

# Clergy Plan Draft Action

as Detroit Papers Distort Conference

Dena Clamage

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During the past few months, the peace movement has become aware of the fact that it must pass into a new phase of protest, a phase closer to resistance than symbolic demonstrations.



Draftees at Ft. Polk, LA. Is this the only way? photo: THE TOY

Especially within the context of the draft, the most oppressive mechanism of the military apparatus, it has become clear that real support and aid should be given to those young men who, realizing that they cannot participate in the immoral Vietnam war, must search for alternatives to the draft.

Realizing this, a group of Detroit clergymen began meeting last October to plan and sponsor a Conference on the Draft, a meeting where men of draft age could meet together with competent counselors to discuss their own situations and various draft alternatives.

On December 28, at Central Methodist Church, this Conference convened with an introductory speech by the Rev. David Gracie, chairman of the Clergy Committee on the Draft. Rev. Gracie described the responsibility which clergymen opposed to the war must fulfill towards draft-age men, in responsibility to help these men explore alternatives to fighting in Vietnam.

Following this, Frank Joyce, chairman of the People Against Racism, spoke, relating the war in Vietnam to the theory of the United States as empire, engaged in a struggle to maintain and extend itself. Joyce also described the war in Vietnam as an extension of the racism prevalent within this country.

After these preliminary speeches, the Conference "got down to the nitty-gritty." James Lafferty, executive secretary of the National Lawyers Guild, the Rev. Eugene Ransom, 1<sup>st</sup> Methodist Church of Ann Arbor, and Dan Wood of the Students for a Democratic Society, presented, in panel form, descriptions of the Selective Service System with its various deferments, the position of the conscientious objector, and the position of the alternatives open to the non-cooperator, including emigration to Canada.

In the afternoon, the 125 participants divided up into small workshops to discuss with counselors questions which were not answered by the panel. Within these workshops, the question of political collective opposition to the draft itself was discussed, although superficially.

This question of opposition to the draft also arose in the general session following the workshops.- In this session, it was announced that the sponsors of the Conference planned to establish a Draft Counseling Center in the near future—more on this later.

At 8:00 p.m. at Central Methodist Church, about 300 people attended a rally on "Vietnam: The Individual's Responsibility." At this rally, Ernest Goodman, Chairman of the National Lawyers Guild, gave a speech relating the World War II Nuremberg trials to the present U.S. involvement in Vietnam. According to Goodman, the individual American, like the individual German, has a responsibility to oppose American genocide in Vietnam.

Following this, Paul Booth, former national secretary of the Students for a Democratic Society, stated the position that young people constitute a separate class within the American "garrison state," a class which is manipulated and exploited. Young people, as a class, must organize to resist the things that oppress them, among these the draft.

Now that the Conference is over, the Clergy Committee on the Draft has expanded to include lawyers, students, professionals and other members of the community, and planning for a draft Counseling Center is on its way. On January 15, the Center will hold its first counseling session at 31 King Street, Detroit. On the 15<sup>th</sup> and on subsequent Sundays from 8:00 to 10:00 p.m., young men will have the opportunity to meet with competent counselors and other young men to discuss their own draft problems and learn about alternatives to service within the armed forces.

For those who cannot attend regular sessions on Sunday evenings, special appointments with draft counselors can be made by contacting, Rev. Gracie, TR1-4750. Aside from standard literature on conscientious objection, the center will provide literature on emigration to Canada and on various deferments within the draft system.

According to Rev. Gracie, "The Center is being set up by a group of people who are opposed to the war in Vietnam. We feel that we have a responsibility toward those young men who are being forced to fight in a war which they may not understand or agree with. This responsibility includes discussing with them alternatives' to military participation in this immoral war."

Although the sponsors oppose the war in Vietnam, the center will be open to all young men who are worried about induction, regardless of political affiliation.

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