

Resistance

Ron Halstead

1968

On June 19 a group of young men declared their intention to confront the draft. The ceremony, originally scheduled for St. Patrick's Church had to be quickly rescheduled for St. Joseph's Church when church authorities declared the meeting would not be of a suitable nature for a church setting.

Father Michael J. O'Hara of St. Patrick's Church began his talk by denouncing the war in Vietnam. He declared that conscientious opposition to the State is part of his religious heritage. He then read the letters from the Archdiocese of Detroit which had closed St. Patrick's to the meeting.

Rev. Robert Morrison of St., Joseph's then called those intending non-cooperation forward. Eleven young men responded. Fred Chase read a general statement which said, in part: "The war in Vietnam has brought unspeakable suffering to the people of that country...We join those persons who have already undertaken acts of civil disobedience to the laws of the United States government that provide men and arms for the war in Vietnam and wars of a similar nature. We believe that our action can help to arouse the conscience of the community which Dr. King referred to as the essence of any act of civil disobedience."

Tom Sincavitch followed. Tom recently quit the Army Reserves. He explained that the increase in hours required for riot control training brought him to his final break with the military. As inner city areas across the country become "strategic hamlets" to be "pacified", the connection between the freedom and peace movements becomes clear.

Bob Brutell, holding a "4-D" as a seminary student declared that he was "returning to Caesar that which is Caesar's." Rev. Gary Ireland spoke for himself and also for Rev. James Markunas in explaining why clergymen were moved to risk prison to try to stop the war.

Professor Jonathan Schwartz, of Wayne University's Monteith College, read the statement he sent to his draft board severing ties with them.

Don Russell, also a conscientious objector, explained why he and Ron Halstead intend to refuse to do alternative service. Mike Slaski, Fred Chase and Bob Brutell also returned their cards.

Rev. Morrison then asked the people seated to join in complicity with the young men. More than half of them came to the front of the church. Then Rev. Morrison asked for volunteers to take the draft cards to the Wayne County draft boards. This duplicated one of the events during the October "Stop the Draft Week" which led to the indictment of Dr. Spock and Rev. Coffin.

The tentative date for the next public ceremony of non-cooperation is August 6, Hiroshima Day. Anyone considering such a step should contact the Detroit Resistance.

fifth Estate

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