

Speech on Oct. 15, 1969
Moratorium

Fifteen years or so ago, it was fashionable for college professors, myself included, to lament the fact that our students were overly apathetic---they simply weren't interested, apparently, in what to us were the leading issues of the day. Much has changed since then, and today it is not uncommon for students to participate, and, to demonstrate their feelings. Often this is done, at least allegedly, in irresponsible fashion.

My response to the students who requested special recognition of this day grows out of this history. We urge our young people to be concerned, in the first place. But, in the second place, we do not want them, in their concern, to intimidate the democratic process nor to behave otherwise irresponsibly. The logic of this would seem to me to dictate, therefore, that when the students focus their interest and concern on one of the most apparent issues of our times; and when they propose a schedule of activities designed to treat with that issue in a sober and responsible manner, as you have; then we should listen with a receptive ear.

The planning for this day, on this campus at least, has been something of a lesson in the democratic process. It has pointed-up the fact that a college or university is a collective enterprise composed of many individuals and their divergent points of view. Unanimity is hard to come by in a college. The process of discussion and demonstrated concern, therefore, must be shaped carefully, in recognition of these divergencies, if democracy is to be well served. For example, there are many viewpoints about the holding or dismissal of classes. These have been recognized. There are also many viewpoints about the American involvement in Vietnam. It is my urgent hope that, as this day wears on, this important set of divergencies will not be casually or carelessly dismissed. I doubt that anyone here, regardless of his views about Vietnam, really favors war. But the purposes for which the war is fought, or the best way to restore peace---these are honest points of difference and debate. Let us

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remember, in real humility, that none of us has discovered Truth. He that claims to have discovered it is dangerous, and should be carefully guarded against.

I commend all of you for the sobriety of your interest and the responsible maturity of the manner in which you have proposed to demonstrate your interest. Let us, then, proceed to a day of intelligent exercise of the democratic process.