Congressmen see strike as ineffective

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and decision-makers in Washington. As harsh as it may sound for a nation "dedicated to many varying concepts of democracy," Capitol Hill would be almost completely unaffected by a student strike. Though the student strikes may receive nationwide media coverage and widespread public support, members of Congress are not moved by such isolated acts of protest, regardless of how extreme or otherwise noticeable to the general public. The immediacy of actions such as strikes and massive demonstrations lead many people to believe that policy-making in Washington can be altered by a single action. This belief is most definitely not true. The Congress and the Executive branch of the government are not as unstable in their policy decisions as the uninformed observer may suspect; to affect these decisions will take more than an outcry from the academic community.

Those attempting to act within an institution must understand the customs of that institution. Specifically, students wishing to affect the national legislative process must understand that Congress acts slowly, even on matters of great importance, and is wont to conduct business through lengthy hearings, committee meetings, and debates. Furthermore, there are apt to be significant time delays between each of the above stages of the legislative process. Those who wish to affect Congressional legislation must have the patience, wisdom, and credibility to stay the course and perservere through what at times may appear to be an excruciatingly lethargic process.

Long-term efforts which have demonstrable effect on the legislative process, and through this process, on national decision-making, include lobbying and participation in electoral politics. Those interviewed expressed the sentiment that for lobbying to be effective it must closely be connected to a current item on the legislative calendar. Thus, lobbying for an end to the war is not effective; lobbying for passage of an amendment which legislates an end to the war is effective. The lobbyist must be well-prepared, informed, and groomed in order to impress the legislative process. Those who wish to affect Congressional decision-making will have limited success, as most of those with whom we spoke stated explicitly that they welcome lobbyists from their home districts or states but do not necessarily hold in the same regard those from other parts of the country who come to their offices. Lobbying which does not require as great an investment in time and money as lobbying personally in Washington would include letter writing and the submission of petitions concerned with current legislative proposals to the signers' Congressional representatives.

A longer term involvement which, if effective, will definitely affect the national-level decision-making process with respect to Vietnam is active participation in the electoral process. Election of a President who promises to end the war, and who can be believed to fulfill his promise if elected, is a certain method to end the war. An effective national policy may also be had by campaigning on other levels.

An ancillary question arises: What is to be the response of the Institute to those students who choose to become involved in the political process? Some of the students are concerned with increasing their political efficacy. This study shows that they must turn to off-campus activities that involve the commitment of large blocks of time and effort. Many concerned students may not be willing to commit themselves to an effort of this magnitude at the expense of their education. It is relevant to ask at this point if students would be justified in expecting an allowance of sorts that would minimize their academic sacrifice. Should an education at the Institute be compatible with involvement in and study of the mechanisms that operate the nation?

We believe that it should. (The study discussed in this column was done by Robert Hunter, Norm Sandler and David Tenenbaum, all members of The Tech staff, and was undertaken on behalf of the Student Committee on Educational Policy (SCEP) and funded through SCSP and the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP). It was conducted in Washington, DC on April 27-April 29, 1972, and consisted of interviews with numerous Washington officials. Over the course of the investigation, 20 legislators (16 senators and 4 representatives) and/or their offices were contacted, as well as one White House official, in evaluating the effectiveness of the anti-war actions on the Washington political scene. - Editor)

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