Resist Newsletter, Mar. 1969

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Discussion at the February meeting of the RESIST Steering Committee focused on the continuing war, the halting negotiations in Paris, the apathy (exhaustion) of the anti-war movement, and related matters. If we were now in many of us felt, the war would probably be moving toward termination and not through another period of American escalation. Instead, we read in the New York Times, buried on page 30, that American casualties are rising and that the United States is dropping record-breaking bomb tonnage on South Vietnam. Our sons are still being drafted, in spite of the Nixon administration's talk about ending the draft. (33,700 were drafted in February; 33,100 will be called in March, 33,000 in April.) What has happened to the pressure that culminated last year in Johnson's March 31st "withdrawal" speech? We are nearly a year away from that alleged victory for the anti-war movement—and the war is still being fought with the same grimness and horror. Why have our voices been softened or silenced?

NEW DIRECTIONS

We have been seduced by promises of negotiation, by the vision of a peaceful Vietnam in the not-too-distant future. Because of that vision, some of us have begun, in the past year, other political work. Young people, among the first to oppose the Vietnam war, have, for example, been extending their concerns to opposing militarism and authoritarianism in high schools, to making universities more responsive to the needs of black students, and to developing a more adequate analysis of the sources of racism and militarism in the United States. Thus, while we continue to support draft counseling centers and Resistance groups, we have also begun to support high school organizing projects, like those of the Wisconsin Draft Resistance Union, which begin "where the kids are" with issues of dress codes, content of courses, "tracking," and so on. We have given financial support to groups organizing against repression, as in Wilmington and Chicago. Other projects, such as support for Army newspapers and armistown coffee houses, extend us in yet another direction. We do not regret these extensions: a healthy anti-war movement must understand that repressive institutions of various sorts work together to support a war-minded society.

At the same time, the sense of the February Steering Committee meeting was that we want to support and help to organize a series of specifically anti-war programs which, although occurring in various parts of the country, will have national impact and visibility.

To foster these programs, members of the Steering Committee are preparing a statement about the current state of the war and the negotiations, the expansion of militarism in American society, and the relationships of the anti-war movement to other efforts to achieve fundamental changes in American society. This statement, an extension of the Call to Resist Illegitimate Authority, will appear in the Newsletter as soon as it is ready.

SPRING PROGRAM

RESIST will be participating in the following events:

February 26 - March 27: A speaking tour for Peggy Duff and Claude Bourdet of the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace. They have had extensive conversations with the Vietnamese in Paris and can provide us with important insights into the negotiations, European views of American foreign policy, and the need for American responses to events in Vietnam. RESIST is cooperating with other U.S. members of the ICDP in arranging their schedule, and we urge you to make use of their presence in your community.

April 3 - 6: We will be cooperating with other members of the National Action Group (NAG - i.e., American Friends Service Committee, Clergy and Laymen Concerned About Vietnam, Women for Peace, Fellowship of Reconciliation, etc.) in planning a series of activities in a limited number of cities; others may wish to use these days to focus on the theme of the NAG groups: Resistance and Renewal.

Late March - Early April: We are helping to organize a series of meetings for Americans with North Vietnamese and NLF delegates to the Paris talks. We expect that local groups will raise the funds for the trips, will send to these Paris consultations people who plan to be involved in the next two activities, and will make arrangements for them to reach a wide audience when they return. Further details will be available shortly through RESIST area contacts.

April 21 - 25: A Week to Confront Militarism on Campus. The March 4 research strike originated at MIT and spread to Cornell, Yale, Johns Hopkins, and other schools. The Week will permit an extension of March 4 activities and will provide a framework for on- and off-campus actions, particularly by the adult anti-war movement. We expect to focus on issues such as military research, ROTC, and ABM construction.

April 20 - May 1: National poetry readings will take place in ten different cities on
successive evenings. Participants will include Robert Bly, Allen Ginsberg, Denise Levertov, Galway Kinnell, and many other poets who have been strong opponents of the war and supporters of resistance.

May 22: A RESIST direct action, still to be defined.

We do not expect that these, or any other set of actions, will by themselves reanimate vocal and strong opposition to the war. But the war will not just go away if we remain quiet and do nothing. We ask you to join us in action.

--Florence Howe and Paul Lauter

POSTSCRIPT TO THE COUNTER-INAGURAL

One force in the Movement could not be ignored by those who participated in the Counter-Inaugural: the large number of people throwing rocks and mud at the police to "expose the violence of the system." Many of these people, alienated and infuriated by America's continuing policies in support of the Vietnam war, racism, and poverty, feel that the battle being waged by the nonviolent peace groups has already been lost. They had little time or sympathy for the protestations of their fellow demonstrators. We, in turn, might be tempted to try to ignore them— a fringe element whose way of doing politics is essentially different from ours. To do so would be a serious mistake.

Why have some among us become angry and violent in their struggle while others continue demonstrating, organizing, and hoping? Among the former, it is merely a matter of tactics to some; to others, however, it is a matter of survival. Those of us who can gather together in a warm restaurant after a demonstration to analyze our latest effort have probably never felt the despair of those dependent on welfare, those suppressed by the racism in our society, those forced to carry the largest part of the burden of fighting the war because they have nothing with which to buy their way out. They feel the "violence of the system" every day— can we castigate them for trying to make it more obvious to less-experienced viewers?

A national demonstration, such as the Counter-Inagural, is a rather pleasant way of airing one's convictions; for most, little effort need be made except at the time it occurs. It cannot, however, ever be expected to achieve results of the sort achieved by day-to-day work on developing and implementing local programs to combat poverty, racism, and the war. We will win our battle only if we are willing to do this work, using national demonstrations only to highlight accomplishments or demands. One measure of the effectiveness of our methods will be the extent to which those now alienated because of hopelessness respond and begin again to work with us, instead of against us, to build a just society. --Arlene Siegel

NATIONAL DAYS OF RESISTANCE AND RENEWAL

The National Action Group (NAG) is planning four days (April 3-6) of local activities around the theme "Resistance and Renewal." In 100 cities and towns people will organize events concerned with issues relevant to their communities. Actions being planned include walks, vigils, open-air rallies; campus actions; special religious services; and discussions with public officials.

April 3 is the first day of Passover, and in some places people will invite GI's to community seders. April 4 is Good Friday and the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King; the SCLC is planning memorial services and other activities. On April 6, Easter Sunday, sunrise services will be held across from military institutions in certain cities. All the actions, though highly decentralized, will focus on resistance to poverty, suppression, and war and on renewal of our commitment to persist in our common struggle.

THE ICDP TOUR

Peggy Duff and Claude Bourdet, General Secretary and President of the International Confederation for Disarmament and Peace, will be in the United States from February 26 to March 15 to "Make ICDP, its services, activities and publications more widely known to ... members of affiliated organizations and to the public generally." Primarily an organization devoted to promoting social change through nonviolent direct action, the Confederation attempts to coordinate peace movements throughout the world for the elimination of the causes of war and its instruments. To accomplish these ends, ICDF works with organizations such as SANE, RESIST, War Resisters League, and Our Generation.

Some of the issues being discussed during the tour are: the publication of accurate information on the NLF and the Saigon regime; the possibility of arranging meetings with American congressmen and senators with NLF representatives in Paris; a projected peace mission to Saigon; the coordination of contacts with draft resisters throughout the world; and the promotion of international support for amnesty.

The tour may be extended for Claude Bourdet to March 17 or 18 and for Peggy Duff to March 27 if there are requests for additional engagements. Contact: Tudja Crowder, SANE, 381 Park Avenue, New York, NY, (212) 899-3442.

"Life begins on the other side of despair." --Jean-Paul Sartre

Milwaukee Fourteen News

The state trial of the Milwaukee Fourteen is now set for May 5. They have also been indicted by a federal grand jury, and it is possible that the federal trial will precede the state one.

"Delivered into Resistance" can be ordered, at $1./copy, from the RESIST office. Information on bulk ordering, at a lower single-copy price, is also available.
NEWS IN BRIEF

Boston: Support the Boston Draft Resistance Group by hiring their own crew of experienced housepainters to take care of your interior painting now and exterior painting in the Spring. The charge is $2.75/hr. per painter (25% goes to BDBG). Call the BDBG office or Bob Wilfong in Needham at 444-1063.

New York: Demonstrations were held on Feb. 14 and 17 to support the Presidio 27. One took place at the Army in Manhattan, and the other was outside the U.S. Armed Forces Recruiting Station in the middle of Times Square. Both demonstrations were organized by the Catholic Peace Fellowship and the Resistance.

Peterburg, Virginia: Four prisoners charged in Federal court that they have been denied rights to "work releases" & "education releases" because of their status as draft resisters. The officials refused this discrimination and the case was dismissed. (Complaints of the refusal of these programs have also come from the draft resisters at Allenwood.)

Tacoma, Washington: The Shelter Half coffee house, operated by an antwar group for Ft. Lewis soldiers has received an order revoking its business license effective Feb. 20. The coffee house is set to offer sandwiches and soft drinks, and a place for discussion. The trouble came easily when two youths, 11 and 15 yrs. old, were found operating the soccer machine there and the staff was charged with contributing to the delinquency of minors.

Springfield, Illinois: The Springfield Council of Churches, confronted by the American Friends, voted that local clergymen shall take instructions in draft counseling and start making themselves available. An impressive start in a conservative city.

Little Rock, Arkansas: Mike Mattin has been taken away from his work on the Arkansas Peace Information Center. The Center had recently begun to show signs of success when Mike was arrested for non-registration.

Des Moines, Iowa: The Selective Service board has drafted 26 year old peace corpsman David Carlson despite the petition of 300 Saipan Islanders. David has been working on Saipan (in the Mariana Islands) to build homes that will withstand Pacific tycoons. The islanders complained that if their only architect leaves, all their work and money will be wasted.

Pasadena, Calif: A longterm, multiple sanctuary has been in progress since Dec. at the Friends Meeting House. Several AWOL servicemen have officially taken sanctuary there and others have lived there for varying lengths of time. The servicemen include marines from Camp Pendleton. One, Neil Blandon, who went AWOL on August 21, 1968, spent 41 days in sanctuary. He was arrested in San Diego, after leaving the sanctuary several times to leaflet induction centers and speak to several groups.

Many thanks to ACLU attorney Paul Halvenek for putting the Presidio situation concisely: "Military justice is to justice what military music is to music."
PRESIDIO - CAUSE FOR MUTINY

27 men risk up to a maximum of 50 years confinement at hard labor each on charges of mutiny for staging a non-violent sit-down strike in which they were protesting the killing of a fellow prisoner and reprehensible conditions at the Presidio Stockade, Calif. Three of these men have already been sentenced. Pvt. Nesrey D. Sood, 26 yrs. old and father of three, was convicted on Feb. 13 of mutiny and received 15 years at hard labor, forfeiture of all pay and allowances, and a dishonorable discharge. Pvt. Louis Oszczeplinski received 16 years at hard labor, and Pvt. Laurence Reidel received 14 years. Sood was the only one of the three who was able to retain a civilian co-counsel.

The strike occurred on Oct. 14, three days after 19 year old Pvt. Richard Bunch had asked a guard what he would do if he walked away from work detail. The guard responded that he would shoot. And so he did--in the back. Bunch was considered by his fellow inmates to have been mentally disturbed. His mother had tried to obtain psychiatric aid for him before he was placed in the stockade for repeated AWOL's. The guard, who remains unnamed, has been absolved of all blame--justifiable homicide.

The Presidio 27 refused to return to their cells and sang protest songs while awaiting for the Corrections Officer in order to list their grievances. When the CO did arrive, he did not consider it to be the correct time for negotiations. He instead read them the definition and penalty for mutiny. Because of the singing and feedback on the loud speaker system, the men could not hear his commands.

Prisoners' affidavits testified to the subhuman conditions at Presidio--unsanitary shower and toilet facilities, overcrowding, inadequate food, and harrassment by the guards. The affidavits were used by the defense to show that the "mutiny" was no more than a demonstration objecting to conditions at the stockade, not an attempt at political usurpation.

A court martial on mutiny charges was ordered by Lieut. Gen. Stanley R. Larsen, despite the recommendation of hearing officer, Cpt. Richard Millard, in a pretrial investigation that the defendants be accused only of willful disobedience. The General also ignored the plea of 35 clergymen who testified that the charges were "inhumane and intolerable."

The defense for Sood's trial pointed out that the protest was entirely peaceful; it was spontaneous; and there was no other effective way of presenting grievances; but the prosecution balanced and topped these points by advising the Board that punishment should be sufficiently severe so as to serve as a "deterrent" to others in the future.

Convicted innocent Oszczeplinski complains that "The reason I was out there was that one of the prisoners got shot and killed and I was afraid I might be next. One of the guards shoved a gun in my face once. I wasn't trying to take over no military authority when I was out there on the lawn. I didn't know any order was given to get up."

While appeals to higher courts are going to be made, keep in mind that these men must still suffer through perhaps years of imprisonment while awaiting the results of these lengthy procedures. Put your shock and outrage in writing and send it to: Sec. Melvin Laird, Defense Dept., Washington, D.C.; Secretary Stanley Resor, 4959 Hillbrook Lane NW, Washington, D.C.; Mr. Jordon, General Counsel, U S Army, Pentagon; Col Chilcoat, J A G office Pentagon. Send $ to National Committee for Defense of Military Prisoners, 330 Ellis, rm 413, San Francisco, Calif. 94102.

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