

# Hell No to the Draft

Dave Bailey

1967

October 16 was the first day of massive draft resistance in Detroit and throughout the United States. From coast to coast thousands of Americans demonstrated against the Vietnam war and against draft slavery.

In total, over 2,000 young men returned their draft cards to the Federal Government. In San Francisco over 200 cards were returned; in New York over 300; in Chicago, 250. Similar actions were held in Denver, Kansas City, St. Louis, Des Moines, and Philadelphia. In Washington D.C. prior to the giant Mobilization almost 1,000 young men said no to the draft by depositing their cards at the office of the Attorney General.

The non-cooperators are part of a loosely structured movement called Resistance, which was originally organized by Dave Harris, radical president of California's Stanford University student body. The various local groups around the country cooperate, but there is no national office.

In Detroit, seventeen young men subject to Selective Service turned in their draft cards to the Cadillac Towers draft board headquarters. In obedience to the dictates of their individual consciences, the seventeen, committed this symbolic act of civil disobedience.

The youth from the Detroit area who resisted include: David Wheeler, chairman of the Detroit Draft Resistance Committee; Frank Joyce, executive secretary of People Against Racism; Ronald Laramie, former parochial school teacher who refused to sign an infamous "loyalty oath"; Marc Anderson; Richard Biesanz; Nathan Fuchs; Ronald Halstead; Joseph Kransdorf; Jim Russo; Vincent Stuart, Jr.; Tommie Suber; William Zook; Larry Banka; Wallace Shandbrom; Marvin Atlas; Robert Connaway, and Peter Werbe, co-editor of the *Fifth Estate*.

In a statement issued to the press, the young men declared: "Whatever the consequences of our action, we refuse to be intimidated into blind conformity with



The rain didn't stop draft resisters from demonstrating on Oct. 16.

the illegitimate coercion of individual conscience. We...refuse to kill or be killed in Vietnam...We urge all men of draft age to refuse to sacrifice their lives to misdirected policies that endanger the principle of democracy of this country.”

By this action of resistance, the seventeen placed themselves in jeopardy of a maximum sentence of five years in jail and a \$10,000 fine for disobeying the “Universal” Military Training and Service Act.

At the same time, Fr. Maurice Geary announced that two churches, St. Joseph’s Episcopal (King St. and Woodward) and Christ Lutheran (756 W. Philadelphia) would be sanctuaries for those who refuse to fight against the people of Vietnam.

The only way these churches would give up the resisters sheltered within would be for the government to forcefully invade the grounds of the churches. “Our civil disobedience is a form of religious obedience,” Fr. Geary explained.

Rev. Robert E. Morrison, of St. Joseph’s, stated that “sanctuary has been a religious duty for 2,000 years.”

Rev. Frank Woodall, of Christ Lutheran, joined the other two clergymen, plus a group of over 100 supporters, on the picket line in front of the Cadillac Towers Building, local branch of Murder, Inc.

The seventeen, accompanied by their fellow demonstrators, entered the Selective Service Headquarters and turned their draft cards in to the commanding officer.

By Tuesday, Michigan Selective Service Director Col. Arthur Holmes announced that he would order an immediate investigation of the 17 draft resisters which could lead to criminal prosecution and induction.

The American Civil Liberties Union challenged the government’s steady chiseling away at the right of free speech. ACLU executive director Ernest Mazel objected “strenuously to the effort to use the Selective Service system to punish “dissenters” by removing deferments.

The draft resisters were supported in a statement issued by People Against Racism: “The American military machine is a tool for the maintenance and expansion of the American Empire. From the decimation of the Indian Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the destruction of the land and people of Vietnam, the Empire has grown at the expense of non — white people.”

Also supporting the protests were the Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, Veterans for Peace, the Detroit Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the Detroit Organizing Committee for New Politics, and the Detroit High School Student Mobilizing Committee.

It was later learned that on December 6 the Detroit area war resisters plan to stage a similar protest, this time with four or five times the number of non-cooperators as October’s protest.

## Related

- *Fifth Estate’s* Vietnam Resource Page.
- Antiwar Battle at the Pentagon, in this issue, FE #41, November 1–15, 1967

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Fifth Estate #41, November 1-15, 1967

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