

## *Serving the Cause of Peace:*

### *The Iowa Campuses' Vietnam Protest*

*By Matthew Boyle*

**T**he late spring of 1970 was a turbulent time on the college and university campuses of Iowa. Nearly every campus featured demonstrations, sit-ins, sleep-ins, and protests concerned with American involvement in the Vietnam War. As the Vietnam War had intensified and become a prolonged and bloody conflict, opposition to American participation in the war had similarly intensified. Anti-war activities reflected the protesters' growing

sense of frustration over their apparent lack of influence on American policy. The violence of the demonstrations of May 1970 was an acute response to President Richard Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia on April 30. The violent demonstrations that erupted in Iowa and throughout the nation were the explosion of tensions that had been growing for months and years, touched off by the spark of the Cambodian invasion.

The demonstrations got off to a mild and undramatic, but perhaps prophetic, start on April 24. That day, seventy-five students presented petitions to University of Iowa president Willard Boyd demanding the end of the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) as a university-sponsored program. President Boyd was not available, but his assistant, Robert Engel, accepted the petitions and promised that President Boyd would consider them.

Rising tensions, however, quickly exacerbated the situation. On April 28, a set of the Johnson County Selective Service files in the local Selective Service office was set afire. Iowa City police viewed the fire as political in nature, but concluded that it was not related to a bomb explosion the previous night in downtown Iowa City. The following night, a typically innocuous dormitory water fight turned into an angry demonstration at the Iowa City Civic Center when rumors spread that some of the participants had been arrested.

The demand for an end to the university's ROTC program, which would become a central issue in the weeks to come, was the objective of a peaceful demonstration on May 1. A crowd of seven hundred demonstrators marched from the university's Pentacrest area to the new Recreation Building across the river in an effort to halt an ROTC awards ceremony scheduled for that day. Brushing aside six campus policemen who tried to block the doorway, the protesters carried on peaceful discussions about the war and ROTC. They lingered until it was announced that the awards ceremony had been cancelled.

After these demonstrations, Iowa campuses remained quiet until May 4, when news spread that four students had been killed by National Guardsmen at Kent State University in Ohio.

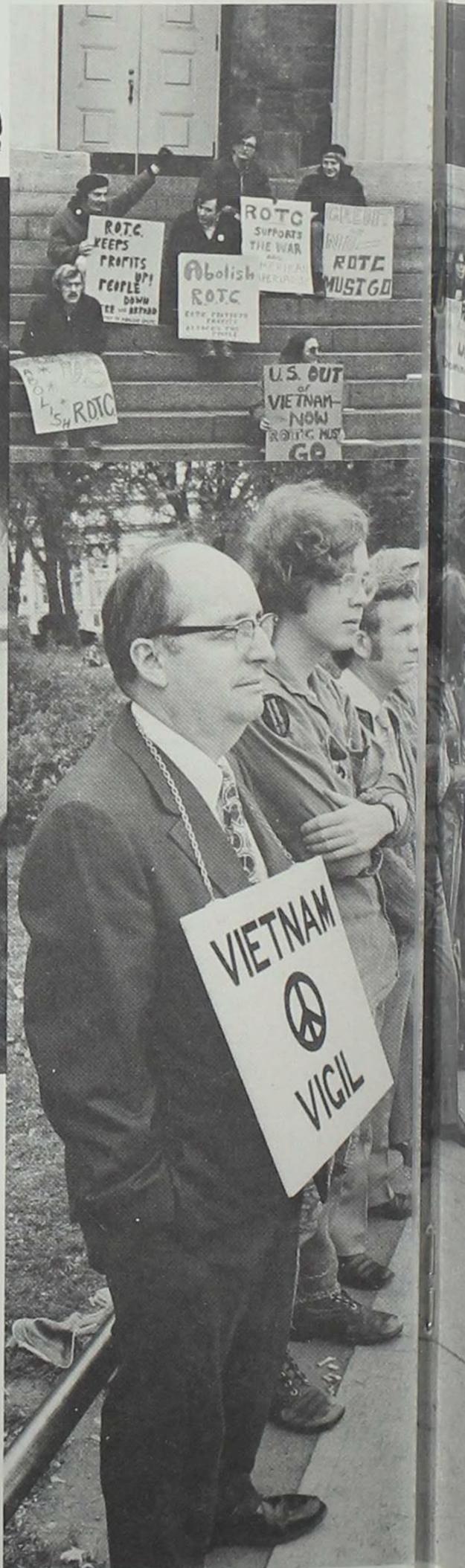
The immediate response to the incident was a call throughout Iowa for participation in a national boycott of classes on Wednesday, May 6. The call for a boycott met a strong response. At the University of Northern Iowa, the faculty voted to turn their classes over to discussions of the war, while at Drake University 2,500 students congregated on the commons and agreed to boycott classes. More active demonstrations occurred at Grinnell College, where student protesters occupied the Air Force ROTC building, and at Iowa State University in Ames, where 150 students held an all-night sit-in at the Armory.

At the University of Iowa, the news of Kent State became a call to arms. *Daily Iowan* editor Lowell Forte wrote a scathing editorial on Nixon following Kent State, charging that "he has sold the youth of America down the suicidal drain — into the Southeast Asia sewer that has frustrated this nation for the past several years." On May 5 a group of from four to six hundred protesters marched to the National Guard Armory south of campus. Some of the demonstrators attempted to break down the doors of the Armory with railroad ties, while others smashed the windows with rocks. Returning to campus, the demonstrators staged a sit-in in front of the Old Capitol on the Pentacrest. In spite of the presence of some fifty riot-equipped police officers, they then marched on the Civic Center. After a confrontation there, the demonstrators moved to a new location and then dispersed when the police were reinforced by officers from the Iowa highway patrol. As a result of the violent demonstrations on May 5, fifty-one people were arrested and charged with disorderly conduct.

The following day the campus was fairly quiet. Although about five hundred

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# Students Begin Strike



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## Boyd Again Urges 'Calm And Reason'

By FRED E. KARNES  
Of the Press-Citizen

University of Iowa President Willard L. Boyd called again for reason and calm early today in a statement to some 1,000 persons at a Pentacrest rally.

"The cause of peace will not be served by destroying this university," he said. "I feel strongly that we can handle our problems internally. I urge you

## Injunction Bars Disturbances Here

By LINDA A. SVOBODA  
Of the Press-Citizen

A court order barring student disturbances of all kinds was issued here Wednesday by District Court Judge Robert Os-

day night at the University of Iowa's Pentacrest.

The UI campus was quiet this morning with some students boycotting classes as the protest here and on other campuses continues against American

(courtesy The Daily Iowan)

# Many Colleges Reopen, Some Closed After Week of Student P

By THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Thousands of college students were still on strike today and many campuses shut down for the duration of the school year in the aftermath of a week of ragged and turmoil. Many other institutions officially reopened, however.

Still angry over fighting in Cambodia and the killing of four Kent State students in Ohio by National Guardsmen, students at many campuses continued to strike despite orders from college officials reopening classes.

said that there are a lot of students on campus, but not many are going to class."

Many, like the student body of the University of Maine, were voting today and Tuesday whether to continue boycotting classes or return to their studies.

The students' strike information center at Brandeis University today listed 450 schools on strike, and said it had confirmed that 157 schools will be struck indefinitely. A ham radio network of 150 stations was set

of a retired naval officer died early today from burns suffered when he set himself afire Sunday on the University of California campus in San Diego.

Winn was carrying a sign which read "For God's Sake, End the War."

Columbia University was holding classes, but New York University was closed indefinitely while faculties of each division held meetings to decide on future action.

Classes at 27 units of the Georgia State University sys-

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Main University and l rained in del branch classes



## Nixon Summons Governors To Discuss Protest, War

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon summoned the nation's governors to the White House today to discuss campus unrest and Southeast Asia in the wake of student strikes, antiwar protests and sporadic violence that climaxed in a massive weekend demonstration in the nation's capitol.

Nixon called the meeting last week after campus violence erupted following his decision to send American troops into Cam-

communities with the theme "No business as usual."

He said the weekend demonstration marked the beginning of a grass-roots movement swelling across the country.

Antiwar spokesmen also said efforts would be stepped up to spread strikes to more campuses and industry in an attempt to cripple the "war economy."

The apparently volatile campus situation also prompted

Princeton University adopted the proposal last week.

Duke University President Terry Sanford also announced plans to give students a week off to campaign in November. Nixon was graduated from the university's law school.

Chancellor Albert Bowler of New York City's Board of Higher Education, which runs the 165,000-student City University, said he would recommend a two-week period of free time for

# Guard Called!

## Old Armory 'Temporary' Destroyed

By JOHN M. JEFFRIES  
Of the Press-Citizen

Fire destroyed the university owned Old Armory Temporary building early this morning. Firemen believe it was arson.

The two-story frame building, fronting Iowa Avenue on the north and University Library on the south, housed the rhetoric program and writing laboratory.

Fire Chief Dean Bebee said this morning that the blaze appeared "to have been set."

Persons having offices in the World War II era temporary building had been warned two years ago not to keep any valuable papers or other items in the structure. Consequently, it is believed that losses of any scholarly work were slight.

Firemen received the call at 1:08 a.m., and when they arrived the middle portion of the barracks-type structure was engulfed in flames. Firemen believe a flammable substance was used. Bebee said he thought the fire started in an eastside entry way.

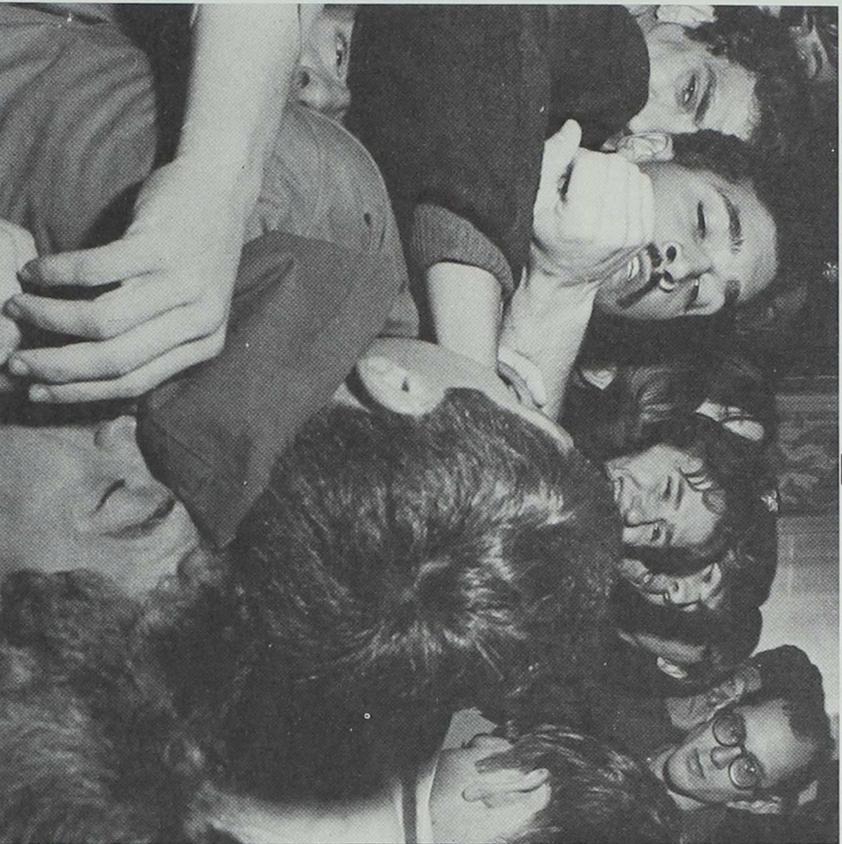
All equipment from the city's central and westside stations were sent, and off-duty firemen were called in to help.

The fire was prevented from spreading to the adjacent Old Armory, occupied by the radio-television division of the Department of Speech and Drama. The Department of Geography also is housed there.

Firemen had the blaze contained by 6 a.m., but several men still were there three hours later. The middle portion of the structure was burned to the ground while charred sections on the north and south remained standing.



# Students Begin Strike



## Boyd Again Urges 'Calm' And Reason'

By FRED E. KARNER  
Of the Press-Citizen  
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(courtesy The Daily Iowan)

## Many Colleges Reopen, Some Closed After Week of Student P

Thousands of college students were still on strike today and many campuses shut down for a second year of the school year. A report from the National Student Reluctance to Return to School Survey, published by the National Student Reluctance to Return to School Survey, said that there are a lot of students on campus, but not many are going to class.

Many like the student body of the University of Maine, were voting today and Tuesday whether to continue boycotting classes or return to their studies.

The student strike information center at Brandeis University today urged 600 students to strike, and said it had confirmed that 157 schools will be struck indefinitely. A ban radio network of 159 stations was set up.

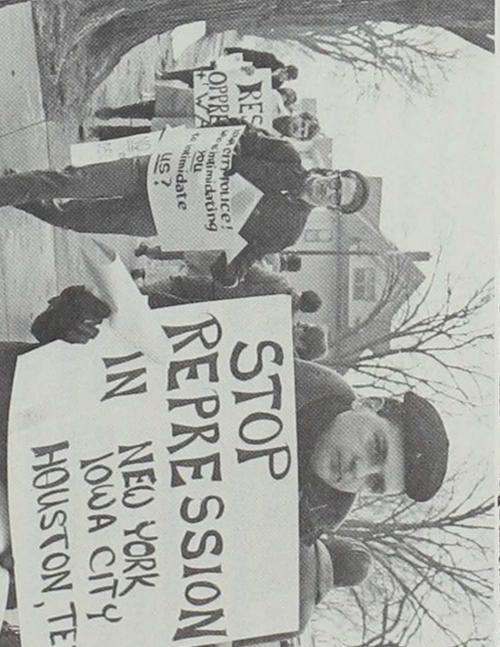
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Nixon called the meeting last week after campus violence erupted following his decision to send American troops into Cambodia.

He said the weekend demonstration marked the beginning of a grassroots movement "willing to give the country."

Chancellor Albert Boyer of New York City's Board of Higher Education, which runs the 16-independent City University, said he would recommend a two-year sabbatical of two times for



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Fire Chief Dean Beben said this morning that the blaze appeared to have been set in the West wing of the building.

The building had been burned two years ago not to keep any valuable papers or other items in the structure. Consequently, it is believed that losses of any scholarly work were slight.

Firemen received the call at 1:15 a.m. and when they arrived the middle portion of the barracks-type structure was engulfed in flames.

Firemen had the blaze controlled by 8 a.m., but several men still were there three hours later. The middle portion of the structure was burned to the ground while other sections remained standing.

demonstrators collected for a sleep-in at the Pentacrest, their activities were peaceful, a situation due largely to the efforts of a group of faculty, student, and citizen volunteers wearing white armbands. President Boyd made his own plea for peace on Thursday, May 7, when he cancelled a planned Governor's Day ceremony, but with a tone of resignation. Boyd added that "It must be clear to all that this cancellation involves a surrender of principle in the interest of public safety."

The demonstrations continued, however. Early Friday morning, several demonstrators of the hundreds who were in the area broke into the Old Capitol and set off a smoke bomb, raising fears that the building was on fire. President Boyd, who was in Des Moines at the time, ordered the area cleared. As a result, more than two hundred demonstrators were arrested and taken away in university buses. Meanwhile, twenty-three Iowa State students had been arrested in Ames for blocking the entrance to the local draft board office, and Grinnell College officials had announced that the remainder of the college semester would be cancelled in order to allow students and faculty to participate in anti-war activities.

The period of violent demonstrations sparked by the Cambodian invasion and the Kent State incident reached a peak on Iowa campuses during the weekend of May 9 and 10. In Iowa City on Friday night a frame building called the Old Armory Temporary went up in flames. By Saturday morning, Governor Robert Ray had stationed about three hundred National Guardsmen within five miles of the city, and National Guard helicopters were cruising above its streets. "It was an unbelievable fact," said one highway patrolman later, "that we were carrying shotguns. It looked like the Cambodian front." Reacting to the rising tone of violence in Iowa City, President Boyd declared: "The cause of peace will not be served by destroying this university."

After meeting with university officials, President Boyd announced on Sunday that the university would not be closed, but that students who feared for their safety could leave the campus without being penalized. In his statement, Boyd said that he sympathized with the protesters' demands but that he viewed education as an equally important issue. "For those who would say that the military intervention into Cambodia is an important symbol," Boyd declared, "I must respond that learning in a free society is an equally important symbol. If the University were to give in to force at this time, a great principle would be lost."

Boyd's decision led to what was described as a non-obstructional, non-violent strike. By late Tuesday, nearly 12,000 of the university's students had left the campus. Though the strike continued throughout the week, Governor Ray withdrew the National Guard units from the Iowa City area on Wednesday. By Sunday, May 17, the three weeks of violent protest drew to a close with an Ecumenical Pentacost held by Iowa City churches.

In the days that followed, the Iowa City campus and college campuses around the state returned to the calm that normally prevails at exam time. The energy of the anti-war movement in Iowa was channelled into more traditional political directions, resulting in efforts such as the campaign to adopt Amendment 609, which would have put constitutional limits on the President's war making powers. □

#### Note on Sources

Sources used in this article included issues of the *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, the *Daily Iowan*, and the *Des Moines Register* for the period from April through June 1970 and a pamphlet, *Riot, Rhetoric, and Responsibility*, published by the University of Iowa School of Journalism in 1970.