

Student Demonstrations--Is There An Alternative?

By BILL NEUBAUER
Sentinel Staff Writer

Peace between extremist adults and extremist college and university students might come sooner were the students given a reasonable alternative to demonstrations.

There is in this country hardly an adult bloodbath proponent who himself would not take to the streets were he taxed by a government in which he has no representation or were he ordered to fight in a perhaps illegal war by a government in which he has no representation.

George Washington led such a "demonstration" when no other alternative was given by the British.

And Washington was an adult, please remember, presumably old enough to think and act coolly.

To expect of a student outraged by injustice more restraint than you would expect of an adult is to be unrealistic and unfair. It simply is not in the makeup of young people, either, grand though they are, to turn the other cheek indefinitely.

And why should they turn the other cheek?

The fact is that the students

are less privileged by far than the extremist adults who excoriate them. Because most of the student are under 21, they have no vote. Having no vote, they have no say in the creation of governmental laws or practices under which they must live.

They pay taxes without representation when they buy.

They are subject without representation to military duty either now or when they graduate in a war they disapprove of.

They have no recourse through meaningful, effective channels to obtain redress of these and other grievances.

For example, they can hardly fire through their votes this November the governmental officials who concurred in the original Vietnam decision or who have yet to challenge at the U. S. Supreme Court level the legality of President Richard Nixon's decision to expand the Southeast Asia war to Cambodia.

You, an adult, may express your opposition or approval of the latest war decision with your vote in the primaries this June and at the November general election.

But the students, many of whom may be ordered to fight

in Cambodia, may not vote.

It is important to remember this and to remember also there exists today not one established means for the students to hold public officials accountable for actions or decisions that affect their rights to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

So chafing under real or imagined injustices, with no other alternative open to them, the students take to the streets and demonstrate until their voices are heard.

It is all well and good to say the students should seek peaceful redress of their grievances. But until the students are given a way to do this, the words are meaningless.

This lack of a reasonable alternative to demonstrations makes the Kent State slayings doubly tragic. The national shame is double as well, because those were American human beings who were shot while expressing their grievances in the only effective way that was left open to them in a so-called democratic society.

That demonstrations are the only effective way open to students to express their grievances at the moment is again

being proven by the present national furor over the slayings.

Suddenly President Nixon is chatting in the White House with student leaders. Senators and representatives are all but falling over themselves to get before a national TV audience to assure the students they are eager to hear their views and right any existent wrongs.

It has even been announced that administration leaders will not call the students "bums" anymore.

But why did they have to be called "bums" in the first place? Why wasn't President Nixon chatting with student leaders before the Kent State tragedy? Why weren't members of the Congress working long ago to prevent a Kent State tragedy?

Student dissatisfaction with real or imagined injustices was not a secret before Kent State. Year after year there have been hundreds of demonstrations.

And the need to provide a meaningful alternative to the demonstrations was not exactly a secret, either. After almost every demonstration many adults have clamored for peaceful means through which the stu-

dents could speak up and be listened to.

But in the past the voices of adult extremists were listened to. No action was taken to provide an alternative. Each new demonstration was met by the police or the state national guard. Hundreds of students were beaten, thousands were arrested. There was even a threat by the head of the military selective service system to penalize demonstrators by inducting them forthwith into the armed forces.

Vigorous repression will be attempted again, you may be sure, unless responsible society compels at last all governmental officials to recall their responsibility to all members of this nation, including students.

The time has come to say bluntly there must be an end to this criminal nonsense of yelling for the bayonets and the Mace and the bullets and the tanks to hassle students into silent perusal of their books or into service in a war they deem illegal.

For unless American society is officially at war with its children, the resort to force makes a mockery of the principles for which the Flag flies.

The right to dissent . . . the right to oppose injustice . . . the right to bear arms against tyranny . . . the right to a fair trial . . . the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness — all these and many more principles are embedded in the Constitution, surely among the finest political statements ever written.

But many of these principles are applied too often these days to adults only.

Have you ever asked yourself why?

Students are asking that question. Using the good brains they were born with and using the very education their parents sent them to the colleges and universities to get, the students are studying their American history and learning from it.

They have not read anywhere in American history that students are second-class citizens. But they have read that taxation without representation is tyranny, and they have read also that only the Congress has under the Constitution the legal right to declare war.

Having learned, they look around them. Seeing what they think are inconsistencies and injustices, they protest. And because society seems to hear the

protests only when the students demonstrate, they demonstrate. It is truly sad when students burn a building to protest what they think is an illegal war.

But wasn't it sadder that the head of the bank that owned the building did not call for an end to the war until after the building was burned?

It is entirely possible that the students are not in the right on the war question or many of the other issues they have raised.

But they have a right to their views. They have a right to expect a hearing on their views, a debate on their views. A certainly they have the right to expect from their parents and other members of adult society a decent opportunity to obtain peaceful redress of their grievances.

These students are not our national enemies. They happen to be our boys and girls. If they don't have a right to expect love, understanding and fair play from us, who has?

And it really is not asking too much that they be given a reasonable alternative to demonstrations in which they may lose their lives.

For they, too, are Americans, you see.