

# Letters

Various Authors

1969

## Dear Editors:

The letter in your August 7 issue [FE #85, August 7–20, 1969] from the corpsman in Da Nang harbor has prompted me to relate a similar experience to you.

I was a corpsman at the hospital at Fort Ord, Cal., for almost two years, where I was appalled by the condition and treatment of over 1000 patients who were packed into a hospital staffed for 250 beds. Most of these patients were Vietnam returnees, and seeing them (and in fact the whole experience) turned me on to the resistance and the revolution.

But as much as I had this evil, nightmarish experience behind me, I have been even more sickened and angered by what I experienced at a reserves summer camp at Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver which I was forced to attend. Fitzsimmons is the amputation center for the army as Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio is the burn center.

I've never seen a man die, but only because I wasn't working on one on the wards. What I did see were mutilated, broken bodies which used to be whole young men. Yet, the army hasn't given up its unjust military discipline for these men.

One man was confined to his ward indefinitely because he didn't hear me call his name when the doctor wanted to see him. I wondered if it was because he was black or would a white revolutionary troublemaker have received the same treatment?

Everywhere I went there were wheelchairs and crutches, smiling faces and pain and struggling for normalcy.

Young guys 18 and 19 years old with one, two, three and four limbs missing.

Girlfriends clinging to memories amid scarred bodies and mutilated faces. Physical and emotional pain hidden under laughter and smiles to avoid facing the reality of two missing legs and never walking again. In this hospital a thousand amputees with some leaving and arriving every day and a rising hatred and anger in my heart for the war and killing and the military industrialist pigs who support and nourish the war.

My body aches with anger and I ask why did this happen and when will it end and there is no answer. How can any man justify killing or maiming another man. What is proven and what is gained—and what is lost!

Peace and love,  
Jesse Ardin

## Dear Friends,

I basically agree with the premise as stated in your letter to Mark Rudd regarding SDS tactics [FE #85, August 7–20, 1969]. A dead revolutionary is no good at all (except to Richard Daley, Dick Nixon, et al) and in these times

there is just no possible way to match the enemy gun for gun and man for man. We cannot afford to lose good people in senseless confrontation.

I dig the fact that you people can intelligently analyze the tactics of fellow revolutionaries and come up with constructive criticism. So many of us get bogged down in agreeing with everything that any radical organization or individual or newspaper happens to say.

Each time I read an issue of the Fifth Estate I realize more and more how very important the underground press is to the entire revolutionary movement. Congratulations for putting out—one of the greatest publications in this whole wide universe.

Jerry Stinson

## Dear Sirs:

I have with increasing interest read your paper every issue. I have tried to analyze from a revolutionary standpoint, which has led me to the conclusion that the *Fifth Estate*, John Sinclair, the White Panthers and the entire Yippie under ground movement is anything but revolutionary. Long hair is not extremely radical in itself, neither are drugs, nor swear words, nor youth.

On the contrary, I must say that especially drugs are counter-revolutionary.

Drugs are an escape from reality. A Marxist must base all his thinking on a scientific analysis of reality. One of the first things Chairman Mao Tse-tung had to battle with after the people's victory in the 1949 revolution was the alarming use of opium. Drugs and Marxism-Leninism do not mix.

The most crucial point where your movement lacks is your program. It is impossible to say "revolution for the hell of it," as Abbie Hoffman. A revolutionary needs a strong Marxist-Leninist program to base all actions on. A revolution won't just happen! Certainly you cannot base your so-called revolution on struggle between generations. Tell me one revolutionary leader throughout Marxist history that led the people while he was under thirty. There are none! In fact there is no such thing as the "generation gap."

The gap is between reactionary and revolutionary thinking, and believe me, most youngsters are extremely reactionary. The gap between generations has, in your mind, taken the place of the class struggle, which separates you entirely from every kind of Marxist thinking.

Therefore I would consider you and your movement at best, the worst kind of pseudo-revolutionaries, at worst the worst kind of counter-revolutionaries.

You have so far done nothing else but alienated the American working class from every kind of revolutionary thinking.

You have also led the youth of this country into what they might have thought was a revolutionary standpoint but is just the opposite. For this you deserve nothing but the worst.

Fredrik Rodhe

(Former exchange student in the U.S.)

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*Editor's Note:* There are so many weird charges and statements in this letter one doesn't know whether to defend or deny. Why don't readers send him their views on his accusations.

## To the Editors:

Like all of us, I am very saddened and discouraged by the way the pigs have treated John Sinclair. But I am even more discouraged by the way the *Fifth Estate* wrote about the event, [FE #85, August 7–20, 1969] especially in the last two sentences of its article: "We will respond in the only way we can. Struggle!" But how many of us are going to be sacrificed to the power machine before we learn that the only way to struggle effectively is to struggle together?

The *Saturday Review* of June 28 reports that the existing marijuana laws have made felons (not necessarily convicted) out of 60 per cent of the population under thirty. Although that 60 per cent constitutes a majority, and although many of that majority are in a position to directly affect legislation, there is such a lack of communication that many are completely unaware of what is being done.

How many are aware, for example, of just what Nixon wants to do to strengthen the present dope laws? Read the current issue of *Rolling Stone*, it's all right there, and it's pretty frightening. If they can give John 10 years now, they could give any one of us 20 or life for the same 'offense' if these laws get passed.

And there is no excuse for not doing something about it. Most of us know who the good people are in government, there is no need to mention names. And these few people need all the help they can get to pass their bills, to get re-elected.

How many of us knew that the bill to change the 20-year minimum sentence for sales to a maximum of 20 was defeated in the State Senate? How many were aware that a bill ever existed? Maybe if we had known, the bill might have passed this session, rather than having to be re-written, and tried again next year.

The fact remains that unless we get together now and work together as a power unit, the pigs are going to continue to do just as they have—pick off our men one by one: Larry Belcher, Dave Valler, John Sinclair—until our ranks are reduced to leaderless chaos.

All power to the people!  
Bellona

## To the Editors:

The critique the editors of the *Fifth Estate* put forward of SDS's tactical proposals for a Chicago action are surely welcome by serious opponents of the war. For, as the editors correctly point out, SDS's "militant" rhetoric is unconstructive politically and self-defeating organizationally.

At a time when we can accurately say that a majority of the American people are opposed to the war, albeit most in a confused way, SDS, after abstaining from the anti-war movement for 4 years, has again, in effect, turned its back on the people by recklessly counselling them to come to Chicago to fight cops, "liberate high schools," and "tear up the courts." As if the revolution was around the corner! They have not only substituted these false tactics for an intelligent program that can lead to victory, but have also substituted themselves for the people, without whose participation social change is impossible. This is, as the *Fifth Estate* comments, "...adventurism of the worst kind."

What then is a correct program for the anti-war struggle? Students alone, as SDS should know, can not end the war. The war will be ended only when other sectors of the population, sectors like the labor movement, the black community, and the anti-war GIs, all of whom have indicated a growing willingness to get involved in the movement, are solidly brought in under the banner of Immediate Withdrawal of All Troops.

The possibility of accomplishing this exists today. It is the task, nay the duty, of all those opposed to the war to reach out and involve these new sectors—but SDS's ultra-left posture erects barriers to doing this. At a time when union bureaucrats, under pressure from the rank and file, can be brought in, SDS rhetoric only serves to give them an excuse to cop out, piously lecturing the workers on "irresponsible anarchy and violence."

As for the GIs, considering the oppressive nature of the Army and the fact that GIs can be barred from participating in demonstrations that are advertised as being illegal (although they can organize for and take part in ones otherwise motivated) what GI in his right mind would open himself and his buddies up to a sure fire victimization?

The anti-war movement must be massive, all inclusive, militant, and in the streets in a dramatic—and most importantly—visible way. Consider the possibilities flowing from such actions. A strike by those workers involved in supplying the war effort (e.g. food to the training bases) would be a pretty effective action but in order to get from one place to another workers have to be afforded the chance to take a first step.

Likewise a great anti-war movement in the Army where thousands of GIs in Nam are demanding that they be brought home would also be pretty effective. This process is going on now, but it must be supported intelligently by a movement that doesn't alienate them or undercut them.

And black people who are most effected by the war certainly are not going to involve themselves with paternalists who ignore indigenous leadership, project a bloodbath, and haughtily parade through their streets.

Should revolutionaries work with liberals in the anti-war movement? The *Fifth Estate* editors seemingly think not.

Yet the fact is that most of the people in this country are liberals, that is, they don't like what the system is doing but they more or less support the system. We in the Young Socialist Alliance say lets involve them, work with them, and change their minds.

The *Fifth Estate* errs in attacking certain actions because they involve coalitions; with liberals, not just pure revolutionaries, and that they are, to quote the editors, "just against war" and not anti-imperialist.

What the editors, we suggest, fail to understand is that in the words of a recent Guardian editorial, "any action demanding immediate withdrawal of troops from Vietnam is objectively anti-imperialist, even if its participants have only liberal or pacifist intentions."

Thousands have been radicalized by the anti-war movement as they have moved from a position of opposing this particular war to one of opposing the system which calls forth these wars, the capitalist system. Radicals who have themselves come to this realization ill serve the radical movement as a whole when they, by insisting that people be "anti-imperialist" before they are acceptable, slam the door in the newcomers' faces.

Moreover, we as revolutionaries, as internationalists, have an elemental duty to our Vietnamese comrades to organize as many people as possible to demand—and eventually get—the ruling class of this country to withdraw all troops from Vietnam.

For after all, when America's overwhelming and counterrevolutionary intervention is terminated, who, if not the NLF, will be the victor?

Close down the schools October 15<sup>th</sup>!

Close them down again November 14<sup>th</sup>!

Forward to Washington November 15<sup>th</sup>!

Michael Smith

Detroit Young Socialist Alliance

## Dear Sirs:

The Sinclair bust can best be described as a "lesson in Power." One must first understand the dynamics of power and how it is enforced.

Racist imperialist Amerika cannot tolerate any threats to its "security and wellbeing." Like any other nation, if threatened it will act violently in order to keep itself "in power," that is, subjugation of millions of oppressed blacks and repression of the youth cultural and political revolutions.

We find power and unity in numbers, and now, one of our leaders has been taken from us by the bourgeois and imperialist forces which rule Amerika.

We have suffered a temporary setback, but we will find a new leader and a new unity to replace the one that was destroyed. Amerika will act quickly to stamp us out, but we must never let that happen. Amerika is a sick, sick nation.

Its imperialist wars are failing and its people are demanding to be treated justly, that is, justice for oppressed black and white.

Capitalist economy is experiencing inflation and youth are discontented and disillusioned by the so called "Amerikan Dream."

How can we work with a society that seeks our destruction? We will not cower under the mailed fist of suppression. But we will stand up, and we will be united. We will LIBERATE AMERIKA.

L. Hafeli

subscriber

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