

FOR RELEASE MARCH 4, 1970

CAPITOL VIEWPOINT

By U.S. Sen. Bob Dole

A NEW TYPE OF ACTIVIST

The tumultuous dissatisfaction of youth in the 60s shows welcome signs of growing into "constructive activism" for the 70s.

Many college students, unhappy with the shape of today's world, are finding alternatives to the tactics of turmoil and confrontation. No longer are all student activists merely pointing out social ills. Some are facing injustices straight on --- working directly with people and problems.

More than 1000 voluntary service programs are known to exist on college campuses across the country. These programs, designed and conducted by students who believe education means more than books and exams, are directed in such areas as racial discrimination, crime, poverty, consumerism, housing and education, to name a few. Working with and for local citizens, action programs range from tutoring ghetto children to sponsoring Red Cross blood drives.

This type of activism is just one of the several indicators of a positive mood developing on American campuses. Many students are apparently convinced that protest is not enough, and have discovered that problem solving requires both personal involvement and commitment.

It has long been my advice to persons of all ages that the only way to achieve lasting progress in society is to work through the institution of democracy --- not by force. Mass action relies not on government by consent, but government by crowds. The disillusionment of many young Americans with the institutions of government, education and business, however, is not totally without merit. Frankly, some have failed to respond to the drastic changes in America; but I believe the only way to effectively remove society's inequities and institutions' obsolescences, is by citizens participating, not just observing or seeking to destroy. I am encouraged by the number of students we could call "builders" in our society.

STUDENT INFLUENCE UP

Students who subscribe to this new method of direct, constructive involvement, are getting results. For a long time they led the now rising public demands to get out of Vietnam and for draft reform. Now, President Nixon is doing both. Truly student influence is up while student violence is down.

In recent months, college youth have concentrated much of their effort on a very old problem, but a new public issue --- that of environmental pollution. Our young people have done a great public service by helping focus the public's attention on this problem and by motivating others to action.

Kansas State University President James A. McCain, in a recent university journal article, proposed that state universities work together to solve pollution and other environmental problems. Reflecting a youthful sense of urgency, Dr. McCain wrote, "The crises confronting our society are crying for action."

President Nixon, in his State of the Union address, predicted the great question of this decade will be whether "we shall surrender our surroundings" or "make peace with nature." "Pollution," he said, has become "a common cause of all people."

Environment may well be one of the great issues of the 70s, and it is students who deserve much of the credit for bringing it to the forefront and insisting that it stay there. Students, because of their recent involvement in domestic and world issues, are becoming aware not only of their power to spotlight problems, but also

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of their ability to get action and results. Consequently, some have expressed frustration about being unable to vote for candidates they think might activate some of their goals and reforms for the country. For this reason, and because many young men who cannot vote must fight in Vietnam, a large majority of college students favor a lower voting age.

RESPONSIBILITY INHERENT IN VOTING RIGHT

Due to improved education, increased mobility and access to mass media, there is no doubt that many students would be well informed voters. If they are willing to take on the legal responsibilities inherent in the voting right, I believe they should become voting Americans.

According to a recent Gallup Poll, which reached 1092 students in 57 colleges and universities, 23 per cent opposed lowering the voting age, 1 per cent had no opinion, and 76 per cent favored lowering the requirement to 18, 19 or 20.

In response to the demonstration by many college-age youth that they are not only sensitive to human problems, but have the ideas and energy for responsibly solving some of them, Congress is considering lowering the age requirement. As one of 67 Senators cosponsoring a Constitutional amendment to lower the voting age to 18, I am certain that with the many young people who are actively working toward what the President has called "a new quality of life," this measure deserves very special consideration.