapter Three on The Black Student Movement with close attention and the utmost interest.

I wholeheartedly accept your proposal that there be greater Federal aid to colleges that have traditionally had a predominantly black student body. This Administration shares the Commission's concern over the financial situation of traditionally black colleges and universities. Because of our concern, in July the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare announced that it was re-directing \$30 million in additional funds to these institutions. This brought their share of Federal aid to higher education to more than 3%, although they enroll only 2.2% of the nation's college students. In addition, the student aid reforms included in the Administration's proposed Higher Education Opportunity Act would greatly improve the financial situation of many students attending these colleges and universities and would thereby assist the institutions as well. Furthermore, black colleges would be fully eligible to seek funds from the National Foundation for Higher Education, also proposed

as part of that legislation. Indeed, there is every reason to think that the Board of the National Foundation might single out the strengthening of black colleges as one of its top priorities.

I very much share your opposition to legislation that would terminate Federal aid to institutions where disruption or violence occurs. The Administration has actively opposed such legislation in the past, and will continue to do so in the future. Nothing would deliver greater power into the hands of the nihilists than a Federal policy of severely punishing any institution of higher education which the nihilists choose to disrupt. To the contrary, our policy should be to prevent the actions of a few from affecting the lives of the many.

I believe it is not necessary, or even proper, for me to comment at any great length with respect to other portions of the report dealing with internal affairs of the academic community. I applaud, as will the nation, your categorical rejection of violence -- whatever its origin, whatever its form, whatever its justification. The nihilist terrorism of which the report speaks with passion and insight continues apace. Whatever government can do to punish those involved, and to prevent others from becoming involved, will be done.

The report makes a number of recommendations concerning youth employment which I am asking Secretaries Hodgson and Richardson to review. As you are of course aware, these are not new proposals, and there are difficulties associated with each of them. But they certainly warrant reconsideration.

I find myself in general agreement with the recommendations that the National Guard receive additional training in controlling civil disturbances and be issued special equipment for use in such situations. Accordingly, I am directing the Secretary of Defense to take all action appropriate within the realm of Federal authority to ensure that these recommendations are carried out. And I call upon all 50 governors to cooperate in this endeavor.

I have also asked Secretary Laird to give careful attention to the possibility of carrying out the proposals with respect to the Reserve Officers' Training Corps which the Commission has set forth.

Your special reports on the events at Kent State and Jackson State are particularly useful in their effective and informative depiction of the facts associated with those tragic occurrences. These two events grived the nation, and called for a detailed fact-finding report. The Commission has provided such a report, and,

although it cannot erase our sorrow at the loss of these young lives, we are all in your debt.

I have many times stated my conviction that violence has no place on our campuses, and my belief that college administrators, students and faculty members should join with state and local authorities in creating an atmosphere in which it will not occur. I think we all now realize, in the aftermath of these tragic events, that everyone must exert restraint and self-discipline, for everyone has a stake in preventing more bloodshed, and in enabling both our universities and our law-enforcement agencies to get on with their proper work.

Allow me, finally, to acknowledge those portions of your final chapter which are especially addressed to the institution of the Presidency.

In your final chapter you proposed that the "moral authority" of the Presidency be used "to convince all Americans of the need to confront candidly the serious and continuing problems of the nation." For its part the Administration has sought to confront those problems. In September I sent to the Congress a Message entitled "A Call for Cooperation" in which I outlined a very

considerable range of reform proposals which I have proposed be enacted. I know of your own vigorous support of many of these measures, perhaps especially the Family Assistance Program. This measure, which has been justly, as I would think, described as the most important item of domestic legislation proposed in two generations would establish a floor under the income of every American family with children. This measure would do more to end poverty than perhaps any other single item of legislation in American history.

If I may be allowed, rather too many persons who have been calling attention to their own righteousness by demanding a change in the national priorities have been painfully silent and evasive when confronted with the issue of supporting this historic measure which would do just that. Much the same painful point would have to be made about the Administration's proposal to put an end to the draft by the establishment of an all-volunteer armed force. For a decade now it has been evident that the existing Selective Service system in effect confers a class privilege on the children of the well off. They go to college. The children of the working people go to the Army, and of late this has meant going to war as

well. Nothing would seem more equitable or urgent than to put an end to this system. Yet I have been disappointed by the silence with which this proposal has been greeted in those circles which now benefit from this privilege. In candor, it would have to be said that despite abundant testimony that the Selective Service system is the source of much campus unrest, the Commission's report treats with the matter hardly at all.

These are details. The fundamental thrust of your assertions remains, and I should like to respond to it, first making clear my conviction that the moral authority of the Presidency derives solely from the degree to which the office is conducted with a rigorous concern for objective truth, to the degree such truth can ever be ascertained, and with an informed and concerned respect for the opinions of all persons who make up the American democracy.

For myself, I accept the judgment increasingly prominent in scholarly circles that there has grown up in America a "presidential cult," and I propose to resist that tendency. Presidents are not priests. They are not supermen. They are neither all wise, nor all powerful. They are mortal beings who put their trousers on one leg at a time. The moral authority of the Presidency is, as I say,

at most derivative. It attends the proper conduct of the office, but is not implicit in either the office or the man. Moral authority is an awesome thing. Few can state with any precision just what it is or how it is acquired. It is akin to the power to loose and to bind, to bless and to damn. I do not believe political figures have that power, nor should they. Others may view the matter differently; this however is my view. I believe Jefferson would have shared it.

To repeat, the task of the Presidency is to seek the truth and to respect the opinions of the electorate. Thus, for example, I would have to say that an effort "to convince all Americans of the need to confront candidly the serious and continuing problems of the nation," is a matter far more complex than might at first seem the case. That complexity begins with the fact that there are widely divergent views within our society as to just what our problems are. The views implicit in the Commission's report range from observations that would doubtless be accepted by a great portion of the nation to conclusions that may be shared by only a small minority. This does not make any of them wrong, or right. Nor should the Commission have refrained from expressing them. (To the contrary: I said on the occasion of receiving the report that I was sure it would be

controversial and felt that to be a necessary condition of any creative event.) A Commission can, in a sense, ignore diversity of opinion in favor of its own views. A President cannot.

Similarly, while I fully understand that many persons, especially young ones, are convinced that the rise of campus unrest is associated with immediate political issues in the nation at large, I would have to say that the evidence is simply otherwise. (Which, to be sure, the Commission acknowledges.) Thus Professor Paul Seabury of Berkeley, a political scientist of impeccable scholarly credentials, recently wrote:

Before Cambodia . . . the campuses of many American universities were in an unprecedented stage of uproar and violence -- the Chicago Seven issue probably "justified" much more physical trashing than anything which took place after Cambodia. Before Cambodia, the New Left demand had been to "shut the place down." Afterwards . . . the demand was to keep it open -- this time as a viable base for political action.

Seabury goes on to note a development that all might be alert to:

The tranquility of a whole-politicized university may be more unattractive than the chaos of one only partly so. Many American campuses this spring had an air of sinister serenity as the academic year straggled to a close.

I do not mean to concentrate attention on the so-called Left.

Their counterparts on the Right are every bit as much a danger and

a reality. There has indeed grown up, in the words of Clark Kerr, an "unholy alliance against Democracy." That is something a President may never forget.

Nor may he forget that the experiences now so common on many American campuses are to be encountered in almost identical form in other democratic nations in which none or almost none of the immediate political issues so often cited as the basis for campus unrest here in America exist. Professor Seabury warns us against the provincialism of thinking only of our local experience. "What many Americans still fail to realize," he writes, "is that the modern university is at a crisis point in nearly all non-authoritarian and non-totalitarian societies." Indeed migration of scholars have already begun that are fearsomely reminiscent of the 1930's. But at that time the great intellectuals of Europe driven into exile could find refuge on American campuses. I would hope this will always be the case. But I am not confident of that, and neither are they. This is a matter no President may forget.

Quite beyond our individual agreements and differences, I write essentially to thank you and the Commission, and your hard-working staff for the report, and to assure you that it is now receiving

and will continue to receive the closest attention within the Administration. I trust and hope that this will also be true in the nation at large.

Sincerely,

RICHARD NIXON

Honorable William W. Scranton
704 Northeastern National Bank Building
Scranton, Pennsylvania 18503