

We Don't Need Any More Martyrs: Anti-War Protests at the University of Iowa 1970

Jack Kapsner
The University of Iowa

Abstract

This thesis argues that the May 1970 anti-Vietnam War protests at the University of Iowa were nonviolent compared to similar demonstrations at other colleges. This was due to the actions of University President Willard “Sandy” Boyd, who was able to strike a delicate balance between maintaining civil order and protecting the right to protest. Students protested the joint U.S.-South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia and the killings of students at Kent State University during a time of intense political upheaval. American politicians and citizens debated how to handle the war in Vietnam best and what course of action to take when coping with anti-war demonstrations. This thesis examines the protests at the University of Iowa to understand better the local political dynamics and how local leaders coped with a dynamic political environment. This thesis uses sources from the University of Iowa archives, the Iowa State Historical Society, and the Daily Iowan archives. While many college and government officials chose to adopt repressive stances towards the protests that occurred nationally, the Iowa protests were de-escalated without any deaths. This resolution gives current elected officials a model of how to maintain civil order without violating the rights of American citizens.

Introduction

On April 30, 1970, President Richard Nixon announced the Joint U.S.-South Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia. Opponents of his policies warned that this decision would make him a one-term president and cost the Republican Party congressional seats in the upcoming midterm elections. Nixon responded to the criticisms in his televised address to the American people: “I would rather be a one-term President and do what I believe is right than to be a two-term President at the cost of seeing America become a second-rate power and to see this Nation accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history.”¹ According to Nixon, his decision was a matter of national survival.

I would like to thank Dr. R. Tyler Priest for his assistance and support during the writing process, I could not have done it without him. I would also like to thank Rachel VanDenover and Jake Mattecheck for putting up with my erratic writing schedule and unsolicited history lectures. Finally, I want to thank my parents, Chris and Molly for their encouragement and emotional support.

¹ Richard M. Nixon and Patrick Buchanan. “Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia,” April 30, 1970, Santa Barbara, n.d. Accessed 2023.

The spring of 1970 was the fifth year of active American involvement in the Vietnam War. Originally, the United States intervened to assist a friendly but failing regime in South Vietnam. The South Vietnamese were fighting their Northern communist neighbors and internal communist guerrilla forces. The war was initially popular in the United States, but it started to become unpopular after the United States failed to meet its operational objectives. This failure on the battlefield was embodied by the thousands of young Americans returning home in body bags, fighting in a country that most Americans couldn't find on a map. The war was so controversial that it doomed the presidency of Lyndon Johnson and started a powerful anti-war movement. This controversy paved the way for Richard Nixon to win the presidency in 1968.

Richard Nixon became president in 1968 by focusing on two key issues: ending the war in Vietnam and restoring law and order at home. Nixon intended to end the war by leveraging the “madman” theory – his escalation of the war would force the North Vietnamese to the negotiating table. This strategy was combined with Vietnamization, a program to train South Vietnamese forces to a point where they could assume the responsibility for conducting combat operations. The invasion of Cambodia was supposed to be the culminating event of the Vietnamization program, meant to secure the gains made by the South Vietnamese against the Communists.

Nixon's aimed his law-and-order message at middle-class, white Americans who feared the rise of inner-city crime and anti-war protests that fueled unrest on the nation's college campuses. Fears about crime, Black civil rights, and youthful rebellion had placed cultural issues at the forefront of American politics. Factions within the Republican Party started mobilizing their voter base among white, middle-class voters in response to the social and cultural changes of the 1960s. College campuses became an important battleground over these cleavages in American society.

Existing historiography on student activism focuses either on elite schools that were well known for their anti-war protest movements or on Kent State because of the killing of four students there by the Ohio National Guard. The University of Iowa has been overlooked because the protests in the May 1970 were handled relatively well. Unlike Kent State, there was no major outbreak of violence at the University of Iowa. The situation was still dynamic and intense, but a major confrontation on the scale of Kent State was avoided. By reconstructing the antiwar protests at the University of Iowa from November 1967 through May 1970, this thesis offers an instructive example of how leaders at the university, local law enforcement, and student groups deescalated confrontations during this tense moment.

Student Antiwar Activism at University of Iowa, 1965-1970

The University of Iowa in the spring of 1970 was a divided campus, a situation all too common for American universities at this time. The New Left political movement had reached its peak with the controversial Vietnam War as the focal point for student discontent. Protests such as the Saturday, April 18 disruption of an ROTC drill competition at the University Recreation building, were frequent. The University of Iowa Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) chapter stated in an undated newsletter that “the abolition of ROTC on campus would not end the war quickly, but would be the most concrete thing students could do against it.”² With a presence on 300 college campuses, the SDS orchestrated a coordinated campaign against ROTC recruitment.³ That Saturday in April, University of Iowa students interrupted the University of Iowa ROTC Pershing Rifle platoon’s drill performance by conducting a “shout-in” and causing such a disruption that the ROTC cadets had to retreat from the drill field and postpone the drill

² “Chicago Attacks Are Not SDS,” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

³ SDS Chapters 1962-1969 - Mapping American Social Movements Project. Accessed November 1, 2023. https://depts.washington.edu/moves/sds_map.shtml.

competition.⁴ By taking issue with the presence of ROTC on the University of Iowa campus, the “shout-in” was an attempt to deprive the U.S. Army of fresh junior officers, making it difficult for the military to prosecute the war.

The University of Iowa leftists were divided in the spring of 1970, which reflected infighting within the SDS at the national level that eventually collapsed that organization. University of Iowa leftists struggled to pick a cause to focus on and how to achieve their political goals. The escalation of the Vietnam War and Nixon's victory in the 1968 presidential election caused some left-wingers to abandon the idea of reforming the American political system. This small faction of radicals turned to violence to accomplish their political aims and launched bombing campaigns across the United States. The Weather Underground was the most famous group that broke away from the SDS and began a systemic domestic terrorist campaign.⁵ This split between reformist and revolutionary activists was also a fixture on the local level in Iowa City. Campus groups were split over which issues to devote their efforts to and by what means to accomplish their implementation.

Like the national organization, SDS split on the Iowa campus into two factions, one continued to be called SDS but also went by the name the Progressive Labor Party.⁶ This was the Marxist or Socialist wing of the University of Iowa Left and was focused on creating a worker-student alliance for a Marxist revolution. The second faction was the Radical Student Association, whose focus was local student issues, the anti-war movement was a secondary concern. The RSA was not as effective as SDS and only lasted a year, SDS benefited from its

⁴ Mike McNamara, “Protesters May Face Penalties,” *The Daily Iowan* April 21, 1970.

⁵ “Weather Underground Bombings,” Federal Bureau of Investigation, May 18, 2016, <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weather-underground-bombings>.

⁶ Mary Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

national brand and organizational infrastructure. SDS on campus continued their confrontational protest campaign but that did not satisfy every student radical.

Anti-war activism at the University of Iowa began with the early U.S. involvement in Vietnam. When the United States took a direct role in the conflict with large infusions of American troops in 1965, University of Iowa student Steve Smith burned his draft card to protest what he saw as an unjust war,⁷ the second person in the United States to do so. His actions were widely condemned. Smith's father, who had served in the Navy during World War II, said he had “no sympathy for the boy in this matter.”⁸ The elder Smith sympathized with his son’s civil rights activism but felt that military service was an essential aspect of being a good male American citizen. It is important to note that in 1965 the public overwhelmingly supported the Vietnam War. Only small groups of activists like Smith opposed the war. In August 1965, The Gallup poll asked if the United States made a mistake in committing troops to fight in Vietnam, and 61% of respondents said “no.”⁹ This would change as the conflict escalated and the United States was unable to meet its operational objectives in the face of mounting U.S. casualties.

Steve Smith exemplified how the core cadre of the campus anti-war movement was also involved in the civil rights movement. Local newspapers described Smith as a civil rights worker, devout pacifist, and a member of the SDS. Many SDS members had experience in political organizing and civil disobedience, mainly in protesting Jim Crow racial segregation. Smith himself had previously spent time as an organizer in the South. While in Canton, Mississippi, a sheriff’s deputy arrested and beat Smith for helping to register Black Southerners to vote.¹⁰ Much like advancing the cause of civil rights, Steve Smith saw the burning of his draft

⁷ “UI Student Burns Draft Card In Protest of Vietnam Policy,” *Iowa City Press Citizen*, October 21, 1965.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ “Public Opinion and the Vietnam War,” Digital History, accessed October 19, 2023, https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/vietnam_pubopinion.cfm.

¹⁰ David McCartney, “Old Gold: Steve Smith, Following His Conscience,” *Iowa Now - The University of Iowa*, July 30, 2012, <https://now.uiowa.edu/news/2012/07/old-gold-steve-smith-following-his-conscience>.

card as patriotic and necessary to ensuring that the public heard the views of people with dissenting opinions.¹¹ Smith had experience with using non-violent resistance from his time in the South and saw burning his draft card as a more effective way of protesting than picketing or conducting teach-ins. Student activists at the University of Iowa continually adapted their protest techniques to ensure that demonstrations were as effective as possible. Smith's action has since been memorialized in the basement of the University of Iowa Memorial Union.

By 1967, the American intervention in Vietnam had become politically unpopular. In June, having been unable to decisively defeat the Vietnamese communists, the Johnson Administration raised the deployment of U.S. service members to 448,000.¹² The war seemed to have no end in sight. By November, various groups on the American Left began calling for an end to the war. The SDS started a national campaign to target defense contractor and intelligence agency recruitment on college campuses. This campaign gained momentum in the fall of 1967 with a major demonstration at the University of Wisconsin campus, which invited police violence against protestors. SDS's goal was to stop the Dow Chemical company from recruiting engineering students. Leftists despised Dow because the company was a major manufacturer of napalm bombs. Napalm is a chemical mixture of jellied gas that sticks to human skin upon contact and causes serious third-degree burns.¹³ Indiscriminate use of napalm destroyed the Vietnamese countryside and horrifically killed innocent civilians. Napalm was an effective but controversial weapon. The napalm manufacturers were the perfect target for SDS vitriol. Similar demonstrations occurred at campuses across the United States, including the University of Iowa and the University of Illinois.

¹¹ "Smith Gives His Reasons for Burning Draft Card," *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 3rd, 1965.

¹² "Vietnam War Campaigns," Vietnam War Campaigns, U.S. Army Center of Military History, accessed October 23, 2023, https://history.army.mil/html/reference/army_flag/vn.html.

¹³ "Napalm and the Dow Chemical Company," PBS, accessed October 19, 2023.

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/two-days-in-october-dow-chemical-and-use-napalm/>.

In November 1967, U.S. Marine Corps representatives arrived at the University of Iowa to recruit students for its officer corps. To protest these efforts, local SDS students blocked the east entrance of the Iowa Memorial Union leading to the Job Placement Office. Campus security officers intervened to allow students with legitimate appointments with Marine recruiters to access the building. The crowd of demonstrators was small at first, but it grew large enough over the day to overwhelm the campus security lines, forcing the officers to retreat. Iowa City law enforcement also had to contend with counter-protestors who sought a confrontation with anti-war demonstrators. These counter-protestors included State Senator Tom Riley (R-Cedar Rapids), who was arrested for disorderly conduct but he insisted that he was there to prevent a riot, along with football players and fraternity members.¹⁴ One student reported seeing a protestor getting beaten by a star football player and a prominent fraternity member.¹⁵ Unarmed and lacking the power of arrest, campus security retreated to make way for Iowa City police, who made arrests without the use of force. One of the arrestees commented that “these were the nicest cops I’ve ever been arrested by.”¹⁶ This restraint, however, would be notably absent when Dow Chemical came to town.

The Dow Chemical Company arrived in December 1967 to be confronted by a group of well-organized protestors equipped with walkie-talkies and megaphones.¹⁷ The objective was to defeat the police in an attritional battle and negate the advantages of law enforcement by exhausting them. Local papers described the demonstrations as a “well-planned and well-organized affair involving elements of urban guerrilla tactics.”¹⁸ The police response was

¹⁴ “Marines Land, 108 Canned,” *The Daily Iowan*, November 2, 1967, 3.

¹⁵ John Leggett, “Metamorphosis of the Campus Radical,” *The New York Times*, January 30, 1972, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/01/30/archives/metamorphosis-of-the-campus-radical-campus-radical.html?searchResultPosition=105>.

¹⁶ Iowa Alumni Review, “Confrontation”, 3, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 4.

¹⁸ “Won’t Tolerate Disturbances,” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, December 6, 1967.

impeded by a bulldozer, which accidentally cut phone lines that led to the campus buildings the police used as their command post. This led to confusion and uncoordinated actions law enforcement. Demonstrators strongly condemned the police's use of mace, clubs, and tear gas to break up the demonstration. The Marine Corps and Dow protests were notable due to the response of local law enforcement and the mass arrests of protestors. The Marine Corps protests were more peaceful because the protestors lacked a coherent plan and organization. The protestors were more organized for the Dow Chemical protests and wanted to cause a police overreaction, leading to a publicity boon that could bring support for the anti-war cause.

The 1968 U.S. Presidential Election was a referendum on the Johnson Administration's Vietnam policies. The Democratic Party's anti-war faction supported primary challengers to oppose the incumbent president. One of these candidates was Minnesota Senator Eugene McCarthy, an outspoken opponent of the war who came within seven points of upsetting the incumbent President in the New Hampshire Democratic primary. This caused Johnson to not seek re-election in 1968 and it galvanized anti-war youth to support McCarthy. The movement became known as Get Clean for Gene,¹⁹ where young campaign volunteers would shed their counterculture appearances and get haircuts. This push for youth to participate in the system was short-lived, McCarthy was defeated in the Democratic primaries by Vice President Hubert Humphrey. The victory of a Johnson allied candidate led to an outbreak of protests at the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. A coalition of McCarthy supporters and leftists wanted to convey their grievances to the Democratic establishment.

The demonstrations in Chicago quickly devolved into a police riot. Chicago Mayor Richard Daley insisted that lawlessness would not be tolerated and had the Chicago Police Department break up the demonstrations by any means necessary. Police used batons, shotgun

¹⁹ Tim Pugmire, "Getting 'Clean for Gene,'" MPR News, July 13, 2019, <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2006/11/20/mccarthy2a>.

butts, and tear gas against the demonstrators, the situation deteriorated into a battle in the streets of Chicago.²⁰ The crowd started chanting “the whole world is watching” as journalists and T.V. news crews documented the carnage that occurred outside the Democratic Convention.²¹ The failure of an anti-war candidate to secure the Democratic nomination and the police brutality outside the convention radicalized many anti-war and New Left activists.

Richard Nixon was elected in 1968, and he promised to end the war by achieving “peace with honor”. Many activists felt that Nixon’s strategy was fundamentally no different than Lyndon Johnson’s. Activists decided to launch a nationwide general strike against the war and wanted the strikers to focus on local anti-war activism. A group called the Vietnam Moratorium Committee sent out a press release calling for the moratorium to start on October 15, 1969.²² In Iowa City, an estimated 6,000 people gathered on the Pentacrest in a rally to support the nationwide moratorium. That day, the class attendance was down fifty percent, according to a *Daily Iowan* poll and professors that did hold class held open discussions on Vietnam.²³ Law enforcement was notably absent from the rally because it was entirely peaceful.

On April 27, 1970, an explosion rocked the Campus Record shop on Dubuque Street, causing \$10,000 in damage and shattering more than 20 windows.²⁴ Iowa City police brought in FBI and U.S. Army experts to investigate the blast. A homemade bomb had been placed in a trash can and detonated using an electronic device. It is unclear who detonated the bomb or why. Nobody claimed responsibility for the blast, and the perpetrators were never apprehended. The April 27th bombing was small by national standards, especially considering this was at the height of the Weather Underground’s domestic terrorist campaign. The bombing in Iowa City

²⁰ Rick Perlstein, *Nixonland: America's Second Civil War and the Divisive Legacy of Richard Nixon, 1965-1972* (Simon & Schuster, 2009), 313.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 324.

²² Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 418.

²³ “University Pauses for Moratorium,” *The Daily Iowan*, October 16, 1969.

²⁴ Penny Ward, “Investigation Started Into Downtown Blast,” *The Daily Iowan*, April 28, 1970.

was not connected to the Weather Underground but local leftists may have come to the same conclusion: the United States was beyond reform. Nonetheless, this was a significant event for Iowa City, demonstrating that some political extremists were willing to employ violence to achieve their aims and were unconcerned about collateral damage.

Cambodian Invasion and the Student Strike

On April 30, 1970, President Richard Nixon announced that U.S. and South Vietnamese forces would launch a ground offensive from South Vietnam into neighboring Cambodia. Although Cambodia was officially a neutral nation in the Indochina conflict, which prevented American and South Vietnamese forces from operating inside its borders. This did not stop Nixon from ordering the secret bombing of Cambodia starting in 1969.²⁵ The bombing was unable to stop the flow of men and material into South Vietnam and the incursion aimed to destroy Vietnamese logistics bases located on the Cambodian side of the border. This is where the North Vietnamese allegedly organized their forces free from enemy ground incursions.²⁶ The goal of the invasion was to deny the North Vietnamese their Cambodian sanctuary.

The Nixon administration used the Cambodian campaign as a tactic to force North Vietnam to peace terms. A key component of this strategy was Vietnamization, a program announced in 1969 whereby the U.S. forces would withdraw at a steady rate while the South Vietnamese would become the primary combat force in Vietnam. The Cambodian operation was meant to demonstrate the effectiveness of the South Vietnamese while impeding the Communist ability to amass men and material within Cambodia. American opponents of the war saw the invasion as an unnecessary escalation of an already unpopular war that was supposed to be winding down.²⁷

²⁵ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 362.

²⁶ Nixon and Buchanan, "Address to the Nation."

²⁷ Howard B. Means, *67 Shots: Kent State and the End of American Innocence* (Da Capo Press, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2016), 5.

University of Iowa students took to the streets on the night of April 30 and clashed with campus security and local police. These students were not protesting the Cambodian invasion but the alleged ill-treatment of students engaging in a water fight outside of the Quadrangle dormitory. The water fight had evolved into an abortive “panty raid,” culminating with a melee between students and police outside of the Iowa City Civic Center.²⁸ Common on American college campuses of the era, panty raids were spontaneous protests against the restrictive gender-segregated dorms and curfew policies.²⁹ Responding to the water fight, a patrol car allegedly hit a male student on crutches. A group of students pelted a UPI photojournalist and professor with rocks, assuming the two men were taking photographs on behalf of the university to identify students and discipline them through official university channels.³⁰

Friday, May 1, marked the third annual celebration of Gentle Thursday, an anti-war protest that was notable for its peaceful disposition. The target of this demonstration was the campus ROTC program, a typical target for campus leftists. That made the Gentle Thursday protest particularly notable because it usually coincided with Governor’s Day, as an event where the Iowa Governor attended a 45-minute ROTC parade, an award ceremony, and held a press conference. In 1968, SDS had disrupted the ceremony by handing a petition to Governor Harold Hughes after the ROTC organizers included a 15-minute time block for anti-war protestors to voice their opinions.³¹ Governor Hughes was impressed that the protestors aired their views in a respectful manner.³²

²⁸ Lowell Forte, “UI Students Clash With Police,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 1, 1970.

²⁹ Holly V. Scott, *Younger Than That Now: The Politics of Age in the 1960s* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2016), 57.

³⁰ Lowell Forte, “UI Students Clash With Police.”

³¹ Dennis Bates, and Suzanne Olson, “Do Your Thing Day’ To Be Mixed Up, Busy,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 1, 1968.

³² Dennis Bates, “Gentle Governor’s Day Happened - Yes It Did,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 2, 1968.

The peaceful demonstration did not last. SDS planned to crash the ROTC awards ceremony.³³ When demonstrators gathered at the University Recreation building to voice their opposition to ROTC, they found locked doors to protect a Joint Army-Air Force ROTC awards ceremony from disruption. When campus security opened the doors to let in an Air Force cadet, protestors used this momentary lapse in security to charge into the building. A confrontation between security and protesters ensued. One campus security officer was admitted to the hospital with a cut on his forehead. Security officers eventually retreated and allowed the protestors to occupy the building. This occupation continued only for a short time after school administrators threatened to use Iowa City police and the highway patrol to retake the building.³⁴

The University of Iowa demonstration coincided with protests across the nation, as New Left campus activists called for a nationwide protest campaign –a “National Student Strike” to protest the invasion of Cambodia. The campaign started at Yale, during a mass meeting convened by SDS. Editorial boards at eleven college newspapers proclaimed their support for the student strike, which spread to colleges across the nation.³⁵ The scale of anti-war demonstrations was unprecedented.

While Iowa City remained calm in the aftermath of Gentle Thursday, protests broke out at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Kent State University, Ohio State University, and many others. The Kent State protests stood out because it was not an elite university or a flagship state school, but rather an average Midwestern school in eastern Ohio, yet it experienced a massive outbreak of protests following the Cambodian invasion. Ohio's Governor, James Rhodes, who was embroiled in a competitive Republican U.S. Senate primary against Congressman Robert Taft, tried to display his law-and-order credentials by deploying the National Guard to counter

³³ Mike McNamara and Karen Good, “Anti-ROTC Protestors, Campus Cops Meet in Gentle Thursday Disturbance,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 2, 1970.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 409.

the protests at Kent State.³⁶ This decision impacted much more than the primary election and had national consequences.

On Monday, May 4, after a weekend of protests, Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on a crowd of student protesters after the protesters allegedly disregarded an order to disperse. The Ohio Adjutant General, Sylvester Del Corso, said that the soldiers opened fire in response to a sniper firing from a rooftop.³⁷ The Guard fired sixty-seven shots in total, killing four students and prompting a massive student response on campuses across the country. The invasion of Cambodia had caused protests, but the shooting at Kent State amplified the discontent.³⁸

In Iowa City, students took to the streets late Monday night after a rally, marching on the local National Guard armory and the Iowa City Civic Center. Student activist Manny Zulakis recalled the march on the National Guard armory: “That night, the most violent in any demonstration in Iowa City – May 4, 1970– we marched on the National Guard Armory.”³⁹ This march was completely spontaneous, starting at the Rienow and Quad dormitories, slowly gathering more people as the crowd moved across Iowa City to the National Guard Armory. Some students thought it was a panty raid heading south until they arrived at the Armory. Every window in the Armory was broken and in the words of protestor Bob Burchfield, “They trashed the Armory.”⁴⁰ Afterward, the crowd moved into Downtown Iowa City to cause further destruction.

Protestors vandalized and looted local businesses. Some students tried but failed to prevent the crowd of looters from damaging property throughout the city, and local law enforcement was slow to respond because there was no warning of a demonstration.⁴¹ The

³⁶ Means, *67 Shots*, 135.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Lowell Forte, “Windows Broken Tuesday,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 6, 1970.

crowds shattered Iowa Book's windows on Clinton Street. This started a two-hour long battle with the police, each taking turns charging at each other attempting to win control over Clinton Street. Zulakis, a committed member of SDS from Cedar Rapids,⁴² said this was the angriest he had ever seen a crowd of demonstrators.⁴³ Students shouted, "The blood is on your hands, the people that were killed in Kent State tonight!" With the help of reinforcements from other agencies, including the Iowa Highway Patrol, Iowa City Police Department, Scott County deputies, Linn County deputies, and Johnson County deputies marched through the streets wearing full riot gear, arresting fifty-one protestors who refused to disperse.

Law enforcement transported the arrestees to the Iowa City Civic Center, where they waited to be placed in jail and charged with various crimes. While the booking process was underway, a large crowd of protestors descended on the jail, aiming to free the prisoners and forcing a response by the Johnson County deputies and Iowa Highway Patrolman⁴⁴. Sheriff Maynard Schneider recalled the incident in the 1994 documentary, *Those Were The Days*.⁴⁵ According to Sheriff Schneider, a crowd of 3,000 protestors descended on the Courthouse and the situation devolved after he attempted to get the crowd to disperse. The *Daily Iowan* reported that the crowd moved toward the line of law enforcement surrounding the building three times, and each time they were forced to retreat in response to charges by police.⁴⁶ The crowd threw rocks at the courthouse, damaging the building and shattering windows. Two sheriff's deputies were injured, and the gathering was not broken up until 3:45 a.m. with the arrival of Iowa Highway Patrolmen and deputies from both Linn and Scott counties. The combined forces of law

⁴² Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Forte, "Windows Broken Tuesday."

⁴⁵ *Those Were The Days: The Anti-Vietnam War Protests in Iowa City 1968-1973*. DVD. United States, 1994, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁴⁶ Forte, "Windows Broken Tuesday."

enforcement marched to the intersection of Clinton and Washington Street to finally suppress the protest at around 4 a.m.

According to the accounts of protestors, there was a group of troublemakers who caused the destruction downtown and escaped accountability. We do not have a good understanding of who these troublemakers were, but many have their theories. Some activists tried to blame outside agitators, but there is conflicting evidence on whether these outsiders existed. Reverend Ron Osborne recalled picking up a hitchhiker from Madison, Wisconsin who said that he was there for “the revolution” and that he could kill with either hand.⁴⁷ Major John Wilson of the Iowa Highway Patrol responded to the protests as a young trooper and he also believed that outside agitators were the main problem, not local students.⁴⁸ Rumors about outside agitators were a common theme throughout the May protests. The Iowa Alumni Association released a report debunking claims that the University of Iowa campus would be overrun by “Black Panther and/or Weathermen and/or students from (a) Wisconsin, (b) Kent State, (c) the college of your choice.”⁴⁹ The protests were a dynamic situation, thus allowing rumors to spread easily and distort the nature of the demonstration.

The demonstrators who were arrested were protesting peacefully and actively trying to prevent the destruction of property. According to one activist, the police were unable to distinguish between violent individuals and legitimate protestors: “the police don’t even have enough sense, don’t even know, can’t even spot individual differences of whatever between people.”⁵⁰ Activists felt that law enforcement was applying unfair scrutiny to peaceful demonstrators, and this allowed for the actual perpetrators of the destruction to go unpunished.

⁴⁷ *Those Were The Days*. DVD.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ Iowa Alumni Association, *Campus/Capitol Contact*, June 1970, vol 1, 5, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁵⁰ Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*.

The following day, May 6, was more peaceful with a 2,000-person rally on the eastern side of the Old Capitol. The crowd stretched from the steps of the Capitol all the way into Clinton Street.⁵¹ Speakers included Associate Professor of History, Robert R. Dykstra, who loudly condemned the invasion of Cambodia and what he saw as the rise of fascism in the United States. Dykstra was appalled by Nixon's tendency to assert that he knew the best course of action in Vietnam. "We've been told that the people in Washington know, well they don't know."⁵² Dykstra's rhetoric demonstrated the deepening frustration over the Vietnam War among Nixon opponents in the aftermath of Kent State and Cambodia. Nixon invaded Cambodia, expanding an unpopular war, and four students were killed at Kent State. In the minds of many people, United States appeared to be on the pathway to an authoritarian regime because of the disregard for the objections of its citizens.

On May 7, UI President Willard "Sandy" Boyd canceled Governor's Day, scheduled for a week later. The situation on campus had deteriorated, and it was not safe for Governor Ray to visit. Ray spoke to the press and said, "It must be clear to all that this cancellation involves a surrender of principle in the interest of public safety. It must be clear to all that the price we pay for this surrender is beyond calculation."⁵³ The head of Air Force ROTC, Colonel Spiva, agreed the cancellation would alleviate the threat of violence. "I think students rights were violated," he added.⁵⁴ ROTC cadre wanted the program's award ceremony to continue unmolested by protestors and were concerned about the survival of the program on campus. Air Force ROTC cadet Gary Seamans was against the cancellation of the award ceremony calling it "one of the poorest showings of respect in the country," asserting that even if the protestors disagreed with

⁵¹ Bill Israel, "Indochina Policy Criticized at Rally," *The Daily Iowan*, May 6, 1970.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Staff Writers, "Governor's Day Canceled," *The Daily Iowan*, May 8, 1970.

⁵⁴ "ROTC," *Iowa '70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*, 30, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

the politics of Governor Ray or the involvement of the U.S. in Indochina, the award ceremony should be respected.⁵⁵

The night of May 7, students gathered at the Pentacrest for another rally. The situation started out calm. Robert Engel, Assistant to the President, estimated that the crowd was anywhere from 1,000 to 2,000 students. A small group of radical activists from an unknown group broke into the Old Capitol and occupied it, claiming that this was the start of “the revolution” and they were calling to “burn the (expletive) down.”⁵⁶ Engel noticed a clear separation between the large, peaceful crowd and the small group of radicals in the Capitol. Engel and Dean Philip Hubbard, the Dean of Academic Affairs, decided to call the police to arrest the extremists and prevent trouble from occurring in the future. Iowa City city manager, Frank Smiley, and three shotgun-toting police officers arrived at the scene, arresting three Capitol occupiers and clearing the rest out of the Capitol.⁵⁷ Smiley decided to release the three men, to the chagrin of the arresting officers.⁵⁸ Engel and Hubbard were disappointed that more radicals were not arrested and that the crowd continued to roam around the Pentacrest.

Around midnight, the “revolutionaries” returned to the Old Capitol, reoccupying and vandalizing it. Concurrently, a crowd of peaceful demonstrators had gathered on the Old Capitol steps. Law enforcement officers finally arrived at 1:30am. Captain Lyle Dickinson of the Iowa Highway Patrol, the ranking officer on the scene, commanded the interagency task force consisting of over 100 police officers including Iowa Highway Patrolmen, Iowa City Police, and Johnson and Linn County deputies.⁵⁹ Smiley asked Dickinson to not arrest the protestors because they were peaceful, but Dickinson was there to clear the Old Capitol of protestors, and Smiley

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Robert Engel, “A Description of Events Which Occurred on or About The Pentacrest Area on May 7 and 8, 1970,” 2, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ “Officials Show Strain from Long Week,” *The Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 8, 1970.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 2.

had no authority over him.⁶⁰ No distinction was made between the small group that had entered the Old Capitol and the peaceful crowd demonstrating on its steps. Dickinson ordered the crowd to disperse and around 200 to 300 ignored these orders, continuing to sing and chant on the Old Capitol steps. These students were quietly arrested by the police and transported for booking.⁶¹ No force was necessary to arrest the protestors.

The mass arrests of the protestors were controversial, considering that a majority were peaceful and only a small group had vandalized the Old Capitol. President Boyd was in Des Moines on the night of May 7 and ordered the mass arrest. Local journalists suspected that Boyd ordered the arrests because of exaggerated reports about the student incursions into the Old Capitol and a false report of arson.⁶² The Columbia University protests of 1968 were a fresh memory for college administrators nationwide. During the Columbia protests, students occupied five buildings for a week, and student protestors were forcibly removed by the NYPD. The NYPD used heavy-handed methods to end the protests, and the situation devolved into a police riot. The NYPD arrested 712 people and 148 were injured.⁶³ This incident damaged the reputation of Columbia, the coverage of the protests seemed to show the nation on the edge of a youth-led revolution. Capitalizing on the negative publicity, Richard Nixon used the Columbia protests in his campaign speeches as the prime example of university disorder, shoring up his law-and-order rhetoric.⁶⁴ The protests provided a case study of how not to react to a demonstration on campus. College administrators needed to strike a delicate balance in preventing campus protests from becoming lengthy occupations of important buildings while also lowering the chance of a violent confrontation with law enforcement. Given the information

⁶⁰ Engel, "A Description of Events," 6.

⁶¹ Engel, "A Description of Events," 7.

⁶² "Officials Show Strain from Long Week," *The Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 8, 1970, 2.

⁶³ "1968: Columbia in Crisis," Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions, 1968: Columbia in Crisis, accessed October 25, 2023, <https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968/timeline>.

⁶⁴ Perlstein, *Nixonland*, 265.

President Boyd had that night, arresting agitators and vandals was an understandable course of action, but the information had been false.

The next day, Boyd apologized for the mass arrest, stating that he was under the impression that the Old Capitol was being occupied.⁶⁵ Boyd then attended a rally at the Pentacrest and spoke to a crowd of about 400 to 500 students. This was the first time Boyd had made a public statement since the arrests. Boyd explained his actions on the night of May 8 and reaffirmed that he intended to keep the University open and that he could not ban ROTC from the University.⁶⁶ Although the University would remain open, students who wanted to skip classes to protest would not be punished because that was a matter of “personal conscience,” but Boyd could not guarantee that same leniency for exams.⁶⁷ The aftermath of the mass arrest at the Old Capitol shows Boyd’s willingness to admit he was wrong and his commitment to keeping the University open.

The culminating event of the turbulent week was the destruction of the Old Armory Temporary, nicknamed the “Big Pink.” Many protestors agreed that after the Old Armory burned down, the protest activity on campus calmed down.⁶⁸ It was an old building constructed during World War II and a prime target for arsonists. In the early morning of May 9, 1970, the “Big Pink” was consumed in flame. Many blamed arsonists, although the exact source of the blaze was never determined. History professor Stow Persons remarked that the “arsonists showed a commendable taste in selecting buildings that were so readily expendable.”⁶⁹ The “Big Pink” had a wooden frame, the University was looking at replacing the building anyway, and no one was

⁶⁵ Mark Rohner, “Bad Data Blamed For Mass Arrests,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 9, 1970.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*.

⁶⁹ Stow Persons, *Thirty Years At The University of Iowa 1950 - 1980*. (University of Iowa Press, 1982), 16.

hurt during the fire. The fire did concern many people in the University community that President Boyd needed to de-escalate the tensions on campus.

The Old Armory arson was the final straw for President Boyd and the University administration. SDS was calling for the University to be closed in support of the national student strike. Campus conservatives, on the other hand, wanted the school to be kept open at all costs. President Boyd, who sympathized with the protestors, needed to assess his options. He could close the University down and risk being perceived as bowing to anarchists, or he could crackdown on the dissent and risk the chance of another Kent State. Boyd reaffirmed his commitment to keeping the University open in a statement issued on May 10: "the University must represent the interests of all, no matter what their stand on the war . . . the University, therefore, will remain open and its usual academic functions will be maintained."⁷⁰ Boyd chose to leave the University open, but he gave students the option to leave the University early if they felt unsafe.

Boyd gave the students three options: a) take the grades they had as of May 3; b) take a pass/fail grade for every course; or c) take grades of incomplete and finish their work later.⁷¹ There were issues with the implementation of this program. Some professors wanted students to complete the required coursework before leaving for the summer, and there were no accommodations for students living in the dorms. Dean Hubbard was quick to react to these issues by clarifying that the options were for students who feared for their safety only and most students left campus taking the grades they had as of May 3.⁷² Many student's parents made this choice for them because they feared for student unrest.

⁷⁰ Statement by Willard L. Boyd, 1970-05-12, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² "Boyd's Options", *Iowa '70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

According to Manny Zulakis, a group of radical leftists collaborated with Black Panthers to steal 20 cases of dynamite from the Rock Island Armory for use during radical actions.⁷³ This story cannot be corroborated, the sole evidence is an interview with Manny Zulakis. The dynamite heist happened in May 1970, the Black Panthers were from Des Moines and the other activists were from Iowa City. The plan was to blow up the National Guard armory in Iowa City, but the plan was called off because the armory was full of cops and the group did not want to kill anyone, so they never ended up using the dynamite. One stick did go off on Saturday, May 9 in between Rienow I and II but that was the extent of it. The Rock Island Armory heist is an example of revolutionary activists taking real-world action and planning to use violence to achieve their aims.

Conservatives React to the Disorder

Local conservatives swiftly responded to the violence of May 5. An emergency joint meeting of the Iowa City City Council and local law enforcement convened. There, Sheriff Schneider criticized the University, saying “The time for dilly-dallying is over, the time has come for action.”⁷⁴ Schnieder was angry about the injuries that law enforcement officers sustained during the outbreak of violence. Two Johnson County deputies suffered broken legs, along with unconfirmed reports of injured officers from other agencies.⁷⁵ This led the City Council to pass an ordinance to ensure that law enforcement felt properly supported with the legal instruments necessary to maintain order.

Sheriff Schneider and Mayor Loren Hickerson were two prominent opponents of the anti-war demonstrators throughout the Vietnam era. Both men personified the values of their respective generations. Both were World War II veterans who viewed the Baby Boom generation

⁷³ Bennett, *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*.

⁷⁴ “City Council Gives Mayor Emergency Curfew Power,” *The Daily Iowan*, May 6, 1970.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

as soft and shirking their responsibilities of citizenship. A local described the situation as “a bunch of long-haired hippies attempting to get out of the draft.”⁷⁶ The prevailing attitudes of many conservatives at the time were that protestors were only concerned with their own physical safety and were only protesting the war because they were afraid of serving themselves. This was offensive to the older generations because of the high rates of military service amongst older American men during World War II, Korea, and peacetime draft during the 1950s and early 60s. Military service was a rite of passage for American men, and the “hippies” were refusing to participate in an essential display of citizenship.

Mayor Loren Hickerson issued a statement on May 5, parroting President Nixon’s “silent majority” rhetoric and strongly condemning the violence that took place the previous evening: “I hope this statement will speak for the overwhelming majority of Iowa City residents, of all ages, who reject violence against people and property as an expression of social protest.”⁷⁷ Hickerson displayed the feelings of contempt that political conservatives had for the protestors, seeing them as a vocal minority who demonstrated a threat to order and the American system of government. Unlike President Nixon and many national conservative figures, Mayor Hickerson addressed the concerns people may have had about the overuse of police force, arguing that it was in the best interest of the public to ensure that order is maintained within the city, but that the role of order must not be solely the responsibility of the authorities; public collaboration was necessary. Hickerson recognized that pure force was not the only means to ensure compliance and that there was also a need to address the concerns of the protestors.

Johnson County Sheriff Maynard Schneider was known as a paternalistic figure who was loyal to his men but also willing to engage in a dialogue with activists. He was not a law

⁷⁶ “Townpeople,” *Iowa '70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*, 28, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁷⁷ “Statement to Mayor Lowell Hickerson, 1970-05,” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

enforcement professional by trade, but instead owned a bowling alley in Rockwell City, Iowa after his serving in the Marine Corps during World War II. Elected as Johnson County Sheriff in 1964, Schneider served in that position through the entirety of the Vietnam War era.⁷⁸ In the documentary, *Those Were The Days*, local peace activist Mori Constantino spoke about how Maynard Schnieder was the only law enforcement official who was willing to listen to the activists' grievances after the violent police response to the Dow Chemical protests⁷⁹. Constantino, a Japanese American internment camp survivor⁸⁰, was very critical of the law enforcement response to protests in Iowa City: "the students were regarded as pampered children, the police were outraged at being called names."⁸¹ Constantino contrasted Sheriff Schneider's approach with that of Scott County Sheriff, William "Blackie" Strout, who was known for his heavy-handed approach to enforcing the law and whose deputies were notorious for brutalizing protestors. Scott County deputies responded to both the 1967 and 1970 protests.

In the Spring of 1970, the Iowa National Guard was activated and brought to Iowa City in case the situation devolved further after the mass arrests at the Old Capitol. Sheriff Schneider, especially, felt that the local and state law enforcement authorities could no longer maintain order without the help of the National Guard. The problem with the National Guard was that they were not professional soldiers, and most units received no crowd control training. Governor Ray preferred using the Highway Patrol because they had better crowd control training.⁸² The Kent State massacre showed the problem with relying on untrained National Guardsmen to control crowds. One Ohio guardsman, who had been in the National Guard for five years, was so poorly

⁷⁸ "Obituary information for Maynard Eugene Schneider," March 13, 2005.

<https://www.lensingfuneral.com/obituaries/Maynard-Eugene-Schneider?obId=43386>.

⁷⁹ *Those Were The Days*. DVD.

⁸⁰ Riordan, Elizabeth. "University Libraries." News Announcements, August 6, 2023.

<https://blog.lib.uiowa.edu/speccoll/2021/04/16/an-activists-legacy-ayako-mori-costantino/>.

⁸¹ *Ibid*.

⁸² Lowell Forte, "Guard Troops Outside City", *The Daily Iowan*, May 9, 1970.

trained that the first time he had ever fired his weapon was at the May 4 shooting.⁸³ Governor Ray and President Boyd sought to avoid another Kent State at all costs.

The National Guard was activated because Major General Joseph May, commander of the Iowa National Guard, exercised his command authority with support from Governor Ray and activated the 34th Military Police Battalion.⁸⁴ May stated that “it was my prerogative to move the troops in so I moved them.”⁸⁵ Despite the National Guard moving into the Johnson County area, President Boyd emphasized calm. “I have urged restraint, I have urged restraint, I have urged restraint... and I continue to urge restraint.”⁸⁶ It was clear that the National Guard was in Johnson County for a worst-case scenario, and President Boyd did not want to escalate the situation on campus by deploying them without good reason.

The U.S. military's reaction to the invasion of Cambodia and the Kent State shooting was mixed. The Armed Forces were made up of individual Americans and soldiers who both supported the anti-war movement and condemned it. A soldier from the 2nd Battalion, 7th Cavalry of the elite 1st Cavalry Division was quoted saying “People voted for Nixon so we could get out of this mess, now we're involved in two wars instead of one.”⁸⁷ This quote was printed in an anti-war pamphlet, showing readers that even active-duty service members were disillusioned with the war. This opinion, however, was not universally shared by all members of the military,

Many members of the military were still committed to fighting in Indochina. Jim Webb, future U.S. Senator and Marine combat veteran, heard cheers when an enlisted marine wrote “National Guard 4, Kent State 0” on a blackboard.⁸⁸ Many military members felt that college students were privileged and able to escape serving in the military because of deferments. This

⁸³ Means, Howard B. *67 shots: Kent State and the end of American innocence*, 198.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ “G.I. Reaction to Our Wars,” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁸⁸ Means, *67 Shots*, 136.

feeling along with the protests did not make military servicemen sympathetic towards the protestors.

The University Left, the Media, and Non-Violent Protest

Retrospectively, New Left activists complained about the media's depiction of the movement, arguing that negative media coverage led to conservative backlash. In Iowa City, local activists objected to the media's fixation on images of the broken windows in Downtown Iowa City and the police clad in riot gear, not the students intervening to stop the destruction of private property.⁸⁹ By depicting student anti-war protestors as violent far-left extremists, the New Left advanced a theory that they were "stabbed in the back". This theory was the inverse of the Vietnam stab-in-the-back myth that gained popularity during the campaign of Ronald Reagan in 1980.⁹⁰ The Vietnam stab in the back myth argues that the United States lost the Vietnam War because of internal political factors. The myth asserts that anti-war demonstrators, liberal politicians, and the media turned the American public against a war that was winnable. The New Left stab-in-the-back theory is analogous because it blames the media for sparking right-wing backlash, leading to conservative electoral dominance in the 1980s.

Archival footage from local Cedar Rapids new station KCRG shows various scenes from the May protests that support the claims of Iowa City activists. Some of the most striking footage is the scenes of destruction after the night of May 5th.⁹¹ There were images of boarded-up shops from Downtown Iowa City, stores like Iowa Book and Supply. There is a shot of the National Guard armory with broken windows after being trashed by the student. Johnson County deputies wore riot gear and brandished batons, and a National Guard helicopter flew overhead. Images

⁸⁹ *Those Were The Days*. DVD.

⁹⁰ Sandra Scanlon, *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism*. (University of Massachusetts Press, 2013), 3.

⁹¹ "Student Unrest," KCRG Collection, May 4th 1970. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

like these support the activists' claims that the media only focuses on the violent aspects of the protests.

National news media likewise focused on the sensational. Transcripts from ABC News show that the national media covered the college campuses with the most violent or turbulent protests.⁹² The University of Wisconsin, Yale, and Kent State were all featured on ABC News broadcasts, while colleges like the University of Iowa were overlooked because the scene appeared less dramatic and newsworthy. Campuses, where the police and National Guard clashed with protestors, were more exciting for audiences. There was serious tension in Iowa City, but the local coverage was more balanced than the national news media. The local media portrayed the protestors and law enforcement in a more nuanced manner. Footage of violent protests plays directly into Nixonian law and order rhetoric. Like the protests, not all news coverages emphasized the violent protests.

While the KCRG footage showed the aftermath of the May 5 downtown clashes, it also showed the intricacies of the protests at the University of Iowa. KCRG anchor Mike Scott conducted interviews with both locals and Captain Lyle Dickinson of the Highway Patrol. In one interview, Dickinson praised the arrestees. "There's only one thing that I can say, I felt really that the students reacted in a real commendable manner."⁹³ Captain Dickinson recognized that a majority of the students protesting were peaceful and that only a small minority were causing trouble. Dickinson wished he didn't have to arrest the students, but he was following orders. The Lyle Dickinson interview was not the only favorable coverage the students received from KCRG.

⁹² American Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts Collection, Box 2, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

⁹³ "Student Unrest," State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Mike Scott covered the mass rally on the Pentacrest where he emphasized the peaceful nature of the majority of the protests. “As opposed to the demonstrations early on Tuesday morning when 51 persons were arrested, demonstrations on Tuesday evening were peaceful. Professors and students kept their commitment to non-violence.”⁹⁴ Unlike what many activists claim, the focus was not solely on the agitators and extremists. The KCRG coverage showed local audiences all aspects of the protests.

An important component of the protests is how students and faculty took steps to control violence themselves. Student monitors were created, and students volunteered and wore white armbands to police the crowd and isolate any violent agitators. In an interview conducted by KCRG, a female student described the role student monitors played during the looting of Downtown. “Also at Iowa Book and Supply bookstore, after they had broken the windows, there were a couple of students who had stood up in front of the broken windows and they prohibited anyone coming near and throwing books out. They did some of this but they did help, you know, from completely looting the store.”⁹⁵ While student monitors were unable to completely stop violence from occurring, their existence shows that demonstrators were not acting as a monolithic group and most did not condone the destruction of property in Downtown Iowa City.

Monitors also sought to combat misinformation, this was in response to a rumor that right-wing vigilantes were coming from rural Iowa to put down the protests themselves.⁹⁶ Although the posse of rural Iowans descending on the protests never happened, student monitors focused their efforts on acting as a buffer between law enforcement and demonstrators. They also manned first aid stations and continued to control the spread of rumors. The existence of the

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Leggett, “Metamorphosis of the Campus Radical.”

student monitors at the protests is an example of how students acted amongst themselves to lower tensions.⁹⁷

Reformers and nonviolent activists constituted most of the protestors at the University of Iowa campus in May 1970. These students and faculty were fed up with the war and saw the Invasion of Cambodia as an unprecedented escalation of a war that President Nixon had promised to end. One anonymous student wrote about why they were arrested at the Old Capitol on the morning of May 8 in a piece titled "About the Bust." The anonymous student defended their actions and expressed frustration with the American political system and the war in Vietnam. They were arrested by the police because they were tired, "I was tired of Vietnam and Cambodia and every other manifestation of imperialism; I was tired of seeing my friends killed, jailed, exiled, or turned into murderers for a cause no one can quite believe in anymore."⁹⁸ This student represented the majority who were protesting because they were tired of the Vietnam War and seeing people they knew die in an unjust war. They were not using the war to develop a "workers-student alliance" for the eventual overthrow of the United States government, like some self-proclaimed revolutionaries. Instead, these students wanted to work within the existing political framework to end the war.

Conservatives were quick to frame the students as anti-American wannabe revolutionaries who deserved to be on the receiving end of police violence. Sandra Goldberg, a University of Iowa student from Sioux City, wrote to her hometown paper to refute this portrayal of University of Iowa students. She wrote that the student groups had no centralized leadership and only a small group were advocating violence. Goldberg condemned the response by authorities, arguing that they should instead listen to the concerns of the students. "We are not self styled revolutionaries or bums. We are your sons and daughters. If sending in troops is our

⁹⁷ "First-Aid Tent," *Iowa '70*, 18.

⁹⁸ "About The Bust," *Iowa '70*, 11.

parents' answer to our cry, we cannot listen.”⁹⁹ Goldberg wanted to older generations to understand that dissent is different than disloyalty and the backlash against the protests was because of the actions of a minority of protestors. The overwhelming majority of students wanted to have an open and honest discussion about the issues facing the nation.

Protestors who sought to reform the American system organized for Amendment 609 or the McGovern-Hatfield Amendment, a constitutional amendment proposed by Senator McGovern (D-South Dakota) and Senator Hatfield (R-Oregon) to end the U.S. involvement in Vietnam by 1971.¹⁰⁰ Iowa Senator Harold Hughes and other prominent anti-war politicians supported the amendment. Organizers united with the University of Iowa students to travel the state and gather support for the amendment after many left the campus before the end of the school year. Advocating for the adoption of the amendment gave committed anti-war students a reform-oriented outlet that aligned with their ideals.

Amendment 609 proponents needed to obtain signatures supporting the amendment from Iowa residents. Many Iowans were troubled with the direction of the United States and the conduct of the war. But they were skeptical of the anti-war movement and were angered by what was occurring on college campuses across the country. A spokesman for the Amendment 609 campaign told a KCRG reporter, “We have of course had some hostile reaction to what students have been doing on campus’s recently, which I think is primarily at this point a matter of education.”¹⁰¹ Amendment 609 activists knew that they would need to need to confront conservatives and Nixon supporters while canvassing around Iowa. The Amendment 609 committee made a comprehensive list of common conservative and pro-war talking points, with

⁹⁹ “A Student’s Plea”, *A Special Report From The University of Iowa*, 4, Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

¹⁰⁰ “Senate Amendment #609,” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

¹⁰¹ “Student Unrest,” State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

ways to best refute them.¹⁰² Although Iowans may have been reluctant to support the amendment, the Amendment 609 activists were committed to having open and honest dialogue with political opponents. The amendment was ultimately unsuccessful but the attempt to change American policy through existing means and channel student's anger toward reform efforts was noble.

SDS called for President Boyd to close the University in support of the student strike, and Boyd refused. The faculty senate passed a non-binding measure calling for the University to not renew its ROTC contract because ROTC was not a legitimate academic program.¹⁰³ A majority of the faculty senate supported the measure, and business professor Bert Schoner argued that the ROTC did not have any academic value and therefore should be removed from the University. Some members of the faculty senate dissented. Law professor Sam Fahr went on record supporting the ROTC program, feeling that the military needed officers sourced from liberal arts schools, not just from technical schools or military academies.¹⁰⁴ This measure was non-binding, but it revealed that the ROTC program was not universally welcomed on the Iowa campus.

Conclusion

The May 1970 protests at the University of Iowa were the culminating event for the local anti-war left movement. The movement ended up losing the momentum that it had gained from Cambodia and Kent State, falling victim to the infighting that had affected the movement throughout its existence. Despite this nationwide outbreak of protest activity, a majority of these protestors were outraged by the invasion of Cambodia and the killing of the students at Kent State. Most were not ideologically committed to some larger left-wing cause, unlike SDS

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Randy Evans, "Faculty Senate Votes Anti-ROTC," *The Daily Iowan*, May 13, 1970.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

members. Mass protest activity at the University of Iowa diminished, even as the United States continued its military involvement in Indochina for another three years.

President Boyd continued his tenure as the university president until 1981. In 1986, a new law school building was built at the University of Iowa and was dedicated in his honor. Inside the front entrance, there is a plaque stating Willard Boyd “had a profound concern for the Individual and an abiding respect for the rule of law.” Boyd’s actions during the 1970 protests demonstrated his commitment to these values. Respect for individual rights and a commitment to order are not mutually exclusive. Both are essential for a functioning democratic system.

Adherence to rigid ideological structures does not lend well to governance in a democracy. Pragmatism and nuance are important because that is how leaders lead most effectively. People who are ideologues rarely govern effectively because political ideologies deal in absolute, black-and-white terms. New Left organizers were unable to effectively mobilize most of the student body for a long-term, systematic protest campaign because their worldview was too extreme. Cynically using the Vietnam War to mobilize for a revolution to overthrow the government was understandably not well received by the wider student body. This played directly into the reactionary, conservative narratives about the New Left that led to a conservative resurgence in the 1970s and 80s.

Students who focused their energies on Amendment 609 and efforts to reform the American political system were more effective. Although they did not enjoy the short-term satisfaction or supposed moral high ground the radicals enjoyed, reform efforts had a chance of succeeding. Organizers who went out and had honest conversations with people about the war did more of a service to this nation than radicals who planned domestic terror campaigns. We should look to honestly address people’s concerns rather than simply condemning what we do not understand.

The lesson of the protests is that even in a polarized environment, cooler heads can prevail. The University of Iowa returned to normalcy, and although the protests were not without tense moments and violence, the conduct of the leaders was commendable. The protest environment was dynamic and ever-changing, but order was restored and the right to protest was upheld. Currently, we live in a country that is divided and we can look to the May 1970 protests at the University of Iowa as a means to ensure that rights are respected, and civil order is maintained.

Bibliography

Published Primary Sources

Nixon, Richard M, and Patrick Buchanan. "Address to the Nation on the Situation in Southeast Asia." April 30, 1970, Santa Barbara, n.d. Accessed 2023.

Newspaper Archives

Bates, Denis. "Gentle Governor's Day Happened - Yes It Did." *The Daily Iowan*. May 2, 1968.

Bates, Denis and Suzanne Olson. "Do Your Thing Day' To Be Mixed Up, Busy." *The Daily Iowan*, May 1, 1968.

"City Council Gives Mayor Emergency Curfew Power." *The Daily Iowan*. May 6, 1970.

Evans, Randy. "Faculty Senate Votes Anti-ROTC." *The Daily Iowan*. May 13, 1970.

Forte, Lowell. "Guard Troops Outside City." *The Daily Iowan*. May 9, 1970.

Forte, Lowell. "UI Students Clash With Police." *The Daily Iowan*. May 1, 1970.

Forte, Lowell. "Windows Broken Tuesday." *The Daily Iowan*. May 6, 1970.

"Governor's Day Canceled." *The Daily Iowan*. May 8, 1970.

Israel, Bill. "Indochina Policy Criticized at Rally." *The Daily Iowan*. May 6, 1970.

Leggett, John. "Metamorphosis of the Campus Radical." *The New York Times*, January 30, 1972. <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/01/30/archives/metamorphosis-of-the-campus-radical-campus-radical.html?searchResultPosition=105>.

"Marines Land, 108 Canned." *The Daily Iowan*. November 2, 1967.

McNamara, Mike. "Protesters May Face Penalties." *The Daily Iowan*. April 21, 1970.

McNamara, Mike and Karen Good. "Anti-ROTC Protestors, Campus Cops Meet in Gentle Thursday Disturbance." *The Daily Iowan*. May 2, 1970.

Rohner, Mark. "Bad Data Blamed For Mass Arrests." *The Daily Iowan*. May 9, 1970.

"Smith Gives His Reasons for Burning Draft Card." *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*. November 3, 1965.

"UI Student Burns Draft Card In Protest of Vietnam Policy." *Iowa City Press Citizen*. October 21, 1965

“University Pauses for Moratorium.” *The Daily Iowan*. October 16, 1969.

Ward, Penny. “Investigation Started Into Downtown Blast.” *The Daily Iowan*. April 28, 1970.

“Won’t Tolerate Disturbances.” *Iowa City Press-Citizen*. December 6, 1967.

Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, University of Iowa Libraries

“About The Bust.” *Iowa ‘70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

American Broadcasting Corporation Transcripts Collection. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“A Student’s Plea.” *A Special Report From The University of Iowa*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

Bennett, Mary. *Student Unrest at the University of Iowa*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“Boyd’s Options.” *Iowa ‘70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries

“Chicago Attacks Are Not SDS,” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

Engel, Robert, “A Description of Events Which Occurred on or About The Pentacrest Area on May 7 and 8, 1970.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“First-Aid Tent.” *Iowa ‘70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“G.I. Reaction to Our Wars.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

Iowa Alumni Association, *Campus/Capitol Contact*. June 1970, Vol I. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

Iowa Alumni Review. “Confrontation.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

Persons, Stow. *Thirty Years At The University of Iowa 1950 - 1980*. University of Iowa Press, 1982.

“Senate Amendment #609.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“Statement to Mayor Lowell Hickerson, 1970-05.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives, The University of Iowa Libraries.

“Statement by Willard L. Boyd, 1970-05-12.” Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

Those Were The Days: The Anti-Vietnam War Protests in Iowa City 1968-1973. DVD. United States, 1994. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

“Townspople.” *Iowa ‘70: Riot, Rhetoric, Responsibility*. Social Justice in Iowa, Special Collections & Archives. The University of Iowa Libraries.

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

“Student Unrest.” KCRG Collection, May 4th 1970. State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Secondary Sources

“1968: Columbia in Crisis.” Columbia University Libraries Online Exhibitions, 1968: Columbia in Crisis. Accessed October 25, 2023.
<https://exhibitions.library.columbia.edu/exhibits/show/1968/timeline>.

Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*. Bantam Books, 1987.

Grace, Thomas M. *Kent State: Death and dissent in the Long Sixties*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.

McCartney, David. “Old Gold: Steve Smith, Following His Conscience.” Iowa Now - The University of Iowa, July 30, 2012. <https://now.uiowa.edu/news/2012/07/old-gold-steve-smith-following-his-conscience>.

Means, Howard B. *67 Shots: Kent State and the End of American Innocence*. Da Capo Press, a member of the Perseus Books Group, 2016.

Metz, Michael V. *Radicals in the Heartland: The 1960s Student Protest Movement at the University of Illinois*. University of Illinois Press, 2019.

“Napalm and the Dow Chemical Company.” PBS. Accessed October 19, 2023.
<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/two-days-in-october-dow-chemical-and-use-napalm/>.

Obituary information for Maynard Eugene Schneider. March 13, 2005.
<https://www.lensingfuneral.com/obituaries/Maynard-Eugene-Schneider?obId=43386>.

Perlstein, Rick. *Nixonland: America's Second Civil War and the Divisive Legacy of Richard Nixon, 1965-1972*. Simon & Schuster, 2009.

- “Public Opinion and the Vietnam War.” Digital History. Accessed October 19, 2023. https://www.digitalhistory.uh.edu/active_learning/explorations/vietnam/vietnam_public_opinion.cfm.
- Riordan, Elizabeth. “University Libraries.” News Announcements. August 6, 2023. <https://blog.lib.uiowa.edu/speccoll/2021/04/16/an-activists-legacy-ayako-mori-costantino>.
- Scanlon, Sandra. *The Pro-War Movement: Domestic Support for the Vietnam War and the Making of Modern American Conservatism*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.
- Scott, Holly V. *Younger Than That Now: The Politics of Age in the 1960s*. University of Massachusetts Press, 2016.
- SDS Chapters 1962-1969 - Mapping American Social Movements Project. Accessed November 1, 2023. https://depts.washington.edu/moves/sds_map.shtml.
- “Vietnam War Campaigns.” Vietnam War Campaigns, U.S. Army Center of Military History. Accessed October 23, 2023. https://history.army.mil/html/reference/army_flag/vn.html.
- “Weather Underground Bombings.” Federal Bureau of Investigation. May 18, 2016. <https://www.fbi.gov/history/famous-cases/weather-underground-bombings>.