

In honor of Kent State

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In addition to being Inauguration Day, this Sunday is the tenth anniversary of the day on which the National Guard, acting under the orders of Ohio Governor Jim Rhodes, shot at random into a crowd of antiwar protesters, killing four students and giving a fleeting fame to Kent State University. Many months ago, when I first learned that the inauguration would be held on May Fourth, I was deeply outraged, and vowed to have no part of it. I have since mellowed on three grounds: First, Kent State is not for most Grinnellians the symbol of the struggle against war and violence that it is for me in a deeply personal way. Second, it is unreasonable to expect a college that can't even remember its 400 Jewish students long enough to avoid scheduling Parents' Weekend on the High Holy Days to take note of anything so trifling as the gunning down of college students ten years ago. Finally, it is undoubtedly unfair to make Mr. Drake suffer for what was surely someone else's brilliant act of scheduling.

Still, we should stop to remember the four who died on May 4, 1970, and especially we must remember what they died for. Let us not make matters overly complex in this regard: they did not die for socialism, social justice, or free sex and drugs. They died because they were loudly demanding peace. In this they were in pursuit of the noblest goal of mankind.

We who wish to honor their memories must not waste our efforts in futile or meaningless gestures. Denouncing the holding of inauguration festivities on May 4 or the building of a gym on the shooting site will not serve the cause for which the four died. Rather, this anniversary should be a day for quiet reflection on the state of the quest for peace. In viewing such current crises as the one in Iran, we must struggle always to see that peace—not American honor, or the defense of American interests, or

as his primary objective? Or is the temptation to 'send in the Marines' likely to prove irresistible to him?

We must remember, too, that the protesters ten years ago were ultimately successful to the extent that their demands were simple and well-expressed; they demanded a pullout from Vietnam, and they got it, but the vaguer demands for a 'dismantling of the military-industrial complex' were utterly ignored. No one will listen to us today without specific proposals behind which a movement can unite.

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the justification of past American actions, or even the lives of the innocent hostages—is our paramount national concern. We must view every current issue in the light of that overwhelmingly important goal. Of each presidential candidate we must ask first, is this man likely to keep peace

Draft registration is an issue that leaves many of us cold; do we wish to declare that we are under no circumstances prepared to serve and defend our country? A better issue, an issue around which a larger coalition could be built, is nuclear disarmament. In giving up the attempt to rebuild Vietnam in our own image, many of us had hoped that we were giving up the dream of America as an imperial power. If that is so, we have no need for weapons that can bend the world to our will. Rather, what we need is a world in which such coercive force does not exist. I would thus propose that the quest for peace can best be served by a dual approach: we should register, or otherwise declare our willingness to protect our country should a real threat ever necessitate that defense. But at the same time, we should declare that such a crisis is by no means upon us, that if it were we would still not be justified in unleashing our nuclear holocaust upon the innocent billions of the world, and that therefore we can and should immediately cut defense spending by fifty per cent or more. Without the new bombs we build daily, we could even afford to pay our soldiers a decent wage and keep our helicopters in working order. And the ghosts of the Kent State four might rest a little easier as we gradually forget all about them.

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