

DARTMOUTH PRESIDENT JOHN KEMENY
ADDRESSING THE COLLEGE COMMUNITY
OVER WDCR MONDAY NIGHT, MAY 4TH:

WE ARE MEETING TONIGHT OVER THE AIR AT A TIME OF ONE OF THE MOST TROUBLED PERIODS IN AMERICAN HISTORY. I WOULD LIKE TO START OFF BY GOING BACK TO MY FIRST PRESS CONFERENCE AS PRESIDENT-ELECT. AT THAT TIME I WAS ASKED ABOUT THE QUESTION OF INSTITUTIONS AND INDIVIDUALS TAKING STANDS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES. I REAFFIRMED THE STAND THAT I HAVE CONSISTENTLY HELD OVER THE YEARS: THAT WHILE INSTITUTIONS AS SUCH CANNOT EFFECTIVELY TAKE STANDS ON CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES, INDIVIDUALS MUST TAKE STANDS, AND I MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE PRESIDENT OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE WOULD BE NO EXCEPTION TO THAT RULE. I AM PAINFULLY AWARE OF THE FACT THAT NO COLLEGE PRESIDENT CAN USE THIS PREROGATIVE TOO OFTEN OR HE LOSES HIS EFFECTIVENESS. AND YET EVENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE DURING THE PAST WEEK WHICH MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ME NOT TO EXERCISE THIS PREROGATIVE. I WILL THEREFORE SPEAK TONIGHT ABOUT A NUMBER OF NATIONAL ISSUES.

WE LIVE IN A PERIOD OF GREAT FRUSTRATION. IN THE RICHEST COUNTRY IN THE WORLD WE STILL FIND POVERTY, WE FIND HUNGER THAT COULD EASILY BE ELIMINATED AND YET WE DON'T SEEM TO BE ABLE TO MARSHAL OUR RESOURCES TO ELIMINATE HUNGER. WE FIND OUR CITIES DETERIORATING AND WE SEEM TO BE UNABLE TO BRING ABOUT THOSE MEANS THAT WILL IMPROVE LIFE IN OUR GREAT METROPOLITAN AREAS. A TIME WHEN BLACK CITIZENS AFTER DECADES OF TRYING TO IMPROVE THEIR LOT FIND ALL MEASURES BEING TAKEN AS TOO SLOW, TOO LITTLE, AND TOO LATE. WE FOUND THE FRUSTRATION IN THE PAST YEAR IN TRYING TO ATTRACT AMERICAN INDIAN STUDENTS TO DARTMOUTH AND WE ALL LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE SCANDALOUS RECORD OF THIS COUNTRY IN THE TREATMENT OF AMERICAN INDIANS. WE HAVE DURING EARTH DAY LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT PROBLEMS OF THE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PITIFULLY LITTLE HAS BEEN DONE TO SOLVE THESE PROBLEMS. THEN, IN THE LAST FEW DAYS, A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL EVENTS HAVE TAKEN PLACE. WE SAW YALE UNIVERSITY BECOME A BATTLEGROUND FOR SOME OF THE GREAT ISSUES FACING THIS NATION. WE SAW A COMMUNITY TRYING TO ACT IN UNISON TO BRING ABOUT PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST EVENTS WHICH THEY FELT WERE WRONG. WE FOUND KINGMAN BREWSTER, ONE OF THE FINEST COLLEGE PRESIDENTS IN THE UNITED STATES, FIGHTING FOR THE LIFE OF HIS INSTITUTION AND TRYING TO BRING UNITY AND PEACE TO HIS CAMPUS, AND AT THE SAME TIME BEING ATTACKED FROM THE OUTSIDE BY THOSE WHO DID NOT UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES AND DID NOT HAVE SENSITIVITY FOR THE NEEDS OF A GREAT UNIVERSITY. WE FOUND A NUMBER OF ATTACKS FROM THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IN WASHINGTON UPON OUR GREAT UNIVERSITIES THAT SHOWED, TO SAY THE LEAST, COMPLETE MISUNDERSTANDING OF THE FEELINGS OF THE PRESENT GENERATION OF COLLEGE STUDENTS AND A VERY LARGE FRACTION OF THE COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTIES.

AND THEN, TO ALL THESE ISSUES AN OVERWHELMING ISSUE HAS BEEN ADDED. THIS HAS BEEN THE ESCALATION OF THE WAR IN INDOCHINA. WE HAVE SEEN A SEQUENCE OF EVENTS STARTING FIRST WITH A REPEATED PROMISE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO DISENGAGE ACCORDING TO AN ARRANGED SCHEDULE FROM THE WAR IN VIETNAM. TEN DAYS LATER HE HAD AN ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SOUTH VIETNAMESE FORCES SUPPORTED BY AMERICAN ADVISORS WERE MOVING INTO CAMBODIA. THEN THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES ANNOUNCED THAT IN ADDITION TO THAT MASSIVE AMERICAN TROOPS WOULD MOVE INTO CAMBODIA. WE WERE ALSO WARNED THAT IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT NORTH VIETNAM MIGHT BE BOMBED AGAIN. VERY SOON AFTERWARDS WE DISCOVERED THAT BY THE TIME THAT WARNING WAS ISSUED THE BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM HAD ALREADY RESUMED.

THIS SERIES OF ACTIONS CAME AS A GREAT SURPRISE TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, APPARENTLY AS A GREAT SURPRISE TO THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES, AND AGAIN, FROM ALL THAT HAS BEEN SAID, A SURPRISE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF CAMBODIA. IN ADDITION TO THAT WE HAD TO LISTEN TO ARGUMENTS IN FAVOR OF THESE ACTIONS THAT MANY OF US FIND TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE. IN THIS DAY AND AGE TO ARGUE THAT WE MUST TAKE THESE ACTS BECAUSE THE UNITED STATES HAD NEVER LOST A WAR IS THE TYPE OF ARGUMENT THAT I FOR ONE SIMPLY CANNOT ACCEPT. MOST OF US HAVE REACHED THAT STAGE IN OUR THINKING WHERE WE FEEL THAT WAR ITSELF MUST BE ELIMINATED AND QUESTIONS OF WINNING AND LOSING WARS HAVE BECOME MEANINGLESS.

AT THE SAME TIME WE FIND THE CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES FRUSTRATED. WE FIND THAT THE PRESIDENT IS CRITICIZED BY LEADERS OF BOTH PARTIES, INCLUDING LEADERS WHO HAVE TRADITIONALLY SUPPORTED HIM IN ALL HIS ACTIONS. AND YET CONGRESS SEEMS TO BE FRUSTRATED AS TO HOW IT CAN ASSERT ITS AUTHORITY. THIS MAY BRING ABOUT ONE OF THE MOST SERIOUS CONSTITUTIONAL CRISES IN THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES. I AM DEEPLY CONSCIOUS OF THE FACT THAT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE MORE THAN ANY OTHER INSTITUTION IN THE COUNTRY HAS PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN HELPING TO SHAPE THAT CONSTITUTION.

THE FINAL EVENT TODAY WAS THE KILLING OF TWO BOYS AND TWO GIRLS AT KENT STATE UNIVERSITY. I DO NOT KNOW ALL THE DETAILS OF HOW THEY DIED AND TO ME THEY ARE UNIMPORTANT. THERE WILL NO DOUBT BE MANY ARGUMENTS AS TO WHO WAS AT FAULT. I CAN ONLY COME TO ONE CONCLUSION: THAT ALL OF US ARE AT FAULT. FOR THIS TO OCCUR, WHETHER IT WAS BY NATIONAL GUARD TROOPS, YOUNG MEN PROBABLY TERRIFIED IN AN ALIEN SITUATION WHICH THEY ARE NOT USED TO, IS TO ME TOTALLY UNIMPORTANT. I FEEL AS SORRY FOR THEM AS FOR THOSE WHO WERE KILLED. WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT CIVILIZATION IN THIS COUNTRY HAS REACHED THE STAGE THAT I FIND TOTALLY INTOLERABLE.

AS A RESPONSE TO THESE EVENTS WE ARE FACED WITH A CALL FROM A LARGE NUMBER OF STUDENTS FOR UNITED ACTION BY THE DARTMOUTH COMMUNITY TO FIND MEANS TO EXPRESS ITS DISSATISFACTIC

ITS FRUSTRATION, AND TO WORK OUT NEW METHODS BY WHICH A COMMUNITY ACTING IN UNISON CAN HAVE AN EFFECT ON THE POLICY OF THIS COUNTRY. I HAVE HEARD A LARGE NUMBER OF SUGGESTIONS AS TO HOW THIS CAN BE DONE, MANY OF THEM HIGHLY EFFECTIVE, MANY OF WHICH STILL HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT. WHILE THE WORD "STRIKE" HAS BEEN USED, AGAIN AND AGAIN THE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GROUP THAT ARE TRYING TO RAISE A STRIKE HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THEY HAVE USED THIS WORD FOR LACK OF A BETTER WORD BECAUSE THIS IS NOT A STRIKE AGAINST DARTMOUTH COLLEGE, BUT AN ATTEMPT BY MEANS OF AN ACTION THEY HAVE CALLED A "STRIKE" TO UNITE THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IN JOINT ACTION TO SEE WHETHER ALL OF US TOGETHER MIGHT BE MORE EFFECTIVE IN CHANGING NATIONAL POLICY THAN ANY GROUP COULD BE ON ITS OWN. THEY HAVE EMPHASIZED THAT THEY WOULD LIKE TO SEE PARTICIPATION BY MASSIVE GROUPS OF STUDENTS, BY THE FACULTY, BY THE ADMINISTRATION, AND BY THE STAFF OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE IN THE BROADEST SENSE OF THE WORD. AS A MATTER OF FACT, A NUMBER OF GENEROUS OFFERS HAVE BEEN MADE TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR MEMBERS OF VARIOUS SEGMENTS OF THE STAFF AND EMPLOYEES OF THE COLLEGE TO PARTICIPATE IN SUCH ACTIVITIES. FOR EXAMPLE, I HAVE HEARD STUDENTS SPEAKING OF CLEANING THEIR OWN DORMITORY ROOMS TO ENABLE JANITORS TO TAKE AN ACTIVE PART. I HAVE HEARD OF STUDENTS VOLUNTEERING TO EAT ONLY TWO MEALS A DAY TO ENABLE EMPLOYEES OF THE DARTMOUTH DINING ASSOCIATION TO BE FREED TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS THAT THEY PROPOSE SHOULD TAKE PLACE IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE.

AS A RESULT I HAVE TODAY MET WITH MY POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL, WHICH IS A GROUP OF TOP ADMINISTRATORS. I THEN MET WITH THE DEPARTMENTAL CHAIRMEN OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE AND I HAD AN ADDITIONAL MEETING WITH THE DELEGATES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE OF THE GROUP CALLING FOR A "STRIKE." I HAVE ALSO HAD THE BENEFIT OF ADVICE FROM NUMEROUS TELEPHONE CALLS AND LETTERS FROM STUDENTS AND FACULTY. IN LISTENING TO ALL OF THESE GROUPS, AND ALL I HAVE DONE SO FAR IS TO LISTEN, I HAVE FOUND A NUMBER OF COMMON THEMES. I HAVE FOUND FRUSTRATION IN THE SEARCH FOR WHAT IT IS THAT AN INSTITUTION CAN DO AS A UNITED COMMUNITY. I HAVE FOUND THE WORD "UNITY" APPEARING AGAIN AND AGAIN, AND THE FRUSTRATION THAT THEY DID NOT KNOW HOW THIS UNITY COULD BE BROUGHT ABOUT BECAUSE THERE ARE SO MANY DIFFERENT CONSTITUENCIES THAT THE MEANS OF BRINGING THEM TOGETHER AND GETTING SOME LEGAL WAY OF HAVING THEM COMBINE DID NOT SEEM TO BE CLEAR. AGAIN I HEARD THAT WHILE MAGNIFICENT PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE IN 24 HOURS OF PLANNING, THERE HAS NOT BEEN ENOUGH TIME TO WORK OUT ALL EFFECTIVE MEANS OF ACHIEVING THESE GOALS. AFTER LISTENING TO ALL THESE PLEAS, I HAVE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT INDEED WE ARE IN EXTRAORDINARY TIMES, THAT IT IS INDEED A TIME WHEN THE COMMUNITY SHOULD TAKE UNITED ACTION, AND IF THERE IS ANYONE WHO CAN BRING SUCH UNITED ACTION ABOUT IT IS THE PRESIDENT OF THE COLLEGE.

I AM THEREFORE PROPOSING TO TAKE TONIGHT A NUMBER OF ACTS. ONE THAT I HAVE TAKEN EARLIER TODAY WAS TO JOIN A NUMBER OF OTHER COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS, REPRESENTING MANY SEGMENTS OF THE COUNTRY, IN ISSUING THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT, ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES:

THE AMERICAN INVASION OF CAMBODIA AND THE RENEWED BOMBING OF NORTH VIETNAM HAVE CAUSED EXTRAORDINARY, SEVERE, AND WIDESPREAD APPREHENSIONS ON OUR CAMPUSES. WE SHARE THESE APPREHENSIONS. AS COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY PRESIDENTS IN CONTACT WITH LARGE NUMBERS OF CONCERNED AMERICANS, WE MUST ADVISE YOU THAT AMONG A MAJOR PART OF OUR STUDENTS AND FACULTY MEMBERS THE DESIRE FOR A PROMPT END ~~OF~~ AMERICAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS EXTREMELY INTENSE. WE IMPLORE YOU TO CONSIDER THE INCALCULABLE DANGERS OF AN UNPRECEDENTED ALIENATION OF AMERICA'S YOUTH AND TO TAKE IMMEDIATE ACTION TO DEMONSTRATE UNEQUIVOCALLY YOUR DETERMINATION TO END THE WAR QUICKLY. WE URGENTLY REQUEST THE OPPORTUNITY TO DISCUSS THESE PROBLEMS WITH YOU DIRECTLY. IF WE SHOULD RECEIVE AN INVITATION FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES TO DISCUSS THESE MATTERS WITH HIM, I AND MANY OTHER COLLEGE PRESIDENTS ARE PREPARED TO GO TO WASHINGTON TO PLEAD WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

I HAVE TRIED TO SEARCH FOR A PRECEDENT TO WHAT ACTION CAN BE TAKEN ON CAMPUS, AND THE CLOSEST ONE I COULD FIND WAS FROM A MINUTES OF THE TRUSTEES OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE. THE TRUSTEES VOTED AT A TIME OF WHAT THEY DESCRIBED AS "PUBLIC DISTRESSES OF THE PRESENT DAY" AN EARLY TERMINATION OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR. OF COURSE THAT WAS A PERIOD OF EVEN MORE INTENSE CONSIDERATION. IT HAPPENED TO BE JULY 24, 1776.

I FEEL THAT WE ARE NOW AT THE POINT OF CRISIS. I AM GREATLY SHOCKED BY THE DEATH OF FOUR STUDENTS, WHICH IS TRAGIC IN ITSELF AND A SYMPTOM OF A NATIONAL MALADY. I AM THEREFORE TAKING THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS AS PRESIDENT OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE:

I AM SUSPENDING ALL REGULAR ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS WEEK.

SECONDLY, I AM DECLARING TOMORROW A DAY OF MOURNING FOR THE STUDENTS AT KENT STATE, AND A DAY OF SOUL-SEARCHING FOR THE ENTIRE INSTITUTION. THERE WILL BE NO CLASSES HELD TOMORROW. I AM URGING ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY TO PARTICIPATE IN INTENSIVE DISCUSSIONS AS TO HOW THIS COMMUNITY CAN BEST JOIN HANDS AND IN A UNITED MANNER TAKE EFFECTIVE ACTION.

I KNOW THAT A MEETING HAS BEEN CALLED FOR 10 A.M. ON THE DARTMOUTH GREEN ON THE PART OF THE STUDENT STEERING COMMITTEE. I URGE AS LARGE AN ATTENDANCE OF STUDENTS AS POSSIBLE.

[IN ADDITION TO THAT I AM ASKING FACULTY MEMBERS TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE FACT THAT I AM CANCELLING CLASSES FOR TOMORROW TO HAVE AS MANY MEETINGS IN WHATEVER GROUPS ARE APPROPRIATE TOMORROW TO BRING ABOUT COLLECTIVE WISDOM AS TO WHAT IT IS WE CAN DO FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS WEEK AND BEYOND I AM INVITING THE GENERAL FACULTY --- THAT IS THE ENTIRE FACULTY OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE --- TO A MEETING AT 8 P.M. TOMORROW IN ALUMNI HALL. THIS WILL NOT BE A FORMAL MEETING WITH PARLIAMENTARY RULES AND MOTIONS AND DEBATES ON SMALL POINTS OF WORDING BECAUSE THE ISSUES ARE TOO SERIOUS. I AM PROPOSING TO HOLD THIS SOMEWHAT IN THE STYLE OF A QUAKER MEETING. I AM HOLDING IT IN THE EVENING SO IT MAY BE PRECEDED BY A DAY OF SOUL-SEARCHING ON THE PART OF THE ENTIRE FACULTY SO THAT WE MAY BRING OUR COLLECTIVE WISDOM TO BEAR ON WHAT IT IS THAT WE MIGHT BE ABLE TO DO FOR THE REMAINDER OF THIS WEEK TO FORMULATE PLANS TO HOW THIS INSTITUTION CAN UNITE IN EFFECTIVE FUTURE ACTION.] IN ADDITION I AM URGING ALL ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICERS TO DO WHATEVER THEY CAN TO MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR ALL EMPLOYEES OF DARTMOUTH COLLEGE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE DISCUSSIONS. WE MUST, OF COURSE, MAINTAIN A FEW BASIC SERVICES OF THE INSTITUTION, BUT I URGE ALL DEPARTMENT HEADS TO USE THEIR DISCRETION TO ALLOW AS MANY PEOPLE TO PARTICIPATE IN DISCUSSIONS, WHICHEVER SIDE THEY MAY BE ON, SO THAT WE MAY TRULY FEEL THAT THIS IS ACTION BY THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY. PERHAPS AFTER A DAY OF SOUL-SEARCHING AND A WEEK DURING WHICH WE ARE SUSPENDING OUR NORMAL ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES, WE MIGHT HAVE A BETTER FEELING AS TO WHERE WE GO FROM HERE. **V**

I REALIZE THAT THERE ARE MANY WHO FEEL THAT EDUCATIONAL, REGULAR EDUCATION, SHOULD NOT BE SUSPENDED. AND YET THERE COMES A TIME WHEN THERE ARE PRIORITIES OVER AND BEYOND THAT WHICH WE HAVE TRADITIONALLY CONSIDERED THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSE OF THE INSTITUTION. I AM SAYING THAT BY SUSPENDING ALL CLASSES TOMORROW WE WILL ENGAGE IN EDUCATION THIS WEEK, BUT AN EDUCATION OF THE DEEPEST FORM WHERE A BROAD COMMUNITY CAN SIT DOWN TOGETHER AND TRY TO FORMULATE ITS VIEWS AND ENGAGE IN A COLLECTIVE EXERCISE OF FORMULATING PLANS FOR THE FUTURE. I FEEL THAT ALL OF US WILL BE BETTER EDUCATED BY THE END OF THE WEEK AS A RESULT OF THIS ACTION.

FINALLY LET ME SAY THAT FOR THIS WEEK I AM GOING TO MAKE MY OWN SELF AND MY ENTIRE STAFF AVAILABLE. I HOPE THAT ANYONE WITH SUGGESTIONS OR ANYONE WHO NEEDS HELP IN FORMULATING PLANS OR MEETINGS, WHATEVER THE NEED MAY BE, WILL CALL ON ALL OF US FOR HELP IN MAKING THIS WEEK TRULY MEANINGFUL.

THANK YOU.

---JOHN KEMENY, MAY 4, 1970