

Vietnam Summer Set for Detroit

Fifth Estate Collective

“There is too much concern about free love and not enough concern about free hate in this society,” stated William Sloan Coffin in an anti-war address at central Methodist Church on May 9, 1967.

Coffin, the Chaplain at Yale University, was speaking on behalf of Clergy and laymen concerned about Vietnam, a new addition to peace and anti-war groups in the city. Coffin is an officer of the national Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam which is co-chaired by Rev. Martin Luther King.

The local chapter was officially created on Good Friday. The May 9 meeting was its first public meeting since its formation. The meeting also served as something of a kick-off for Vietnam Summer, a program backed by Dr. King and others.

Conceived as similar to the Mississippi Summer of 1964, Vietnam Summer is intended to bring thousands of full and part time workers into communities across the country to increase anti-war sentiment.

Coffin's speech was attended by nearly 300 people, many of whom were new faces not previously seen at peace meetings.

They responded favorably to the address which attacked America's psychotic fear of Communism and the “herd mentality of wartime.” “We are scared to death of communism when we ought to be scared to life by it,” stated Coffin, who added that “the United States is a conservative country because it has a great deal to conserve.” He compared this to “underdeveloped” countries “who have nothing to conserve but poverty, illiteracy and disease.”

Coffin pointed out that after numerous briefings by high officials of the State and Defense Departments, including Secretaries Rusk and McNamara, he was convinced that John Q. Public “knows as much about the essentials of the war as they do. “ “Indeed,” he added, “the further one is from the seat of power, the closer one is to the heart of the matter.”

In responding to a question about alternative policies, Coffin, who is generally considered to be in the moderate wing of the peace movement, called for an immediate cessation of the bombing of North Vietnam but added that it is not necessary for US to formulate policy alternatives for the President, only to demonstrate our opposition to the present.

The speech closed with a renewed call to participate in Vietnam Summer which will apparently be coordinated in Detroit by Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam.

Officers of the new group are Rev. James Bristah, Chairman, Prof. William Standing, Secretary-Treasurer, and executive committee members, The Rev. George Coleman, Father Maurice Geary and The Rev. Archie Rich.



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