

Talkin' 'Bout My Demonstration

Bob Fleck

1966

Hardly louder than the wet snow that was falling over the assembled marchers, Al Harrison softly said "All right brothers, lock your elbows and let's march for peace and freedom," as he and members of the Afro-Americans For Peace led the Mass March held Saturday, November 5, as part of the November Mobilization for Peace, Jobs, and Freedom.

The 800-plus participants gathered at the Central Methodist Church and at a cadence set by two drummers from the Veterans for Peace began the march down Woodward Ave. towards the Civic Center in downtown Detroit. Demonstrations were being held in over 60 other cities the same day.

They were accompanied by at least two dozen mounted policemen and tactical mobile unit cars who were on the scene in case Breakthrough tried to make good its threats to disrupt the march.

But they might as well have stayed home for all the trouble that arose.

A small group of the right-wingers merely stood across Woodward near Hudson's and displayed placards and banners reading "Beware Reds," "Liberate Asia," and "Wayne Commies Never Die, They Just Smell That Way."

The marchers next assembled at a rally behind the Civic Center to hear John Anderson lead off the speakers. Mr. Anderson was instrumental in initiating the Vietnam referendum in Dearborn.

"War has always meant a loss of civil liberties by the people," he pointed out, "all the way from the McCarthyism of the Korean War to unfair relocation of American Japanese in World War II to the silencing of dissent today."

Mr. Anderson further stated that the Secretary to the International Federation of Labor was told to keep quiet by Walter Reuther when the secretary spoke out against Johnson's war.

"What rank has the Rank and File? None!" he exclaimed. "Reuther has sold the working man down the river."

Mr. Anderson has been currently active in creating a unique referendum which enabled the citizens of Dearborn to voice their stand on the Viet Nam question.

Following speakers included Mr. Al Harrison from the Afro-American group, who emphasized that the American Negro's fight was in the United States for civil rights and not in a foreign land under a government which is unjust toward them.

Nick Medvecky of the Veterans Against the War also spoke, explaining that "you don't have to be in Viet Nam to love your country." Medvecky is also chairman of the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

Those participating in the demonstration included members of many anti-war groups, both pacifist and militant.

Among them were the Detroit Committee to End the War in Viet Nam, The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Veterans for Peace, The Wayne State University Committee to End the War in Viet Nam, Women for Peace, Students for A Democratic Society (including representatives from the Detroit, Ann Arbor, and Lansing Chapters) and the Trade Unionists For Peace.

Also marching were many unaffiliated students and adults who came for a variety of reasons, like Robert Eddy of Royal Oak.

“I’m downtown here because Mr. Lobsinger and Breakthrough told me I couldn’t come,” he commented “and I didn’t like that. So here I am.”

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