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Is There a New Mood on Campus? - Part II

College Students Back Nixon on Vietnam, But Strong Opposition Found on Eastern Campuses

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PRINCETON, N. J. Dec. 17 — If the nation's nearly eight million college students were asked to vote in a referendum on President Nixon's Vietnam policies, a favorable vote would likely be recorded in the South, Midwest and Far West, but an unfavorable vote in the East.

For the nation as a whole, the President wins more support than opposition, but the margin is close: 50 per cent of all college students reached in a survey just completed say they approve of the way President Nixon is handling the situation in Vietnam, while 44 per cent say they disapprove. Another 6 per cent do not express an opinion.

These findings were recorded in a survey carefully designed to provide a national sample of all full-time college students.

A total of 1093 students were interviewed in person on 57 colleges and university campuses, including the correct proportion of students from public, private and church-related schools.

Interviewing was conducted Nov. 1 through 16, with virtually all of it having been done following the President's Nov. 3 speech on Vietnam. The survey does not reflect reaction to the President's speech on Vietnam last Monday.

64% of Adults Express Support

President Nixon's Vietnam policies

are less popular on America's campuses than among the nation's adult population. A Gallup survey conducted Nov. 14-16 found 64 per cent of adults saying they approve of the way President Nixon is handling the situation in Vietnam, compared to 25 per cent who expressed disapproval.

All students in the survey were asked this question:

Do you approve or disapprove of the way President Nixon is handling the situation in Vietnam?

The following table compares the views of college students with those of the general adult population:

Rating of Nixon on Vietnam		
	College Students	Adult Pop.
	%	%
Approve	50	64
Disapprove	44	25
No opinion	6	11

The President receives backing from eight in ten Republicans on campus, but opposition outweighs support among Democrats and Independents.

The following table shows the political and regional breakdowns:

Results by Politics and Region (College Students)			
	Ap- prove	Disap- prove	No Opin.
Students who describe themselves as:			
	%	%	%
Republicans ..	81	14	5

Democrats ..	42	52	6
Independents ..	43	49	6
Students attending colleges in:			
South	60	34	6
Midwest	52	43	5
Far west	50	42	8
East	36	58	6

Mood on War Has Shifted

The prevailing mood on campus today is to slow down or halt the fighting in Vietnam, with 69 per cent favoring such a course compared to 20 per cent who think we should step up the fighting. Another 11 per cent do not express a view.

This represents a sharp shift in attitudes from a nationwide survey conducted in the Spring of 1967 which showed 49 per cent of students in favor of a policy of escalation compared to 35 per cent who wanted military activity reduced.

Support for de-escalation is stronger on the campus than among the general populace. A recent Gallup survey of adults (conducted Nov. 1-3) showed 55 per cent in favor of reducing our military effort and 31 per cent favoring a policy of escalation.

Although the terms "hawk" and "dove" have different meanings at different stages of the war, the following wording was employed to provide an exact comparison of the latest results with those from the Spring of 1967:

People are called 'hawks' if they want to step up our military effort in Vietnam. They are called 'doves' if they want to reduce our military effort in Vietnam. How would you describe yourself—as a 'hawk' or as a 'dove'?

Escalation vs. De-escalation (College Students)	
	Latest Spring, 1967
	%
Dove	69
Hawk	20
No Opinion	11

Two out of every three students who favor a policy of escalation back the President, but somewhat fewer than half of those who favor de-escalation do so. Many of the latter group want the immediate and total withdrawal of troops from Vietnam.

A Lafayette College sophomore said in an angry tone: "Let's get out of Vietnam right now and make a firm pledge never again to involve ourselves in another nation's problems. We have enough here at home."

A female undergraduate said, "I almost cry when I think about the senseless killing going on over there. I don't know why we just can't get out. Is it that complicated to figure out?"

A 21-year old senior from a small Pennsylvania college backs the President: "He's doing all he can with a situation he inherited. What else can he

do? You can't put a date on when you'll bring all the troops home."

Focus on Rate Of Withdrawal

And so the debate goes, with the focus of controversy now more on the speed of withdrawal than on the question of whether escalation or de-escalation will bring us closer to a solution to the war.

It is clear that many students, for whom the war is an ever present reality, are caught between a desire to see an immediate end to the killing on both sides and the belief that our withdrawal cannot be abrupt.

Some may give tentative approval to the Administration's current policy of de-escalation, but nevertheless believe it is the role of students to keep the problem of Vietnam in the forefront of the nation's conscience and to bring pressure on the Administration to find ways to end the war as soon as possible.

Coming Sunday!

Third and Final Part

How Would Students Change America?