



Report From Kent

The following is an account of the incident at Kent State last May written by someone who was there, the president of the Phi chapter. While THE SCROLL is aware that the events at Kent have been reported many times, we feel this report on the incident by an undergraduate Phi presents the events in the perspective of the students. THE SCROLL does not endorse or reject the views of Mr. Rodkey, it merely presents them.

Kent Changes Unlikely, Official

Prosecution of Guard Kent Deaths Hinted

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Protest at Kent Is Nonviolent

KENT, Ohio, Aug. 5
(AP)—Kent State Univer-
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By Ken W. Clawson
Washington Post Staff Writer

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Guard Chief Backs Kent Probe

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COLUMBUS, Ohio, July 31
(UPI)—The head of the Ohio
National Guard said today he
planned to meet with Gov.
James

meet with both Rhodes and
state Attorney General Paul
W. Brown to discuss the pro-
posals.

the shootings were “-
sary”.

Brown

The National Guard's
being

By James Rodkey
President, Ohio Lambda

MONDAY, May 4, 1970, started out as a beautiful spring day, sunny and warm, with a light breeze blowing over Kent's tree shrouded campus. A quiet contrast to the three previous nights of disturbances which had resulted in the burning of the ROTC building and the calling out of the Ohio National Guard. A message spread across the campus Monday morning, "Rally on the Commons at noon!" By noon 3,000-4,000 students had gathered in the Commons areas. Nothing atypical except perhaps for the size of the crowd. Kent has had many such rallies and most students pay little or no attention to them.

However, as soon as you reached the outskirts of the Commons area, you knew that this was no ordinary rally. There was apprehension in the air, a feeling that something was going to happen. The crowd on the Commons had gathered about 75 yards opposite the National Guard troops who were guarding the ruins of the ROTC building. The crowd began to chant: "Pigs off campus," "Hell no, we won't go," "One-two-three-four, we don't want your f---- war" and various other anti-war slogans.

A jeep came out from the ranks of the troops and an officer addressed the crowd. He ordered the demonstration to end at once, "by order of

the Governor of Ohio." He said all demonstrations had been banned, and that all assemblies of more than four persons were prohibited. This order is in direct violation of the freedom of assembly clause of the First Amendment, but the U.S. Constitution evidently doesn't apply to the state of Ohio while it is under the rule of Gov. James A. Rhodes.

The students refused to obey the order. The crowd stood its ground. A number of speakers quieted the crowd and began to address the students about the war in Vietnam, the extension of the war into Cambodia, and the presence of the National Guard troops on campus. The

Phi Ombudsman

The immediate past adviser to the Phi chapter at Kent, Paul C. Kitchin (Kent '46) (see SCROLL 5-70-323) has been named student ombudsman at Kent. In announcing creation of the post, Kent's president said the office would serve to resolve student grievances, real or imagined. Kitchin was an associate professor of political science at Kent.

Crowd cheered the speeches and the chants began again. The officer returned in his jeep with more orders and threats.

These threats were met with jeers, insults, and a few rocks, sticks, etc. The officer fled to the safety of his own lines. Reinforcements were called for, and more guardsmen marched onto the Commons. Suddenly, a barrage of tear gas was fired at the crowd. Some students began to scatter, but most held their ground, picking up the gas cannisters and hurling them back at the guardsmen. More gas was fired, but it was just thrown back. A most embarrassing situation for Rhodes' Raiders. Then the command came to fix bayonets and charge the crowd. This maneuver did succeed in breaking up the crowd, but who wouldn't run with a guardsman chasing you with a bayonet drawn? The guardsmen chased the crowd off of the Commons and up over a hill surrounding the area. The pursuit ended when the guardsmen stopped to regroup on a practice football field at the base of this hill.

By this time the original crowd had been swelled by many onlookers and curiosity seekers. The crowd swarmed over the hill and spilled over into a parking lot next to the foot-

ball field. Everyone was just standing around waiting to see what would happen next. They didn't have to wait long. A group of about 10 or 20 long-haired students came out from the crowd in the parking lot and gathered about 20 yards in front of the main crowd. The chants began again, and several students threw rocks and sticks at the guardsmen, most of them falling far short of the target. In all, maybe a dozen or so objects were thrown.

The guardsmen seemed confused by this "attack" and suddenly retreated up the hill and appeared to be headed back towards the Commons. At the instant they reached the top of the hill, the guardsmen turned towards the crowd down in the parking lot, the front rank dropped to one knee, the back rank stood over them. And without warning, the guard fired point blank into the parking lot below. Not just a few scattered shots, but a simultaneously volley directly into the crowd.

The demonstration had finally been broken up! As it turned out, four students had been shot dead and nine others had been wounded, one paralyzed for life, but the demonstration had been broken up!

Kent State, May 4, 1970, is history now, but





various governmental commissions are still probing the incident, trying to find out why and how such a thing could happen, and how to prevent a reoccurrence of such a terrible tragedy. If these commissions want to know why the students at Kent were demonstrating in the first place, the answers they get are going to center around President Nixon's escalation of the war in Vietnam by sending troops into Cambodia. Other reasons will include the absence of democracy in our so-called democratic system of government, and the refusal of college and university administrations to listen to the questions and suggestions of their students.

Most major polls show that students are opposed to the war in Vietnam. We are opposed to a war that we cannot possibly win. We are opposed to spreading this already senseless conflict to other areas, namely Cambodia. The students were on the Commons May 4 to voice their disapproval of President Nixon's decision to send troops to Cambodia. A peaceful assembly, until interrupted by the National Guard, to seek redress of grievances, a right guaranteed in the First Amendment, yet denied to these students.

Denied to these students because our government and our society regard students, young people in general, as second class citizens. Old enough to die for our country in wars started by

Kent Reports, Investigations

In July the Justice Department issued a memorandum to Portage County Prosecutor Ronald Kane which said the shooting deaths at Kent were "not necessary and not in order." It indicated the guardsmen were not surrounded, that none were in danger of their lives and that the situation could have been controlled without shooting.

The Ohio Attorney General said that because the guardsmen were protecting state property he doubted if any of the men would be indicted. The head of the Ohio National Guard took issue with some aspects of the Justice Department report, saying "We all regret the deaths of those four kids, but the guardsmen were on duty in a riot. There is no question but that there was a riot."

Saying that the people of Ohio and the nation are entitled to know what, if any, criminal acts took place at Kent and who should be charged with them, Gov. James Rhodes in August ordered a state probe of the affair.

Kent president Robert White says he was not advised that the Guard was moving onto campus nor that they were carrying loaded weapons. Guard officers have testified that no order to shoot was given.

our elders, but not old enough to vote. Not old enough to vote for those who represent our ideals and values, to vote for people who will represent us in the democratic process. Ignored by university administrators, who cling to their archaic teaching methods and administrative practices. Frustrated by attempts to communicate with these officials which are bogged down by miles of red tape and other unnecessary bureaucratic procedures. This is why thousands of students gathered on the Commons that fateful Monday. They only wanted to be heard, to claim the rights denied to them for so long. But what happens? Four are killed, setting off a chain of violence at campuses across the country.

What will happen when school opens this fall? What lies ahead for Kent State and the other schools hit hardest by outbreaks of violence? If nothing is done to alleviate some of the problems I have pointed out, I'm afraid that more trouble will come to these campuses, including Kent. Many moderate or conservative leaning students at Kent saw their fellow students shot down. This single factor will serve to radicalize many of these former moderates and conservatives.

The shootings at Kent will unify the student against "the establishment." The students have a rallying point for further demonstrations. The same will be true at other schools. If immediate steps are not taken to end the war in Vietnam and Cambodia, if young people are still denied the right to participate in our so-called democratic form of government, if administrators refuse to listen to the questions and suggestions of their students, another Kent State could very well happen at some other school. Another tragedy could happen at Kent State. ■

The Author

Jim Rodkey (Kent '71), a suburban Chicago native, is president of the chapter at Kent. An industrial relations major, he carries a 3.5 grade average on a 4.0 system. He has been a student senator, a dorm officer for two years, on the IFC Housing Committee and was 1969 Homecoming chairman. He is a member of the Honors College and serves on its Policy Council. In addition he is presently on the IFC and on the Student-Faculty Budgetary Committee.

