

The Press of Peace

Draft Resistance in Vietnam Summer

Ben Habeebe

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A good peace never did come easy.

One of the real tough things about involvement in a resistance movement is your total lack of power. When LBJ (of “Hey, Hey” fame) addressed a thousand-dollar-a-couple Democratic Party fund raising dinner in L.A. a few thousand people gathered outside to tell Lyndon they didn’t like his policy in Vietnam.

They got their heads busted—just like that.

The cops moved in and whipped their night sticks around. If someone’s head got in the way—tough shit. Here in Detroit we have nicer cops.

A couple of VIETNAM SUMMER draft resistance workers were out leafleting the Fort Wayne Induction Center. Their leaflet is kind of hip. It says:

“WHO’S BODY WILL NEXT BE FORCED INTO UNIFORM AND INDOCTRINATED TO SLAUGHTER? YOURS!”

Anyway the police and the F.B.I. were there the first time the anti-draft people appeared on the scene. No heads were busted, they just took pictures.

The next day the anti-draft people were back. The response was good. In their situation many young men visiting the induction center were glad to get their hands on anything that offered a glimmer of hope. Then this gang of young toughs appeared. Five of them, three of us. No cops. The toughs wielded a knife, a stick, and beer bottles. The draft people were armed with leaflets. They fled, but not until the toughs got in a few good licks.

As one informed observer put it, “Funny there were no cops there.”

Aside from thugs, VIETNAM SUMMER is beginning to shape up.

Community organizers have been knocking on doors on the Northwest Side and results have been a pleasant surprise. The first meeting of neighbors getting together to see what they can do about the war was held Sunday.

The draft committee has two full-time organizers and is working to have a Highland Park office opened by the time you read this.

More things are happening on the peace scene than we could possibly have room for. A new newspaper has sprung up called *The Bond*. It pegs itself “The Servicemen’s Newspaper,” except that it lacks official sanction. In its volume 1, number 1 editorial it says it grew out of “dissatisfaction with the war in Vietnam, racism in America,” etc...Alan Ginsberg and a few rock bands put on a spring rite for peace in Portland, Oregon. It drew 900 people...Rubin Butler, who won the silver star for bravery in Vietnam is now organizing veterans in Philadelphia. Of the battle of Michelin where he won his citation he says: “The newspapers reported we killed as many as 1500 Vietcong, which is a lie—we killed only nine. We occupied the area, I was there, I know.”...Add San Francisco to the growing list of cities flirting with the idea of a Viet referendum in 1968...A black minister in Baltimore resigned from a draft board there because “I couldn’t reconcile the Vietnam war with my religious convictions.” The Cleveland Plain Dealer has tapped public opinion on the war. But before holding a straw vote they presented three points of view. Representative Mendel Rivers spoke for the hawks, Senator William Fullbright pushed for a de-escalation and Boston University professor Howard Zinn took the case for getting out now.

Among other things Zinn said the propped up South Vietnamese government would never negotiate while we were there to bolster it. Plain Dealer readers preferred Zinn and his point of view by more than four to one.

The big joke in Washington of late is a variation on a theme of,—the U. S. should trade Westmoreland for one-eyed Israeli general Moshe Dayan who has captured the imagination of some traditionally anti-Semitic militarists. Dayan was in Vietnam last summer as a newspaper correspondent.

When he left he said the Viet Cong could never hope to throw the U.S. out of South Vietnam—which is certainly true. But he added that U.S. troops would never be able to stamp out the Viet Cong completely because they have deep roots among the people.

Strictly from a military point of view Dayan advised: “Get out of Vietnam.”

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