

Common Cause: Shared Perspectives Among Anti-Vietnam War Activists, 1965-1971

by

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Common Cause: Shared Perspectives Among Anti-Vietnam War Activists, 1965-1971

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## **ABSTRACT**

Peace activism has had a constant presence within the broader landscape of social movements in American history. From the pre-revolutionary era to the present, there have always been Americans animated by the idea of peace and eager to agitate for it. Diverse perspectives abound, from strict religious pacifism to softer, secular, and politically motivated non-violence. The Vietnam war, combined with the cultural transformations of the long-1960s, thrust the undercurrent of peace advocacy into the spotlight, bringing what was once a niche movement to much greater prominence.

This thesis concentrates on the rhetoric, politics, and tactical debates of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement from 1963-1971. The rise and fall of the movement's influence is analyzed as part of a greater trend in social activism, beginning in 1900. The peace movement of the Vietnam era was novel in its demographic makeup and ideological tapestry, but it did not come to life in a vacuum, and the activists responsible for its ascendance made conscious efforts to connect their movements with those that preceded them. To that end, this work makes use wherever possible of the writings of activists and leaders of the antiwar movement. Much of this material was retrieved from the Swarthmore Peace Collection, specifically the papers of Vietnam Summer, National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, New Mobilization Committee, Daniel and Philip Berrigan, and the papers of Cora Weiss. Additional primary material was retrieved digitally, in the cases of Students for a Democratic Society, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and the War Resister's League. Utilizing these documents, this thesis demonstrates the commonalities of otherwise discrete antiwar organizations. Though the myriad antiwar groups of the Vietnam-era differed greatly in their makeup and ideologies, they retained a constant connection to the shared history of civil rights and peace activism of the twentieth century.

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## Appendix A: Abbreviations, acronyms, and initialisms

Full name	Abbreviated name
Alliance for Labor Action	ALA
American Federation of Government Employees	AFGE
American Federation of Labor – Congress of Industrial Organization	AFL-CIO
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees	AFSCME
American Friends Service Committee	AFSC; Quakers (colloquial)
Black Panther Party for Self Defense	BPP
Catholic Peace Fellowship	CPF
Central Intelligence Agency	CIA
Clergy and Laity Concerned – succeeded by Clergy and Laity Concerned About Vietnam	CALC; CALCAV
Cleveland Area Peace Action Council	CAPAC
Committee for a Sane Nuclear Development	SANE
Committee for Nonviolent Action	CNVA
Communist Party of the United States of America	CPUSA
Congress of Racial Equality	CORE
Counterintelligence Program	COINTELPRO
Democratic National Convention	DNC
Democratic Republic of Vietnam	DRV
Federal Bureau of Investigation	FBI
Fellowship of Reconciliation	FOR
GI – Civilian Alliance for Peace	GI-CAP
House Un-American Activities Committee	HUAC
International Longshore and Warehouse Union	ILWU
Inter-University Committee for Debate on Foreign Policy	IUCDFP
Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace	LLAP
League for Industrial Democracy	LID
May 2 <sup>nd</sup> Movement	M2M
Montgomery Improvement Association	MIA
National Association for the Advancement of Colored People	NAACP
National Coalition Against War, Racism, and Repression	NCAWRR
National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War	CCCW
National Liberation Front	NLF

National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam	MOBE (also referred to as Mobe)
National Peace Action Coalition	NPAC
National Security Council	NSC
National Student Association	NSA
New Mobilization Committee	New MOBE
Peoples Coalition for Peace and Justice	PCPJ
Progressive Labor Party	PL
Rapid American Withdrawal	RAW
Republican National Convention	RNC
Reserve Officers' Training Corps	ROTC
Retail Workers and Department Store Union	RWDSU
Revolutionary Youth Movement	RYM
Socialist Workers Party	SWP
Southern Christian Leadership Conference	SCLC
Student League for Industrial Democracy	SLID
Student Mobilization Committee	SMC
Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee	SNCC
Student Peace Union	SPU
Students for a Democratic Society	SDS
Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	USSR
United Auto Workers	UAW
United Nations	UN
United States	US
Viet Cong	VC
Vietnam Day Committee	VDC
Vietnam Moratorium Committee	VMC
Vietnam Veterans Against the War	VVAW
Voice of Women (Canada)	VOW
War Resisters League	WRL
Women Strike for Peace	WSP
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom	WILPF
Women's Peace Union	WPU
Young Socialist Alliance	YSA
Youth International Party	YIP; Yippies



## I. Introduction

The antiwar movement of the Vietnam era, memorialized in public memory and the historical record as diverse, disorganized, and disunited, was held together by greater unity than commonly asserted. From 1963-1971, thousands of activists organized innumerable committees, conventions, protests, and organizations to register their dissent. At no point was there tactical or political unity across the “movement,” which is better described as a combination of many movements. Despite this, the antiwar movement was united by several common threads, and these threads enabled the movement to exert significant pressure on the American government in a manner that had never been seen.

Over the course of the Vietnam War, Americans expressed a wide range of differing opinions about the conflict, and their positions were rarely set in stone. Not everyone who opposed the war, however, can be considered a part of the movement to end it. For the purposes of this analysis, the antiwar movement is defined as the loose collection of individuals and groups who both opposed the Vietnam War and engaged in some type of expression of dissent, such as protesting, petitioning, tax resistance, or any other public tactic. Simply choosing to vote for a political candidate who expressed opposition to the war would not fit into this framework, for instance. The combination of both antiwar sentiment and dissenting action is thus the benchmark used in this analysis to determine who was and was not a part of the “antiwar movement.”

Additionally, the antiwar movement was populated by a wide range of political ideologies. As a general, non-absolute rule, most antiwar advocates were not conservatives. Beyond this, however, the antiwar constituency ran the spectrum from solidly moderate voters to committed leftwing radicals. This predictably led to uncomfortable tensions

between some organizers, tensions which are explored in greater depth beginning in chapter two. Critical to the Vietnam-era peace movement however was the fact that most antiwar organizations and individuals were most successful when they focused on their shared histories and shared values, values that often superseded their commitment to any ideology. Across the ideological spectrum of antiwar organizers, a common affinity to democracy, particularly in a bottom-up, grass-roots approach was apparent. Most organizers operated under the shared belief that their segment of society, be it demographically, culturally, or ideologically, was inadequately represented in American government. Beyond the central immediate task of ending the war, activists all had a more expansive vision for change in American society, whether that change meant greater political participation among students, a societal moral revolution along the principle of non-violence, or a radical reformation of racial divides. Even as the antiwar movement was divided along its differing ideological priorities, activists all shared the belief that the war stood as an impediment to their vision of a better country, shaping the tenor of their activism and its focus towards the domestic harms brought about by the war.

At its core, the Vietnam-era antiwar movement was the continuation and merger of two separate social movements that preceded it: the peace movement(s), and the Civil Rights Movement. Within the broad antiwar constituency, individual groups essentially operated in their own self-interest. Student radicals saw the antiwar movement as a tool with which they could advance their antipoverty and antiracism initiatives, labor unionists saw it in the language of worker exploitation, and old leftists saw it as an avenue to agitate against American imperialism. The groups which emerged in unified antiwar opposition, despite their ideological diversity, all saw the war as an attack not only on the lives of the

combatants and civilians, but as an attack on their domestic initiatives. Furthermore, those involved in the movement(s) to end the war, from the women of Women Strike for Peace to the radicals of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement, felt that they were important movers of social change. They had optimism that they could not only change the course of the war, but the course of American society in general. For all groups involved, their commitment was rooted in a common, nebulous articulation of democratic principles, principles that differed in definition across the movement, but nevertheless offered activists a common starting point.

The initial impetus for a national antiwar movement began with student activists. Over the course of the war, student radicals saw themselves as the vanguard of a sweeping cultural movement, and they maintained centrality for the entire duration of the movements to end the war. This was particularly true in times of coalitional disunity, when students seized public attention while the more established elements of the peace movement debated over tactics and ideology. Critically, however, student activism was never truly the bulk of antiwar agitation. Peace activists of all stripes, from all backgrounds, were members of the chorus of dissent from the start of the war, and these activists – while responsive to the changes in national attitude effectuated by student mobilization against the war – pursued their own course independent of the student-led movement.

The earliest evidence of this non-student, unified coalition strategy began in the fall of 1965. On August 6, 1965, American Nazi Party members attacked Staughton Lynd, David Dellinger, and Bob Moses with red paint while they marched against the Vietnam War in Washington D.C. The marchers' organization was the Assembly of Unrepresented People, and the goal of their four-day demonstration was to recite a declaration of

consciousness within the halls of Congress. Receiving over 6,000 signatures, the declaration asserted total refusal to assist in the American war efforts in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic. The assembly was consciously intersectional; Lynd and Moses had spent the previous few years agitating for civil rights in the South as part of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) while Dellinger was associated with a menagerie of pacifist groups. Other organizers included Donna Allen of Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and Eric Weinberger of the Committee for Nonviolent Action (CVNA). Groups like Catholic Worker and the War Resisters League (WRL) supported the assembly as well. Borrowing language and tactics of the civil rights groups who preceded it, the Assembly offered a glimpse into the shared ambitions and perspectives held by antiwar activists, perspectives that often got overshadowed by petty factional squabbles.<sup>1</sup> The Assembly was not the first national demonstration against the war, nor was it the biggest, but it served as a poignant example of the sheer cultural and intellectual diversity of activists. That these groups and individuals had enough in common to organize together is remarkable and deserves considerable attention.

Historians often trace the beginnings of the Vietnam antiwar movement to two sources: the pre-existing peace movement that emerged in response to nuclear proliferation throughout the 1950s, and the New Left, an intellectually minded collection of academics and college-aged people who united to support the goals of the Port Huron Statement and left-liberal reforms while rejecting the Marxist-Leninist frameworks within the Communist and Socialist parties. Most popular narratives take the same line: that as the movement progressed, so did the stock of participants, each with their own ideals and perspectives.

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<sup>1</sup> Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* (New York, NY: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 51–54.

Rapidly, members of the “old” (socialist) left, trade unionists, political moderates, and more were assimilated into the movement, and disputes over tactics eventually split it apart. Reality is more nuanced; from the very beginning of “the movement,” coalitions were broad. Trade unions supported the formation of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in 1960, moderate women marched against the war with WSP, and SNCC adopted a practical opposition to the draft based on the Selective Service System’s racist biases. These groups shared a common devotion to the principles of democracy and liberty, and they maintained optimism (especially in the beginning) regarding their power to enact it.

The earliest national demonstration against administration policy occurred just weeks after the first US Marines landed in Vietnam, over the Easter holiday in 1965. SDS, a fledgling offshoot of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), was the sole sponsor. Between 15,000 and 20,000 people marched in Washington, D.C., demanding through signs, chants, and speeches for President Lyndon B. Johnson to discontinue the war against Vietnam.<sup>2</sup> Foreshadowing the intellectual development that was to come, SDS president Paul Potter spoke to the demonstrators, articulating his belief that the war was a symptom of systemic sickness in American democracy, an institutionalized addiction to power over others.<sup>3</sup> Civil rights activists who attended the march highlighted this theme of democratic sickness further. Bob Moses, of SNCC, implored activists to organize through the South, connecting the fight for morality abroad to the fight for equal rights at home.<sup>4</sup> Mass marches became a focal point of activism in the US after the April 17 march, and

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<sup>2</sup> “15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War: Students Picket at White House,” *New York Times*, April 18, 1965.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Potter, “The Incredible War,” in *Lyndon B. Johnson and American Liberalism: A Short Biography with Documents*, by Bruce J. Schulman (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin Books, 1995), 229–32.

<sup>4</sup> “Murder of Sammy Younge and SNCC’s Statement on Vietnam,” January 9, 1966, retrieved from *SNCC Digital Gateway*, <https://snccdigital.org/events/murder-of-sammy-younge-snccs-statement-on-vietnam/> [accessed July 31, 2023].

“antiwarriors”, as they were sometimes referred to in the literature of the time, adopted varying acts of civil disobedience and non-violent resistance.

SDS was not the first group to speak out against the war, but to the chagrin of liberal-internationalist peace organizations like the Committee for Sane Nuclear Development (SANE), SDS was the earliest to sponsor a national march. SDS did not remain the vanguard of the antiwar movement for long, however; paralyzed by a byzantine structure, SDS failed to organize in a meaningful capacity against the war until the end of 1966. Throughout the remainder of the movement to end the war, the movement seldom coalesced around a proper national organization. The relevance of various groups, with their disparate political perspectives, waxed and waned; ad hoc committees cropped up around the country, and national initiatives sponsored events but with little staying power. The result was a constantly shifting tactical approach, never settling on the validity of mass marches, draft resistance, or civil disobedience.

As soon as protests began, the Johnson administration embarked on a national tour for public opinion, attempting to simultaneously placate and discredit the antiwar movement. Seeking popular consensus, administration officials toured the nation’s campuses drumming up support for the war machine and understating the degree of American troop commitment in Vietnam. Johnson failed to quell dissent, and in the fall of 1965, antiwar activity ramped up again, this time led by the more established pacifist and anti-nuclear organizations. The Berkeley, California-based Vietnam Day Committee (VDC) designated October 15-16, 1965, as International Days of Protest. SANE sponsored a demonstration in Washington D.C. close after, on November 27. In the interim, Norman

Morrison—a Quaker pacifist—self-immolated on the lawn of the Pentagon on November 2.

Between 1966 and 1971, antiwar organizations staged countless actions in every major city in the country. Draft resisters began a systemic rejection of the selective service system, and radical pacifists counseled them on the conscientious objection process. In a move criticized by moderate civil rights activists, SNCC publicly adopted an antiwar and antidraft stance as official policy. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. joined the movement, delivering a speech at the 1967 Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace which argued that the war abroad was distinctly harmful to the US. In 1968, the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) echoed King's sentiments and proclaimed the war an extension of American racism abroad. In these three instances, civil rights groups made clear their opposition to the war on the basis that it undermined the very initiatives for which they fought for at home. The war was a direct impediment to the domestic goals of integration and poverty reduction. As a rule, the Johnson administration reflexively rejected any challenges to his foreign policy goals in Asia. Believing firmly in President Eisenhower's containment theory, and self-beholden to abide by President Kennedy's rejection of troop withdrawal, Johnson repeatedly escalated the war in its first three years.

Antiwar demonstrations grew in numbers, frequency, and geographic scope, but the war remained popular with the American people overall, and the antiwar movement was miniscule in the face of the commanding popular mandate given to President Johnson. Polls conducted by Gallup showed that the war was supported by a supermajority of Americans;

only 26 percent of respondents in 1966 identified as a “dove” for foreign policy.<sup>5</sup> As the antiwar movement nationalized, it maintained a peculiar unpopularity which plagued it for most of its existence, even in later moments when Americans broadly disapproved of public policy. In a 1969 Gallup poll, for instance, 60 percent of respondents felt that the antiwar movement harmed the country, even though 50 percent agreed that the war was immoral.<sup>6</sup>

Attempts to court the American public consciousness were a constant source of tension within the movement, and partly responsible for its decentralization and fragmentation. Coalitions formed, broke apart, and reformed along new lines in a constant shifting. National umbrella organizations formed several times over, but at no point did the antiwar activists have a unified and stable central organization. Campaigns like Mobilization to End the War and Vietnam Moratorium were exceptions, not the rule. Coupled with legislators’ public redbaiting, the national intelligence agencies engaged in clandestine repression of the antiwar movement in order to exploit this organizational weakness.<sup>7</sup> While the US waged war against Vietnamese Communism in Southeast Asia, it simultaneously waged war against the antiwar movement at home.

The government and activists engaged in a constant push and pull. As Washington escalated US involvement in the war in Vietnam, the size, frequency, and intensity of demonstrations grew. Occasionally, tensions erupted violently, as they did at the 1968

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<sup>5</sup> Lydia Saad, “Gallup Vault: Hawks vs. Doves on Vietnam,” *Gallup Vault* (May 24, 2016) <https://news.gallup.com/vault/191828/gallup-vault-hawks-doves-vietnam.aspx> [accessed November 25, 2022].

<sup>6</sup> Charles DeBenedetti and Charles Chatfield, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 264.

<sup>7</sup> 89 Cong. Rec. 27099 (October 15, 1965) (statement of Sen. John Stennis); Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1974), 226–30; Nelson Blackstock, *COINTELPRO: The FBI’s Secret War on Political Freedom* (New York, NY: Monad Press, 1975), 137–41.



Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where Chicago police attacked antiwar protesters and bystanders alike, and arrested hundreds of people. Eight antiwar organizers were indicted and then acquitted on conspiracy charges. Some, like David Dellinger and Thomas Hayden, were convicted of crossing state lines to incite a riot, but these charges were later reversed.<sup>8</sup> By 1968, the movement diversified further, with segments of organized labor joining the chorus alongside certain civil rights leaders. In January 1968, UAW Local 600, a union local with 45,000 members, endorsed the policy declaration of the 1967 Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace. By 1969, numerous public sector unions reorganized along shared opposition to the war, and the UAW left the pro-war AFL-CIO altogether. At the same time, radical antiwar activists and Black Liberationists joined forces within the Black Panther Party. These developments spurred an unfavorable government response, and the FBI ratcheted up their repression to new levels, as both the Bureau and the CIA were ordered by President Johnson and then by President Nixon to prove that the antiwar movement was an international Communist conspiracy.

That conspiracy was never found. The antiwar movement was genuinely homegrown, a democratic extension of American sentiments around liberty and prosperity. Despite the movement's strength, however, it was not until the middle of Richard Nixon's first term that the US—in the process of "Vietnamization"—began to deescalate. Committed antiwarriors continued their demonstrations, at this point believing across the movement that anything short of immediate withdrawal was unacceptable and immoral. By the war's end in 1975, most organizations that arose during the war had ceased to exist. SDS, for instance, was ripped apart by factionalism (and the FBI) in 1969. Some

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<sup>8</sup> DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 223-228.

organizations, like WSP, adopted new causes. Many radicals, bent on changing the system itself, pivoted back towards domestic campaigns of anti-racism and anti-sexism. At their core, however, the constituent components of the movement were always united in purpose.

### **A. Historiographical Perspective**

The Vietnam War as a broad field is densely researched by historians. Similarly, the 1960s as a cultural movement, both in the US and globally, has been thoroughly examined. Most of this examination, however, is not strictly dedicated to the antiwar movement itself. Despite this, several historians have addressed the antiwar movement, either in full or in part, and their analyses form the background for this research. Histories of the antiwar movement fall in three categories: narrow studies of specific organizations or individuals; broader comprehensive studies of the Vietnam-era peace and antiwar movements; and even broader studies of American peace activism over a lengthier timespan.

Among the earliest comprehensive works on the antiwar movement is *Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam 1963-1975* by Nancy Zaroulis and Gerald Sullivan.<sup>9</sup> Operating in a revisionist capacity, Zaroulis and Sullivan wrote *Who Spoke Up* to challenge popular sentiments against the antiwar movement that arose from unfair media portrayal. The book lacks a degree of academic rigor but makes up for it with lengthy quotes from movement participants, offering a unique insight relative to the field. As one of the earliest books on the subject, it provided a necessary jump start for other

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<sup>9</sup> Zaroulis and Sullivan, *Who Spoke Up?*

historians to take the helm in researching the dense but understudied story of the antiwar movement.

Enter Charles DeBenedetti, whose research on the movement was completed posthumously by Charles Chatfield and published as *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era*.<sup>10</sup> Whereas Zaroulis and Sullivan at times substituted detail for brevity, *An American Ordeal* does the opposite. It is comprehensive in an encyclopedic fashion, providing what amounts to a near-complete roster of antiwar organizations and organizers. A chronological account, *An American Ordeal* traces the individual protests and actions of organizers in a day-by-day fashion, almost as an act of journalism. DeBenedetti's monograph approaches the movement almost as a tragedy, in the sense that he covers its tremendous differences as a fault, leading to its eventual disintegration. His central conclusion, that the antiwar movement's inability to set aside tactical differences led to its eventual retreat from relevance, is essentially valid, but his analysis lacks an in-depth look into the motivations and rhetoric of the movement's leaders, motivations which demonstrate immense unity of purpose.

Tom Wells's *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam*<sup>11</sup> is another dense narrative history, this time arguing most enthusiastically that the antiwar movement was a serious and successful social movement. Wells's primary contribution is the contention that the antiwar movement was responsible for shaping administration policy, thus limiting American escalation. By weaving administration accounts alongside the chronology of protest activity, Wells described a now-clichéd version of the antiwar movement: a

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<sup>10</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*.

<sup>11</sup> Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle Over Vietnam* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994).

successful and broad coalition that, unable to see beyond the immediate despair of the situation, fell victim to brutal factionalism. Taking cues from those who came before him, Wells's monograph is frequently interspersed with quotes and recollections of those who participated in the movement to end the war. Unlike DeBenedetti, Wells does attempt to shed light on the shared motivations of the antiwar movement, through his extensive use of interviews. These motivations are essentially analyzed in a vacuum, however, lacking the long-term continuity of the peace movement that stretched to the beginning of the twentieth century.

These three works represent the most substantial scholarship that attempts to be comprehensive in nature, and all three adopt a similar posture regarding the makeup of the antiwar movement on a national level. They all emphasize the broadness and diversity of perspectives on display, while simultaneously omitting some of the facts that brought activists together in the first place. Aside from the obvious connection of the war itself, none of the above scholars endeavor to examine in depth the cultural or intellectual connections that enabled collaboration of the various antiwar organizations in question. Further, they neglect to analyze the Vietnam-era movement in the context of the movements which preceded it, particularly the lengthy legacy of peace advocacy that began to grow at the turn of the twentieth century.

The preceding three works, despite their differences, all give a rosy—occasionally outright complimentary—examination of the movement. Adam Garfinkle's *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement*<sup>12</sup> does the opposite. In this monograph, Garfinkle utilizes a series of counterfactual arguments to assert that the

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<sup>12</sup> Adam Garfinkle, *Telltale Hearts: The Origins and Impact of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1995).

antiwar movement was ineffectual and harmful, both to the war effort itself and to the US generally. Garfinkle calls scholars and movement veterans alike to cast aside their romanticism of the 1960s decade and approach the antiwar movement more critically. Crucially, Garfinkle's critique that the movement bred resentment among middle-America misses the fact that the public spectacle of the movement rarely represented its genuine composition, an omission which undermines the validity of his analysis.

As for subject specific monographs, there are many. Philip Foner's *Organized Labor and the Vietnam War*<sup>13</sup> tackled the complicated relationship between labor unions and the war. Similarly, Edmund Wehrle's *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War*<sup>14</sup> examines the pro-war stance of the AFL-CIO, with a particular eye towards the relations between the AFL-CIO and the Vietnamese Confederation of Labor (CVT), a South Vietnamese union confederation. Both studies focus mostly on the impact felt within the trade unions themselves, examining the changes wrought by the war and activism, or lack thereof. These provide very essential background to this project, particularly Foner's *Organized Labor and the Vietnam War*, as they tackle the underemphasized role that trade unionists played in the antiwar campaigns.

Leaving the workplace and entering the campus, historians have covered campus unrest at length. Studies such as Kirkpatrick Sale's *SDS*<sup>15</sup> have investigated the Students for a Democratic Society. Others, like Kenneth J. Heineman's *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era*<sup>16</sup> take in a broader scope.

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<sup>13</sup> Philip Sheldon Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War* (New York, NY: International Publishers, 1989), <http://archive.org/details/uslaborvietnamwa0000fone>.

<sup>14</sup> Edmund F. Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain: The AFL-CIO and the Vietnam War* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Sale, *SDS*.

<sup>16</sup> Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993).

Both provided essential background research to this project, especially *Campus Wars*, which was a welcome deviation away from scholarship that focused on elite universities. Unrest was seen nationwide, and Heineman rightfully contends that a comprehensive analysis of the antiwar movement requires scholars to examine the schools of the American heartland just as carefully as one looks to Berkeley and Columbia.

Likewise, scholars have endeavored to examine the antiwar movement within the home as well, demonstrated by Amy Swerdlow's *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s*.<sup>17</sup> Swerdlow's monograph is a narrative history of the organizational, intellectual, and operational development of Women Strike for Peace. In it, she contends that WSP was in a sense self-contradictory, embodying a traditionalist ethos that appeared at odds with its radical politics. These seeming contradictions are reconciled via the merger of private and political spheres, the shattering of outmoded gender divisions.

A comprehensive analysis of the antiwar movement would be incomplete without analysis of the religious opposition to the war. Mitchell K. Hall's *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War*<sup>18</sup> provides an analysis of Clergy and Laity Concerned, an interfaith organization of Protestants, Jews, and Catholics that challenged the war. Peter Cajka's *Follow Your Conscience: The Catholic Church and the Spirit of the Sixties* is a broader examination of individualism, dissent, and the Catholic Church in the 1960s, with significant attention paid to the Catholic segment of the antiwar

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<sup>17</sup> Amy Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace: Traditional Motherhood and Radical Politics in the 1960s* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1993).

<sup>18</sup> Mitchell K. Hall, *Because of Their Faith: CALCAV and Religious Opposition to the Vietnam War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990).

movement. These again were immensely useful in the research process as guides for deeper analysis.

Finally, there are those histories that are not themselves concerned with the Vietnam war, but nevertheless include it as part of their analysis into the greater trend of American peace activism. Among these are DeBenedetti's *The Peace Reform in American History*, Chatfield's (ed.) *Peace Movements in America*, Kleidman's *Organizing for Peace: Neutrality, the Test Ban, and the Freeze*, and Moorehead's *Troublesome People: The Warriors of Pacifism*.<sup>19</sup> These are but a representative, not exhaustive, list of books that represent meaningful contributions to the ongoing understanding of peace activism in American history. Though differences abound between scholarly approach, intended audience, and thematic focus, a common thread does in fact weave these works together: movements against war are pervasive throughout American history, demonstrating that opposition to war, violence, and militarism – while malleable – is an essential component of American political culture.

Collectively, these histories highlight the breadth and depth of the antiwar scholarship. There are, of course, many volumes dedicated to the war, but the aforementioned titles are a fitting representative cohort. Within them is a clear gap in the research, one which this project was conceived to fill. While comprehensive and more specific titles alike emphasize the movements' *differences*, that is, the disparity between groups like SDS, CORE, and CALCAV, rarely have authors attempted to display their

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<sup>19</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 1st ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980); Charles Chatfield, ed., *Peace Movements in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1973); Robert Kleidman, *Organizing for Peace: Neutrality, the Test Ban, and the Freeze*, 1st ed. (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1993); Caroline Moorehead, *Troublesome People: The Warriors of Pacifism* (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, Publishers, Inc., 1987).

*similarities*. Aside from the common factor of antiwar opposition, authors seldom examine the organizational constants of the antiwar movements. Furthermore, these titles tend to focus most on chronology and events, spending less time examining the intellectual and ideological developments of the movement. This thesis focuses primarily on the ideological, cultural, and intellectual similarities among activists, from the self-described “housewives” of WSP to the counterculture “yippies” of the Youth International Party. These committed activists, despite deviations in ideology and approach, ultimately continued a fundamental legacy of American culture.

### **B. Primary Sources**

The bulk of the primary sources utilized in this project reside within Swarthmore College’s Peace Collection archive. Containing the complete papers of activists like Cora Weiss (WSP) as well as the documents of organizations like Vietnam Summer, the Peace Collection offers the most valuable insight regarding the internal organization and structure of myriad peace groups. The Peace Collection has a repository of the War Resister’s League newsletter as well, which gives crucial insight towards the outward facing posture of radical pacifists. Also from the Peace Collection are the papers of MOBE, some documents from New MOBE, and the papers of Daniel and Philip Berrigan.

Analysis of the New Leftist and radical pacifist contingents of the movement was made possible by utilizing digitized copies of newspapers, particularly *New Left Notes*, *WRL News*, *Daily Worker*, and *Catholic Worker*. These were available online courtesy of JStor, the Wisconsin Historical Society, Internet Archive, and the Catholic Worker archive.

Also available online are myriad pamphlets, recollections, and ephemera from the civil rights organizations involved in antiwar activism, particularly SNCC and CORE.



These documents are essential to the conclusions that domestic initiatives were central to antiwar activism. Additionally, they contribute to the narrative structure of this paper, revising the history of the antiwar movement beyond the common belief that it was universally middle class and universally White. Antiwar activism has not always been a consciously intersectional project within the US, but through the Vietnam era, it most certainly was.

Supplementing these documents are the various memoirs, autobiographies, and recollections written by movement participants. Books like Fred Halstead's *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* and Luke Stewart's (ed.) *My Country is the World: Staughton Lynd's Writings, Speeches, and Statements against the Vietnam War* provide essential insight into the mindset of movement participants.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, Carl Davidson's anthology of late SDS documents, *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class*<sup>21</sup>, supplies intellectual material from that organization. Oral history interviews of Cora Weiss help establish the narrative of the WSP, available digitally from Columbia University. Finally, government documents from the FBI and CIA help show the institutional response to protest. Internal memoranda from the Nixon years are available from Bruce Oudes' anthology *From: The President*<sup>22</sup>. Nixon's memoir, as well as H.R. Haldeman's, provide some secondary insight into the attitude of the administration towards demonstrators, as well.

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<sup>20</sup> Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York, NY: Monad Press, 1978); Luke Stewart, ed., *My Country Is the World: Staughton Lynd's Writings, Speeches, and Statements Against the Vietnam War* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2023).

<sup>21</sup> Carl Davidson, ed., *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the Port Authority Statement, the RYM Documents and Other Lost Writings of SDS* (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011).

<sup>22</sup> Bruce Oudes, ed., *From: The President: Richard Nixon's Secret Files* (New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1989).

## II. The Origin of Modern American Antiwar Activism

Wherever there are wars, there have always been individuals and organizations opposed to war. This maxim reflects a basic aversion to violence within humankind, but the rationales of antiwar attitudes have never been static, instead changing constantly to fit the context and contours of a given society. In the US, proponents of peace have existed since the colonial era, their arguments malleable between religious, practical, moral opposition. Charles DeBenedetti describes this well. Despite the “stretches of organized violence [that have] dominat[ed] the great surface of American history,” as he put it, there has always been a subculture of organized peace activism.<sup>23</sup>

No group has an earlier claim to a legacy of citizen’s peace advocacy than the Society of Friends, commonly referred to as the Quakers.<sup>24</sup> An itinerant and necessarily insular sect of Christianity, the Quakers argued passionately about the liberating influence of Jesus on the human soul. Radical pacifism thus became a crucial tenet of Quaker theology. This, coupled with the Quaker ideal that civil and religious matters were

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<sup>23</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 1st ed. (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1980) xi.

<sup>24</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, the well-documented peace advocacy of various Indigenous Americans, which have the longest lineage of peace activism on the continent, is tangential. These groups, particularly the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, prioritized peace over war and should not be overlooked. This analysis however is focused on members of the mainstream American (and colonial) body politic who rejected the militarism of the US and European governments. The Haudenosaunee, as sovereign nations, did not occupy the same space of domestic opposition, thus their peaceful attitude does not fit within the analysis of a *protest* movement. Critically, to Native societies, peace was not considered through the Christian-pacifist lens of nonviolence and non-resistance, rather, it was an ongoing practice of prioritizing right and respectful relations, self-determination, and reciprocity. The oral tradition of the Great Law of Peace, retold by Haudenosaunee knowledge keepers, emphasizes the Great Law as a pedagogical process, describing the reciprocal relations which undergird harmony within one’s clan, one’s nation, and foreign nations. See: Leanne Simpson, “Looking after Gdoo-Naaganinaa: Precolonial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 2 (2008): 29–42, <https://doi.org/10.1353/wic.0.0001>; Gage Karahkwí:io Diabo, “Kaianere’kó:Wa: A Lesson in Being Ready to Listen,” *Studies in American Indian Literatures* 32, no. 3–4 (2020): 41–62, <https://doi.org/10.1353/ail.2020.0017>.]

irrevocably linked, put Quakers at the foundation of American reform movements, particularly the movement(s) for peace.<sup>25</sup>

Over time, peace and antiwar advocacy in the US evolved from a purely religious expression into a broader secular movement. The forces of industrialism, argued reformers, made war a relic of the past. Unfortunately, industrialism instead not only made warfare more common; it made it more efficient, more destructive, and more ruinous.<sup>26</sup> As industrialism foisted the horror of warfare upon increasing numbers of people, secular rationales against warfare took stage alongside religious ideology. Christian pacifism, as practiced by Quakers, Mennonites, and later the collective non-resistance movement, continued to exist; in the broad scope, however, peace activism was joined to other reform positions, particularly opposition to poverty, setting the stage for the shared perspectives of the modern antiwar movements. The secularism inherent in the modern movement for peace is not exclusionary, however, and religious voices like the Quakers have maintained a leading role in antiwar activism throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century.

These movements—first religious, then secular—are traced succinctly by Charles Chatfield in his introduction to *Peace Movements in America*. Chatfield relays the push and pull of the peace movement throughout the wars of the nineteenth century, ultimately concluding that while organized peace movements existed through all of it, never did they establish any sort of permanent relevance within American society. This changed near the turn of the twentieth century, slowly, and then began to accelerate in the interwar period

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<sup>25</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 14-15.

<sup>26</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 108-9.

from 1918-1941.<sup>27</sup> In the span between 1900-1965, peace advocacy's popularity waxed and waned, and new perspectives were constantly subsumed and adopted into the broader peace movement. This diversity of perspective was in some instances a weakness, but American peace activists over this era, in general, began to coalesce along secular and political rationales for peace advocacy, developing into an intersectional, grass-roots movement, unified in purpose despite its myriad differences.

#### **A. Antimilitarism at The Turn of the Twentieth Century**

By the turn of the twentieth century, the interwoven concepts of pacifism, antimilitarism, and peace activism were topics of regular discussion among academics, philosophers, and lay commentators. Differences of perspective abounded, from committed moral non-violence to so-called Just War pacifism. On a surface level, the distinction between these terms and ideologies appears inconsequential. Pacifism, as a moral rejection of violence, is an essentially different philosophy to antimilitarism, the critique of the military establishment. Similarly, opposition to one war does not presuppose opposition to all wars. The relationship between these mentalities is analogous to that of a square and a rectangle, wherein all pacifists are opposed to militarism, but not all antimilitarists are pacifists. These differences reflected themselves in the relative obscurity and diffusion of peace groups prior to the Great War. Essentially, advocates of peace lacked a common cause around which to rally. Some utopians advocated for a world free of all violence, where others looked down on militarism but left exceptions for certain conflicts.

Take for instance William James, the Harvard academic most remembered for his contributions to psychology and philosophy. In 1910, James lectured that he devoutly

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<sup>27</sup> Charles Chatfield, "Introduction," in *Peace Movements in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1973), ix–xxxii.

believed in the reign of peace. To James, the “fatalistic view” of militarism was a non-starter; war was “absurd and impossible from its own monstrosity.”<sup>28</sup> Despite James’s curious admiration for the disciplinary and social components of militarism, he argued passionately that nations who wage war against one another for the purposes of statecraft were misguided, carrying on a harmful legacy of human suffering.<sup>29</sup> This comes to a head with James’ final thoughts, wherein he discounts the militarists’ belief in the validity of fear as the only stimulus possible of awakening humankind’s spiritual energy. The utopian society which America ought to strive for was possible only through a redirection of discipline into civic goals, lest the country destroy itself through its unfailing dedication to militarism. Despite all of this, James conceded that war could remain permissible in the short-term, until a better, more justifiable system of discipline and order was worked out. The horrors of war were to be avoided, but the preservation of humankind’s hardiness was most desirable.<sup>30</sup> James’s pacifism is thus rationalized by his pragmatic and utilitarian philosophies, wherein he argues that the moral consequences of warfare outweigh its civic utility.

James’s arguments here make more sense when viewed in context with the Progressive movement, particularly the Preparedness movement of the Great War era. At bottom, the Preparedness movement was an embrace of militarism, particularly of the supposed societal goods that stemmed from it in preparation for the United States’ potential entry into the war. Perspectives were diverse, ranging from a professional officer corps

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<sup>28</sup> “The Moral Equivalent of War,” in *Memories and Studies*, by William James (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1911), 286; James considered himself a pacifist, rather than pacifist. This distinction is purely linguistic, reflecting both term's origin in the term *pacific*, defined as peaceful in character or intent.

<sup>29</sup> James, “The Moral Equivalent of War,” 288-296.

<sup>30</sup> James, “The Moral Equivalent of War,” 288-296.

who sought to model the American military after the Prussian system, to reformers who felt mandatory military training could rid America of social and class distinctions. In government, adherents to the Preparedness movement looked to address the rising tides of European war, linking the movement to the impulse to procure greater national security. As such, proponents of Preparedness hoped to shift the American military away from its status as a professional service into a much wider, visible part of civil society. This would, they argued, have transformative effects on American society.<sup>31</sup>

Ironically, the arguments advanced by Preparedness advocates, and militarists more broadly, mirror the arguments made by many anti-militarists. Both camps agreed that a wider embrace of militarist tendency would transform American society but differed in their prediction of the direction of that transformation. For reformers who opposed war and militarism, modeling the US military after the Prussian system would be a step backwards, not forward; militarism was believed to be the enemy of progress, and thus could not rationally fit within the suite of progressive reforms. This split among progressive reformers would continually emerge in response to changes in American military policy, exposing a weak point of anti-militarist arguments that did not center moralistic concerns.

James's position was, at times, convoluted. The bulk of his work reflects an earnest aversion to warfare, particularly in relation to its denigrating impact on human society writ large. His seeming contradictions may be best explained by his decision to meet militarism on equal moral footing, attempting to convince militarists of pacifist virtues vis-à-vis their relevance to a well-disciplined civic society. James thus avoids discussing the more horrific sides of war. This was not especially common among peace advocates, even for the time.

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<sup>31</sup> See: John Patrick Finnegan, *Against the Specter of a Dragon: The Campaign for American Military Preparedness, 1914-1917* (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1975).

Indeed, authors like Ernest Howard Crosby made careful use of the horrific violence of war in their rhetoric, hoping to appeal to human sentimentality.

Ernest Howard Crosby was a poet, politician, and pacifist, well-known amongst American peace activists at the turn of the twentieth century. Crosby's antimilitarism was built on the shoulders of Leo Tolstoy, the Russian author and thinker best known for his fiction. In the latter part of his career, surrounding the publication of his 1899 novel, *Resurrection*, Tolstoy produced a dense corpus of original intellectual material focused on his studies of Christianity. Tolstoy's essays infused anarchist political tendencies with Christian principles, particularly to admonish Christian Churches for their endorsement of governments. In a fusion of anarchism and Christianity, Tolstoy held that there could be no government which upheld Christ's dictum to "resist not evil," for all governments relied on violence in order to exist. Tolstoy thus approached Christianity through a rational lens, attempting to live up to Jesus' teachings the way an apprentice studies a master. Tolstoy adhered specifically to the teachings of Christ as he interpreted them rationally, rather than how they were passed down through Church Orthodoxy. As such, Tolstoy's Christianity rested on five central principles: do not be angry without reason; do not commit adultery; do not swear; do not resist evil with violence; and love your enemies.<sup>32</sup> These were, for Tolstoy, the essential tenets of Christian teaching, the rational truths of Christianity which could be discerned not from dogma, but from reason. Pacifism, specifically non-resistance, was a critical component to Tolstoy's theories, and it is this theory, so widely forgotten by even those who respect his literary accomplishments, which helped inspire a new generation of peace activism across the world.

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<sup>32</sup> B. Srinivasa Murthy, ed., *Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Letters*, 1st US ed (Long Beach, Calif: Long Beach Publications, 1987) 16.

Globally, Tolstoy's biggest disciple was Mahatma Gandhi. The two regularly corresponded with one another, and Gandhi's application of Tolstoyan non-resistant pacifism was a central aspect of Gandhi's anti-colonial protest activity in India. In a letter to Gandhi written in 1910, Tolstoy laid bare his strict pacifism, explaining that violence, once committed, renders the law of love (as articulated by Christ) futile.<sup>33</sup> Tolstoyan pacifism, in the manner articulated in these letters, proved to be exceptionally influential, not only to Gandhi, but to Gandhi's American admirers as well. Before Gandhi, Crosby held a reputation as Tolstoy's most ardent advocate in the United States. Well before Tolstoy's influence could be seen transmitted by Gandhi, Ernest Howard Crosby attempted to proselytize Tolstoy's teachings.

Crosby has, unfortunately, fallen outside the bounds of memory in most studies of American peace advocacy. This is explained, in part, by his absence within a visible peace movement, not to mention his early death. Crosby was a writer, not an agitator, and his relative lack of exposure before the public has pushed him into the margins of peace history. Nevertheless, Crosby represents one of the earliest examples of humanistic pacifism that proved so essential to later activists, particularly David Dellinger and Martin Luther King, Jr. As a Tolstoyan, Crosby approached his antimilitarism through a non-doctrinal, Christian, humanist lens.

Like Tolstoy before him, Crosby was a strong proponent of the ideals of the American abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, particularly Garrison's ideal of non-resistance, a principle derived from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount." Perturbed that Tolstoy was remembered in the US not for his non-resistance but rather for his fiction, Crosby took

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<sup>33</sup> Murthy, *Mahatma Gandhi and Leo Tolstoy Letters*, 36.



it upon himself to endorse the virtues of Tolstoyan pacifism, both in non-fictional and fictional literary spaces. In “The New Freedom,” a poem published in 1898, Crosby’s stanzas paint American militarism in terms that would be echoed in nearly every antiwar movement of the twentieth century. Bitingly, he pens that militarism was not fighting against oppression, for oppression was within the American soul. Inverting the essential tenet of Quakerism, he writes that “the kingdom of hell is within [America],” an inversion meant to signify the dehumanizing influence of warfare on the soul of a nation. Only by ridding the nation of warmongering could the US take its place as a beacon of freedom to the world, a shining city on the hill; with warfare, however, American freedom and invulnerability was unattainable.<sup>34</sup>

Crosby has not been fully expunged from the historical record, however, thanks to the work of Perry E. Gianakos. Writing about Crosby’s 1902 novel *Captain Jinks, Hero*, Gianakos analyzed Crosby’s employment of satire to espouse pacifist virtues in fiction. Gianakos explains that in *Captain Jinks*, Crosby takes efforts not only to renounce violence, but also to renounce Christians who do not adhere to the true—Tolstoyan—message of Christianity. Gianakos reminds readers that Crosby, in sharp contrast to writers like William James, refused to shy away from the blood and gore inherent to militarism. His choice to do so led him to be ignored by American society, but not in totality. Crosby died of pneumonia in 1907, and his memorial service was attended by a collection of twenty reform groups, spanning the spectrum from labor organizations to anti-imperialist

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<sup>34</sup> “The New Freedom,” in *War Echoes*, by Ernest Howard Crosby (Philadelphia, PA: Innes & Sons, 1898), 12–14.

societies, evidencing the strength of the budding connections between peace advocacy and other reform activity in the early twentieth century.<sup>35</sup>

American reformers, whether abolitionist, suffragist, or antipoverty were crucial in developing a peace movement centered on politics. Jane Addams is perhaps the most significant of this crop. Addams is known for her contributions to the women's movement as well as her social activism for antipoverty measures, but she was also a staunch ally to the principles of democracy and internationalism. It is there, in the field of liberal internationalism, that the growth of secular peace advocacy formed as a movement, rather than through someone's personal moral conviction. This transformation was a critical step for American peace advocacy, as it helped to usher in the adoption of protest and civil disobedience as mechanisms for reform.

Addams' perspective was an idealistic one. Addressing the National Arbitration and Peace Congress,<sup>36</sup> held in New York in 1907, Addams contended that there was "a rising, sturdy and almost unprecedented internationalism, which [would] be too profound, too widespread, ever to lend itself to warfare." This proclamation was, of course, wildly optimistic, reflecting Addams' unfailing belief in the power of humanity and democracy to usher in a peaceful epoch. To Addams, democracy was first a function of a well-educated, well-cared for society, maintained by full participation in the electoral sphere. Democracy is brought about by a society's willingness to conform to a system of social ethics, ergo the ongoing maintenance of democracy required an ongoing commitment to fulfilling one's social duties. Democracy is thus, in essence, the result of an empathetic electorate, a

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<sup>35</sup> Perry E Gianakos, "Ernest Howard Crosby: A Forgotten Tolstoyan Antimilitarist and Anti-Imperialist," in *Peace Movements in America* (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1973), 1–19.

<sup>36</sup> This organization voted for Andrew Carnegie as its first president, evidencing the growing popularity of peace advocacy in elite circles prior to the Great War.

phenomenon that itself was a novel consequence of industrialization and modernization.<sup>37</sup> Addams' optimism was rooted principally in her observations of the industrialized world. Earlier in her 1907 address to the National Arbitration and Peace Congress, she explained the nature of a new cosmopolitan society brought forth by the printing press. The twentieth century was different, she proclaimed, because the industrialization of the prior hundred years had brought together the peoples of the earth for the first time.<sup>38</sup>

Addams' optimism continued into her conclusion. There, she articulated her belief that "when we once apprehend the new life, that is deeper among the cosmopolitan people, we will touch a reservoir of martyrdom which the world has left untapped." The question left hanging, then, was how reformers would usher in this new cosmopolitanism? She continued, arguing that the seeds of peace had already been sown into American society. America was a critical component of the peace formula for Addams, as she believed wholeheartedly in the liberal democratic ideals that the nation professed to stand for. Only in America, Addams proclaimed, was the seed of peace growing and developing, owed most to the opportunity afforded by immigration and cross-cultural recognition.<sup>39</sup> In this regard, Addams was advocating for the values of international arbitration and internationalism more generally, led by a cadre of American peace activists, activists who, through immigration and cosmopolitanism, had imbued within themselves the tenets of liberal democratic ideals that stood at odds with militarism.

It is worth noting here that in contrast to the other thinkers mentioned thus far, Addams did not espouse a pacifist ideal. Her opposition to militarism, and that of the

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<sup>37</sup> Jane Addams, *Democracy and Social Ethics* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1902), 1–13.

<sup>38</sup> Jane Addams, "The New Internationalism" (Speech, National Arbitration and Peace Congress, New York, NY, April 16, 1907), <https://digital.janeaddams.ramapo.edu/items/show/5987>.

<sup>39</sup> Addams, "The New Internationalism".

National Peace Congress more generally, was rooted in an aversion to warfare as a means to an end, not a categorical moral rejection of war. In the several arbitration societies that existed at the time, warfare was deemed as an avoidable natural phenomenon, something acceptable under the right circumstances but ill-advised as a diplomatic tactic. Arbitration was yet another tool in the arsenal for nations to settle disputes, and it was the earnest hope that through supporting the ideals of internationalism, wars would cease to be fought as the alternative proved less costly and more attractive. Addams was not, like the eventual activists of the War Resisters League, advocating for a complete and permanent demilitarization. The National Peace Congress was content with collaborating with American War Department officials, for they were believed to have the most knowledge of war, and therefore the strongest rationales to employ against it. This collaboration with those who wage war made liberal internationalism an easy pill to swallow for non-pacifists and helped make it into the most popular avenue for peace advocacy during interwar periods. It was weak, however, in times of war, leading proponents of arbitration to fade into the background during the various conflicts of the twentieth century.

Finally, socialist internationalists must also be considered among this early corpus of peace advocates. Of these, Eugene V. Debs is most conspicuous. No pacifist, Debs opposed war not out of moral consideration, but as a distraction against the broader struggle of the organized working classes against the evils of capitalism.<sup>40</sup> Writing in *The Toiler*, in 1902, Debs railed against the arbitration movement. There cannot be peace, he proclaimed, in any land where capitalist masters rule over wage workers; the arbitration movement, he castigated, was corrupted by the influence of capital, its professed apolitical character a

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<sup>40</sup> Here, pacifist is defined as a categorical opposition to violence. Debs, though antimilitarist, supported the rights of workers to defend themselves against Capitalists, even when that defense may require violence.

fault, not a feature.<sup>41</sup> For Debs, peace was not an absence of war, it was an absence of wage labor. More troubling, any internationalism that did not center the interests of the working classes would, at best, uphold the existing imperialist order, an order that relied upon violence against the working classes.

That said, Debs was certainly not singularly minded, and in addition to agitating for the overthrow of the capitalist system, he continued to accost American warfare as pitting American wage laborers against other workers of the world. This rationale is delivered bitingly in Debs' 1910 essay "Military Murderers". "Under capitalism," he wrote, soldiers "are workers hired by capitalists to murder their fellow workers." Debs argued in favor of desertion, arguing that if the US military continued to hemorrhage men, it was a mere matter of time until the soldiers transferred their allegiance away from dehumanizing patriotism and towards revolutionary socialism. Militarism entails moral degradation, and industrialized warfare created in soldiers yet another division of wage slavery.<sup>42</sup> From this standpoint, Debs' opposition to liberal forms of internationalism is logical. Any internationalism which presupposes a continuation of the capitalist system of wage labor is an internationalism which could not truly hope to unite the workers of the world under a common banner of peace. With the outbreak of war in Europe, just four years after "Military Murderers" was published, Debs' arguments, sharpened by hindsight, proved prescient. Moreover, Debs' belief in antimilitarist *resistance*, via desertion and refusal to serve, helped to influence the modern antiwar movement, even in instances where peace groups rejected Debs' socialist ideology.

## **B. Evolution of the Peace Movement 1914-1945**

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<sup>41</sup> Eugene V. Debs, "Peace, Peace, There Is No Peace!," *St. Louis Labor* 2, no. 56 (February 15, 1902): 7.

<sup>42</sup> Eugene V. Debs, "Military Murderers," *Appeal to Reason*, no. 787 (December 31, 1910): 4.

The issues of internationalism and supranational governance grew increasingly relevant as the specter of conflict rose over Europe before 1914. As the world reckoned with the horrors of industrialized warfare, a newfound imperative of peace found a willing audience both within and without the antimilitarist movement. Strange bedfellows were made between peace activists, who by this point often occupied the ideological left, and conservative isolationists. This newfound constituency evaporated at the end of the Great War, however, as the right wing pivoted away from peace as an absence of conflict and towards peace as military security. While peace was a common ideal across the entirety of American politics (the commitment to actualizing this ideal notwithstanding), most members of government defined it in decisively martial terms. In essence, while nearly every American politician of the interwar period held peace as a paramount objective, the face of that peace was typically peace through strength, rather than peace as an absence of violence. This distinction allowed for arbitration to take center stage once again, while pacifists were increasingly marginalized. In addition, a socialist antiwar constituency gained relevance over this period, but evaporated quickly under pressure from the US security state.

Political developments in Europe helped to influence the American peace movement(s), as well. The Russian revolution infused the nascent American socialist movement with renewed vigor, and anti-imperialist peace advocacy took on a new left-wing political dimension, a facet of antiwar advocacy that would transform peace advocacy in the latter 1960s. Unfortunately for American peace advocates, however, the European wars of 1914 and 1939 strengthened the American military more than they harmed it, and

peace-through-strength became the de facto political stance for nearly everyone in government.

In the lead up to the Great War, Jane Addams remained a vital face of the peace movement. Contrasting herself from the Tolstoy-influenced radical pacifists, Addams maintained that the mechanisms of peace relied on a positive state which emphasized stronger social relations. Like Tolstoy, Addams believed that peace as an objective began first with social transformation, but in contrast to the anarchistic theories of Tolstoy, she argued that the state must imbue society with the necessary tools to resist war as a means to an end. These arguments, despite their commonality to the Progressive policies which were in vogue, did not spur any meaningful changes. Indeed, progressive politicians earned the support of nearly all peace-minded individuals, even socialists, who saw Woodrow Wilson as a pragmatic liberal internationalist that could isolate the US from war. Peace-minded policy makers endorsed a practical approach that emphasized international arbitration and bilateral treaty-making, policies that proved ineffectual to avert war in Europe.<sup>43</sup>

Beyond the forum of policymaking, radical pacifists took on peace as a personal moral challenge. When the US entered the Great War in 1917, pacifists began taking action not only to agitate against the war, but to actively resist it. This development began first in Europe, when the Fellowship for Reconciliation (FOR) was founded in Cambridge, UK, in 1914. In 1916, following the imposition of conscription in Britain, the American chapter of FOR was founded, attempting to preempt the American entry into the war. Among the

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<sup>43</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 88–107.

first crop of members were A.J. Muste, a Christian minister and pacifist who from this year on would remain a leader of the American radical pacifist movement.<sup>44</sup>

The American chapter of FOR was resolute in their commitment to Christian principles, and they articulated the desire that American policy reflect those principles of moral decency. In their early formation, they advocated for draft resistance and draft obstruction, for they deemed military conscription to be an ultimate assault on individual moral principles. They likewise issued public appeals to the American government to pursue a peaceful alternative to conflict, to center morality as paramount above any other national interest. In the wake of German submarine attacks on American shipping vessels, FOR issued a strongly worded statement in the *Advocate of Peace* urging policymakers to carefully consider solutions other than warfare. The statement did not, contrary to detractors in the US government, endorse any aspect of German war-policy. They described the German attacks as a wrong against mankind that was disloyal to every principle of humanity. Still, however, FOR argued that to respond to violence with more violence would be an abject failure of policy and a renunciation of Christian morality.<sup>45</sup>

Like many peace organizations that followed, the Fellowship made arguments about the ultimate diversion of resources necessitated by warfare that would come at the expense of social progress. Owing to their Christian pacifist principles, however, FOR ultimately did not rely upon this political and social denunciation of warfare, and instead argued a deontological renunciation of war beyond the mere utilitarian calculus. The method of war, argued FOR, shattered moral principles. Warfare was a “wholesale

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<sup>44</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 95.

<sup>45</sup> Fellowship of Reconciliation - USA, “Statement of the Fellowship of Reconciliation,” *The Advocate of Peace* 79, no. 4 (April 1917): 113–15.



destruction of men by men ... engendering widespread hatred and distrust. They added that “however just a cause may be, the method of war is intrinsically and incurably evil.” Preempting criticism made by non-pacifists, FOR contended that the prioritization of love over war was not designed to “condone the unrighteous acts of any nation.” Rather, FOR urged the US to combat wrong not by annihilation, but by a “sustained appeal to conscience.” Going beyond policymakers, FOR urged all adherents to morality to lift themselves out of their own self-righteousness and self-complacency, to embrace a newfound inventive faith to promote constructive human service.<sup>46</sup> FOR exemplified in this statement the purest form of radical pacifism, an ideology that was far from passive.

FOR was an organization spurred to action by its commitment to Christian principles of non-violence, evidenced by the fact that its founders came from a multid denominational corpus of religious leaders, particularly members of the Society of Friends. This Quaker influence shaped the tactics of tax resistance and draft resistance, policies which were employed by increasing numbers of pacifists when the US declared war against Germany in 1917 and implemented the Selective Service Act months later. Despite the relative popularity of pacifist ethics among American society, the American government fought tooth-and-nail to reject the moral impulse against war, taking a variety of social and legal measures against individuals who claimed Conscientious Objector (CO) status. The insular nature of the itinerant Christian sects that comprised organizations like FOR meant that their reach within American society was limited, spurring the birth of a renewed secular peace movement, the War Resisters League (WRL).

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<sup>46</sup> Fellowship of Reconciliation - USA, "Statement of the Fellowship for Reconciliation," 114.

At its founding in 1923, the purpose of the American branch of WRL was to create a network of support for COs who fell victim to unfair treatment at the hands of the American government. Insistent upon meeting Wilson's idea of military preparedness, the US government adopted draconian measures to harass, intimidate, and compel all citizens to support the war effort. The WRL, with its "crossbreed" of anarchism and pacifism, as DeBenedetti puts it, sought to legitimize the moral objection to war. Members who joined pledged not to "support any kind of war, international or civil, and to strive for the removal of the causes of war."<sup>47</sup> In practice, this meant support for acts of civil disobedience, like the refusal to pay taxes, as well as protest actions organized among prisoners in CO camps. Women, who had gained a greater political voice by this time thanks to the powerful activism of suffrage activists, were essential to the formation of an antimilitarism built on tactics of resistance. Though not itself a feminist group, the WRL was founded by and ideologically connected to the Women's movement in the US, tactically supporting the same aims of another new-found peace group, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). For both the WRL and the WILPF, warfare was a unique evil, an evil which humanity must rid itself of to better focus on the advancement of a freer, more egalitarian human society.

The individuals who aligned with groups like FOR, WRL, and WILPF largely resisted war in a unilateral fashion. Believing that pacifism was an internal transformation before it was a societal one, these opponents to violence attempted to proselytize their ethics by setting a positive example, believing that as more individuals resisted war and its associated evils, Americans would acquiesce to a revolution of morals. Those in favor of

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<sup>47</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 115.

arbitration, like Jane Addams, attempted to wield political power to shift American policy towards peace. This had some limited success, particularly in the election of Jeannette Rankin, a suffrage activist from Montana who was the first woman elected to the US House of Representatives. Rankin, alongside fifty other representatives, voted against the US entry into the Great War in 1917, a promising electoral success for antiwar activists, but ultimately inadequate.<sup>48</sup> Increasingly, the women's movement split itself over the issue of support for the war. Many activists elected to support the war effort in order not to distract from the credibility of their suffrage cause, while others, like Rankin, opposed the war by virtue of their morals. Feminist peace activists primarily argued against warfare as an affront to motherhood, especially since mothers, as women, were excluded from the political process across the country. In choosing to center their femininity in their opposition to the war, women's peace advocacy groups set the stage for the peace movement that was yet to come, particularly the 1961 birth of Women Strike for Peace (WSP).

Eugene Debs, from his position within the American Socialist Party, sought to support and expand upon the antiwar ethic espoused by women like Rankin with the onset of war in Europe. By 1915, Debs' writings took on a more universally pacifistic character than his earlier material. Three pieces assert this change. The first, "Never be a Soldier," is the shortest and most direct. The leaflet, which was distributed widely in the US, implored all workers to never become a soldier and never go to war. Referring to the war in Europe, and to the Americans who sought to enter it, Debs proclaimed that "the dastard jingoes" within government were "plotting to force the US into the seething maelstrom of fire and

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<sup>48</sup> "Congresswoman Faced Difficult Situation," *The Daily Missoulian* (Missoula, MT), April 7, 1917; "Roll Call Votes: House Vote #10 in 1917 (65th Congress)," *GovTrack.us*, accessed March 11, 2024, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/votes/65-1/h10>.

slaughter, pestilence and famines, misery and hell.”<sup>49</sup> With these strong pronouncements in mind, he reminds his reader, ostensibly a member of the working classes, that such horrors only serve the interests of their capitalist rulers; thus, no working person should lend their support, material or otherwise, to the efforts of warmongering politicians and generals.

In “Peace on Earth,” an article less poetic and more political, Debs once again denounces all war, though this time he invokes the Great War in more specific terms. Here, Debs courts support for women’s suffrage, arguing that if women could vote, every state of the Union would make strides towards driving the “horrible scourge of war from the face of the earth.” As in all his earlier pieces on the subject, Debs does not mince words in his belief that capitalism was the root of mankind’s proclivity towards conflict. By abolishing capitalism, establishing industrial democracy, and removing the profit motive from production, Debs argued that the incentive for war would vanish.<sup>50</sup> Curiously though, when viewed alongside the aforementioned pamphlet “Never be a Soldier,” Debs does indeed acquiesce to the pressing conflict in Europe and an eventual American entry – the US could and would intervene “when the time comes,” in order to restore peace; ending the war “prematurely” would lead to yet another conflict.<sup>51</sup>

By November 1915, Debs once again oscillated back towards a position of clearer moral clarity and stricter pacifism. In a letter to the New York *Sun*, Debs railed against the advocates of Preparedness, particularly President Wilson as well as former president Theodore Roosevelt, as people who welcomed further conflicts. He urged fellow socialists

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<sup>49</sup> Eugene V. Debs, “Never Be a Soldier,” Marxists Internet Archive, 1915, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/atc/858.html> [accessed March 11, 2024].

<sup>50</sup> Eugene V. Debs, “Peace on Earth,” *The American Socialist* 1, no. 26 (January 9, 1915): 1.

<sup>51</sup> Debs, “Peace on Earth,” 1.

to devote themselves to the ideal of internationalism, for true socialists are opposed to war and to “preparedness.” An adoption of Wilson’s preparedness would, to Debs, mark an acquiescence to plutocratic supremacy in the US; only through setting a peaceful example to Europe could the US claim opposition to the “barbarism and butchery of war.”<sup>52</sup> Debs was once again drawing on sources beyond the socialist authors whom he based his ideology, for this hope of setting a peaceful example for the world was the exact same premise advocated by pacifists before him. In the years which followed these 1915 pieces, Debs continued to lambast the preparedness movement and warfare in general.

In 1918, after the American entry into the Great War, Debs’ antiwar views sharpened further, putting him in the crosshairs of the increasingly powerful American police state. On June 16, Debs delivered a speech in Canton, Ohio, in which he strongly denounced nearly all elements of the existing liberal order. Within this meandering speech, Debs covered decades of American history, and spoke passionately against private landholding, capitalist press rooms, and, more than any other subject, the injustice and inhumanity of warfare. Near the midpoint of his address, Debs plainly urged his listeners to resist the Great War, for it was a war declared not by the people, but by their masters.<sup>53</sup> Prior to this speech, in an effort to tighten the grip on American public opinion over the US entry into the Great War, the Wilson administration signed two new bills: the Espionage Act in 1917 and the Sedition Act in 1918. These acts made antiwar speech essentially illegal, by criminalizing any speech that could incite or lead to disloyalty and refusal of duty. The contents of the Canton speech, observed by agents of the US Justice Department

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<sup>52</sup> Eugene V Debs, “Russell Plan, Says Debs, Invites War,” *New York Sun*, November 30, 1915.

<sup>53</sup> Eugene V. Debs, “The Canton, Ohio, Anti-War Speech,” Marxists Internet Archive, June 16, 1918, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/debs/works/1918/canton.htm> [accessed March 11, 2024].

who were in attendance, led to Debs' arrest on June 30, 1918, and later conviction on September 12, 1918.<sup>54</sup> This abuse of authority set in motion an enduring theme of future peace advocacy in the US, that of continual government repression.

Despite Debs' antiwar attitude, dissent over his opposition to military service abounded among American socialists over the Great War. In a 1917 statement of principles shared by a group of socialists—including the American author Upton Sinclair—the authors issued a defense of liberal institutions, as well as their militaries. Among other items, this group of socialists declared that military service in democratic nations (those being the Allied forces) ought to be compulsory, for it was the civic duty of every citizen, male and female. A vital military system “should be an organic part of our national life,” and until the world moves toward global socialist federation, this militarism would plant the seeds of discipline until military organization “naturally turned towards the ends of peace.”<sup>55</sup> For these socialists, support for the existing liberal democratic order was strategic, a dialectical attempt to prevent a backslide into authoritarianism that would inhibit the future adoption of socialist principles. With the growth of the US police state (represented plainly by Debs' 1918 arrest for sedition) in response to war-time dissent, these arguments would rapidly fall from favor among most leftists in America, but the fact remains that antiwar agitation not a universal preoccupation of American socialists at the onset of the Great War.

The years following the Great War saw a renewal of efforts towards internationalist organization, particularly via the League of Nations, as well as the growth of groups who

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<sup>54</sup> Glenn V. Longacre, “Free Speech on Trial,” *Prologue Magazine*, May 16, 2018, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2017/winter/debs-canton> [accessed March 11, 2024].

<sup>55</sup> W.J. Ghent et al., “New Principles Enunciated,” *The Daily Missoulian* (Missoula, MT), April 7, 1917.

supported COs. As mentioned, the WRL, founded in 1923, attempted to secure the release of those who were imprisoned for the crime of their conscience. Additionally, segments of the peace movement began to embrace the total outlawry of war, both in the US as well as internationally. These groups supported the internationalist ambitions of the League of Nations and its proponents, while simultaneously hoping to extend the scope of international law. The Women's Peace Union (WPU), formed in 1921, as well as WILPF, established in 1915 as an outstretch of the Women's Peace Party, organized through government to prevent a repeat of the horrors of the Great War. In a fusion of tactics, these women's peace organizations merged elements of the Tolstoy-influenced nonresistant rhetoric employed by the WRL and FOR alongside the organizational tools of the abolitionist and suffragist movements.

In 1926, Elinor Byrns and Caroline Lexow Babcock submitted an amendment resolution to Senator Lynn Joseph Frazier of North Dakota. The amendment, if passed, declared that "war for any purpose shall be illegal," and that neither the US, nor any territory within its jurisdiction, could prepare for or appropriate funds for any armed conflict. Utopian as it was, this piece of nonresistant legislation was designed to influence the rest of the world to abandon warfare as a tool. Only without warfare, the WPU argued, could the ideals of freedom and democracy for all prosper.<sup>56</sup> Both the WPU, as well as WILPF, with Jane Addams as chair, held that the democratic ideals of social duty and cosmopolitanism were paramount to a free and egalitarian society, and believed earnestly that war was the central impediment to that democratic ideal.

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<sup>56</sup> Harriet Hyman Alonso, *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War, 1921-1942* (Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 1-20.

At its core, these women's peace organizations, in much the same way as the male dominated WRL and FOR, believed earnestly that they held the power to transform society through nonviolent social revolution. The optimistic perspective led the WPU to be extremely active throughout the interwar period, lobbying for nearly a decade towards their goal of outlawing warfare in the US. Although the WPU traced its origin to the abolitionist societies of the Northeast, large segments of its support base resided in the rural Midwest, an area that would be tapped again by women in the 1960s to organize against war. Further emphasizing their political perspective was the specific language used by the WPU during the 1927 hearings held to consider their amendment. Elinor Byrns spoke to the US congress in largely practical political language. Rather than emphasizing the moral concerns, which were central to nonresistant philosophy, Byrns explained that the \$22 billion dollars spent on the Great War could have gone to pay off farm debts, or to electrification initiatives. War was the absurdity of all absurdities, nothing more than a testament to mankind's short-sightedness, and thus, a relic of the past that must be abolished.<sup>57</sup>

The WPU's central aim of the outlawry of war, though initially well-received throughout large swaths of America, did not go far. The proposed amendment never did garner significant support in Congress, and as economic crisis began to tighten around the country, enthusiasm for issue-oriented peace groups (in contrast to religious/moralistic groups like FOR and WRL) waned precipitously. The WPU did, however, attain some measure of success via the legislative process, as they, alongside the WILPF, helped field support for a variety of bills designed to promote disarmament as well as international law-making.

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<sup>57</sup> Alonso, *The Women's Peace Union and the Outlawry of War*, 52–55.



The greatest of these accomplishments was the ratification of the Kellogg-Briand Pact in 1928. On the surface, this treaty accomplished the aims of the WPU amendment on an international scale, renouncing the use of war as an instrument of diplomatic policy. The treaty, split into three articles, held that the signatories condemned recourse to war for the solution of international disputes and that any settlement to a dispute should only be resolved by pacific means.<sup>58</sup> One of the greatest champions of the Kellogg-Briand Pact, in addition to the WPU and WILPF, was the National Committee on the Cause and Cure of War (CCCW). This was the largest and most centrist of the women's peace advocacy groups, particularly when viewed in contrast to the radical pacifism of the WPU and the intersectionality of the WILPF. Through the lobbying of the CCCW, the Kellogg-Briand Pact saw great support within American society, a public who, despite being spared by the worst of the Great War, was collectively horrified by its violence.<sup>59</sup>

The peace groups that championed the peace pact saw it as a tremendous success, a culmination of their lobbying efforts and a genuine signal that the virtues of nonviolence and internationalism were finally becoming commonplace. Unfortunately, activists and peace advocates were rapidly disabused of their assumptions. By 1931, when Japan—a signatory to the pact—invaded Manchuria, the Kellogg-Briand Pact's weakness was exposed. Activists who led the call for the pact assumed that its ratification would be met with further actions to strengthen the power of the League of Nations and World Court (bodies that, to the chagrin of American peace organizations, had not been recognized by the US government), as a robust adherence to international law was a prerequisite to a

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<sup>58</sup> “Kellogg-Briand Pact 1928” retrieved from *The Avalon Project*, [https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th\\_century/kbpact.asp](https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/kbpact.asp) [accessed March 17, 2024].

<sup>59</sup> Susan Zeiger, “Finding a Cure for War: Women's Politics and the Peace Movement in the 1920s,” *Journal of Social History*, no. 1 (Autumn 1990): 69–86.

treaty of nonviolence to have any impact. These actions never came. The failure of Kellogg-Briand helped to legitimize many of the claims advanced by socialists within the peace movement, that liberalism and capitalism were systems insufficiently equipped to resist the impulse of warfare for profit. This led many leading pacifist organizations to platform a wide cast of leftists within their ranks. Even as the 1940s-1960s predominance of socialists in the peace movement waned, this period of time helped to solidify the fusion of leftwing politics and the peace movement, a fusion that remained on display through the modern era in the US.

The onset of the Second World War in 1939 brought about important transformations within the peace movement, particularly vis-à-vis the interconnection of civil rights and peace activism, though it would take two decades for this interconnection to be fully realized. This confluence of activity was made necessary by governmental repression of both movements, as well as the growing acknowledgement from activists towards the latent intersectionality of their causes. Throughout the Second World War, religious and secular pacifism remained the primary nexus of direct action against the war, while liberal internationalists retreated from the peace movement, in favor of the Allied action against the Axis powers. A pattern was thus set in motion, where peace activism grew increasingly subversive from the perspective of the American government, due in great part to the fusion of radicals in the peace, economic, and civil rights spheres.<sup>60</sup>

As the US drew nearer and nearer to war against Germany in the 1930s, American socialists were put into a peculiar position. On the one hand, socialists from the Debs era onward had largely committed to peace advocacy on the basis that no war waged by

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<sup>60</sup> DeBenedetti, *The Peace Reform in American History*, 138–64.

Capitalists could be just. On the other hand, though, socialist parties, particularly the Comintern directed Communist Party USA (CPUSA), had strong rationales to support the Allied cause on account of supporting the Soviet struggle against Nazi fascism. Nevertheless, CPUSA threaded an intricate course that, by war's end, placed them at the forefront of peace advocacy in the US.

The first evidence of this fact was the *Daily Worker* coverage dedicated to the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement, commonly remembered as the Hitler-Stalin pact, which asserted a position of non-aggression between the two powers. In the August 24 edition of the paper, which was the official newspaper of CPUSA, Earl Browder, CPUSA Secretary, argued in favor of the pact, proclaiming it as a “weapon for peace.” For Browder, the pact seemed to be a no-brainer, the type of agreement that all great powers should sign with one another to prevent warfare and promote peace. Additionally, Browder's arguments were firm in his belief that such a pact would not enable Hitler's fascism, as it was not a formal declaration of friendship between Nazi Germany and the USSR, but simply an understanding to avoid conflict.<sup>61</sup>

Following the Nazi invasion of Poland in September, the CPUSA, via the *Daily Worker* as well as pamphlets, continued to urge the validity of the non-aggression pact. Browder urged the US government to work alongside the USSR to negotiate a new peace between Germany and the rest of the world. In issues of the paper released in the aftermath of the German invasion into Poland, the *Daily Worker* took on a strikingly pacifistic tone, urging all adherents to socialism and communism to reject warmongering as meaningless capitalistic aggression and support immediate negotiations. To that end, articles in the

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<sup>61</sup> Harry Gannes, “Non-Aggression Pact Weapon for Peace, Open to All Nations, Says Browder,” *Daily Worker*, August 24, 1939.

paper were heavy with praise for President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who had in 1939 reiterated publicly his desire to avoid war in Europe by any means.<sup>62</sup>

Following the 1941 Nazi invasion into the USSR, CPUSA issued a statement urging the full support of American Communists in favor of the Soviet struggle against their reactionary enemies. Emphasizing their previous dedication to neutrality and peacemaking, the statement—issued by Chairman William Z. Foster and Acting Secretary Robert Minor—urged the American people to strive for active friendship and fraternal solidarity with the people of the Soviet Union. It did not, however, make any urgings of the US government to support the USSR militarily, instead opting to castigate those in the US who saw war against the USSR as a beneficial outcome of the growing Second World War.<sup>63</sup> This changed in December, following the December 7 attack on Pearl Harbor by Japan. After the US Congress unanimously declared war against both Germany and Italy, CPUSA issued a statement endorsing the measure, pledging “full support to the unity of the nation and unity among nations” to resist the Axis’ assault on the national life of all free peoples.<sup>64</sup>

In the face of fascist aggression, total pacifism was nearly absent from public discourse. War against the Nazis of Germany and their allies in fascist Italy and imperial Japan was deemed by even the strictest peace advocates as the most just a war could be, necessitating staunch support for national defense. The fact that the US had suffered an attack before entering the conflict helped assuage the fears of peace advocates as well, as nearly all peace activists supported national defense, even if they renounced aggression in

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<sup>62</sup> See: *Daily Worker* issue 210, September 2, 1939.

<sup>63</sup> William Z Foster and Robert Minor, “Support the USSR in Its Fight Against Nazi War: Statement of the Communist Party,” *Daily Worker*, June 23, 1941.

<sup>64</sup> William Z Foster and Robert Minor, “On the Declaration of War Against the German, Italian Governments,” *Daily Worker*, December 12, 1941.

foreign policy. Throughout the Second World War, however, a small minority of radical pacifists continued their activism for the preservation of conscience, by working for the rights of conscientious objectors in the face of the most popular war in modern history.

The War Resisters League, though miniscule in scale, maintained a cogent moral position throughout the Second World War, and their actions were primarily concerned with advocating on behalf of conscientious objectors who felt the fury of the state fall upon them through imprisonment. They were not, however, acting in a vacuum, ignoring the political situation around them to focus solely on COs. In a variety of petitions, pamphlets, and documents, members affiliated with the WRL penned pleas to the American government to negotiate a settlement to the war as quickly as possible. In 1942, for instance, George W. Hartmann, a psychology professor and member of the League, authored a pamphlet in which he questioned the contemporary peace debates of the time. Hartmann's analysis of the issue was succinct – while members of the Allied governments groveled about how best to reimagine the post-war order, they neglected to ensure that a post-war order would exist; the primary obligation of policymakers per Hartmann was to establish peace as rapidly as possible. Moreover, in the erection of a new, post-war reality, efforts should be made to ensure the conditions that led to war do not arise again, efforts that would include the establishment of a new, World government guided by principles of common decency and respect for all life. A world which maintained the pre-war colonial order, for instance, would not fulfill the duties of these governments to live up to the ideals of freedom and democracy for all peoples, and would surely increase the likelihood for new wars to arise. Additionally, Hartmann argued against the mentality of victory at any cost, contending that states must rapidly acquiesce in their quest for victory in order to

ensure a common prosperous future for humankind, lest they continue to pledge the life and property of all citizens in the name of success.<sup>65</sup>

The WRL, and their secular dedication to radical pacifism, was quite miniscule in scope. In addition to their commitment against war, the previous bastion of pacifism in the US—religious organizations—retook their position of relevance. Various itinerant sects of Christians, particularly Quakers and Mennonites, refused to register for the draft. The Catholic Worker movement, led by Dorothy Day, joined into the chorus as well, dissenting from Church hierarchy to stake out a Christian pacifist stand during the Second World War. In 1942, *Catholic Worker* (the official news organ of Day’s movement) issued to its readers a declaration that despite their allegiance to the American government, the movement would refuse to support any efforts towards the war, including the draft, the purchase of war bonds, and the manufacturing of munitions. Instead, the editors of the *Catholic Worker* newspaper would pray for a rapid end to the conflict and continue on their normal religious callings of almsgivings and helping the poor.<sup>66</sup>

Members of the Catholic Worker Movement have provided historians with some of the most potent denunciations of war possible, incisively articulating the position of radical pacifism with immense clarity. Fr. W. E. Orchard, writing in the January 1942 edition of *Catholic Worker*, articulated his position on Catholic Pacifism in this fashion. He outlined the historical application of “Just War” doctrine within Church hierarchy before contending that the idea of a war that is just is a misnomer, particularly in the modern era. To Orchard, “the mass and mechanized methods of modern warfare ... are indisputably

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<sup>65</sup> George W. Hartmann, *A Plea for an Immediate Peace by Negotiation* (New York, NY: War Resisters’ League, 1942), <http://archive.org/details/APleaForAnImmediatePeaceByNegotiation>.

<sup>66</sup> “Our Country Passes from Undeclared to Declared War; We Continue Our Christian Pacifist Stand,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1942.

unjust, while the starvation of whole peoples into surrender is beyond discussion from any Christian standpoint.” In this light, pacifism was understood not only to be a personal moral crusade, but it is also a religious duty delivered by God that all faithful must abide to.<sup>67</sup> Orchard was cognizant to the fact that pacifism was an unpopular and uncommon position for anyone to take, let alone Catholics, who in America tended to abide by a strong nationalistic and patriotic ethic. Nevertheless, in the early 1930s, Dorothy Day had directed the Catholic Worker Movement into a powerful source of counsel for prospective conscientious objectors, assisting both those who illegally refused all cooperation with the Selective Service System (Day’s preferred method of pacifist direct action) and those who sought legal registry as COs. Still, Orchard’s acknowledgement of the uphill battle faced by Catholic pacifists was prescient; of the 11,887 registered COs in the Second World War, 135 of them registered based on their Catholicism. This figure represented a considerable relative increase in Catholic pacifism compared to the figure of the Great War (of which there were four Catholic COs) but signified the incredible loneliness of this moral stand.<sup>68</sup>

### **C. Nuclear Disarmament, SANE, and the Cold War**

The end of the Second World War brought American peace advocacy to a nadir. The argument for a deterrence-based peace-through-strength policy seemed to most observers an obvious truth. Liberal internationalists largely celebrated the war as a necessary triumph of liberal ideals over totalitarianism, and they welcomed the formation of the UN. Some internationalists were perturbed over the predominance of the Great Powers within the security council, but nevertheless, peace advocacy, especially of the

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<sup>67</sup> W.E. Orchard, “Catholic Pacifism,” *Catholic Worker*, January 1942.

<sup>68</sup> Patricia McNeal, “Catholic Conscientious Objection during World War II,” *The Catholic Historical Review* 61, no. 2 (April 1975): 222–42.

pacifist bent, seemed to be a relic of the past. The newfound status quo relied upon a base level of military preparedness; strength would beget stability, and therefore, bring about an indirect peace. In great part, this reliance on stability through strength was influenced by fears of appeasement; the disaster of the Munich Agreement motivated a hardline, militaristic anti-communism within nearly all facets of government. Peace advocacy was painted with a similar brush by many individuals both within and without the government.

As a matter of practical policy, peace-through-strength was actuated through massive military armament, particularly the rapid development of nuclear weaponry. On April 7, 1950, the US National Security Council circulated a top-secret memo to President Harry Truman articulating the threat posed to the US by the “hostile design” of the Soviet Union. While the document, known as NSC-68, had major detractors within the Truman administration at the time of its authorship, the invasion of South Korea in June prompted the administration to adopt the memo’s recommendations as official policy, embracing the “rapid building up of the political, economic, and military strength of the free world.” This action of armament kicked off the snowballing of military spending that occurred throughout the second half of the twentieth century, as Truman increased the defense budget from 5 percent of US GDP to 14.2 percent of GDP.<sup>69</sup> While the contents of this memo remained secret until 1975, its effects were noticeable, and peace activists rapidly caught onto the US’ growing embrace of the military industrial complex and its endless drive towards armament.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> David W. Mabon, ed., *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1950, National Security Affairs; Foreign Economic Policy*, vol. 1 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1977), 234–93, [https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v01/pg\\_234](https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1950v01/pg_234); “NSC-68, 1950,” US Department of State Office of the Historian - Milestones: 1945-1952, accessed March 21, 2024, <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/NSC68>.

<sup>70</sup> The term “military industrial complex” was first coined by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in his 1961 farewell address. In that speech, he issued a warning to Americans not to fall victim to an ever-growing



Despite the growing disdain for peace activism in American society, peace advocates by the 1950s were able to redirect towards an issue of growing popular attention. Advocates of peace coalesced around a singular goal: nuclear disarmament. Broadly speaking, antimilitarism had begun to be an accepted and conventional position of leftists and liberals alike, especially in the post-war period prior to the McCarthyite Red Scare.<sup>71</sup> Beginning in 1957, the National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE) formed to oppose President Dwight D. Eisenhower's policies of nuclear development.<sup>72</sup> SANE warned the American public that continued nuclear armament meant certain destruction for the US and the world. By utilizing newspaper advertising, as well as by leveraging connections to labor unions, SANE rapidly gained a sympathetic audience. Their ascendancy culminated in a highly publicized and well-attended national conference in 1960. The conference, held May 19 at Madison Square Garden, was a successful moment in the growing American peace movement; SANE's conference was made possible by assembling a broad coalition of leftwing organizations and individuals.<sup>73</sup> Following the conference, five thousand of the attendees marched through Times Square, stopping at the

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commitment to war, but simultaneously articulated his belief in the importance of a strong military establishment. See: Farewell address by President Dwight D. Eisenhower, January 17, 1961; Final TV Talk 1/17/61 (1), Box 38, Speech Series, Papers of Dwight D. Eisenhower as President, 1953-61, Eisenhower Library; National Archives and Records Administration, retrieved from <https://www.archives.gov/milestone-documents/president-dwight-d-eisenhowers-farewell-address#transcript> [accessed April 17, 2024].

<sup>71</sup> Rationales for leftwing antiwar sentiment vary widely. For some individuals and organizations, pacifism was a moral prerogative. For others, it was based in opposition to American imperialism. See: "The 1960 Campaign for Disarmament Opens," *National Guardian* 12, no. 24 (March 28, 1960): 3; "Troops Slaughter 700," *Workers World* 2, no. 2 (January 15, 1960): 2; Ana Kezman, "May Day, 1960, Is a Day of Hope for Masses (But Imperialists Plot Intervention and War)," *Workers World* 2, no. 9 (May 1, 1960): 1.

<sup>72</sup> "Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (SANE)," History, Peace Action, accessed November 21, 2022, <https://www.peaceaction.org/who-we-are/our-mission/history/>.

<sup>73</sup> The clearest evidence of this broad coalition is contained within the commemorative pamphlet that was distributed at the meeting. Authors, artists, politicians, and more voice their support through editorials and sponsorships. Prominent trade unionists, such as Walther Reuther, were important early supporters as well. See: National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy (U.S.), "Toward a Sane Nuclear Policy" (PRISM: Political and Rights Issues and Social Movements, 1960), <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1216&context=prism>.

headquarters to the U.N. The demonstrators—led by Walther Reuther of the UAW, Norman Thomas of the Socialist Party, and Rabbi Israel Goldstein of Congregation B’nai Jeshurun—called on President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Premier Nikita Khrushchev, and Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld to continue working towards nuclear test bans and disarmament treaties.<sup>74</sup>

SANE was fighting against both officials in the government as well as the public. In 1950, 77 percent of surveyed Americans answered “yes” to the question of whether they would support the use of an atomic weapon in the event of another World War. In 1961, opinion research given to President Kennedy suggested that as many as three-fifths of Americans would be willing to support the use of nuclear weapons to maintain Western control in Berlin. In general, the public felt a need to “keep up” with Soviet nuclear development, and the government was responsive to such desires.<sup>75</sup> Kennedy himself helped to stoke this fear. In a 1958 speech, while still a senator, Kennedy cautioned his congressional colleagues that the US was approaching a strategic disadvantage with the USSR, the so-called “missile gap.” Kennedy did not forgo the goals of universal disarmament, instead speaking hopefully about the ideals of peace and diplomacy.<sup>76</sup> Still, however, the government’s messaging on the issue was sufficient to spark fear in the hearts of most Americans, fear that would be responded to by support for an ever-growing nuclear arsenal. Speaking to a Democratic Party platform committee on June 17, 1960, Najeeb

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<sup>74</sup> “5,000 March Here After Atom Rally,” *New York Times*, May 20, 1960.

<sup>75</sup> George Gallup, “Use of A-Bomb in Korea Rejected 2-to-1 by US Public in Survey” (Public Opinion News Service, September 15, 1950); Samuel Lubell, “The People Speak, More People Now Favor Nuclear Bomb Shelters,” July 6, 1961, Papers of John F. Kennedy, Presidential Papers, National Security Files, Subject: Opinion polls: General, 1961-1963, retrieved from <https://www.jfklibrary.org/asset-viewer/archives/JFKNSF> [accessed December 5, 2022].

<sup>76</sup> Papers of John F. Kennedy. Pre-Presidential Papers. Presidential Campaign Files, 1960. Speeches and the Press. Speeches, Statements, and Sections, 1958-1960. Defense and disarmament: Missile gap.

Halaby—a deputy assistant Secretary of Defense from 1948-1954—lambasted the SANE statements. Halaby opined that nuclear war was *not* outside the realm of possibility. It was “not only thinkable, but in prospect.”<sup>77</sup> The solution to national security and fighting international communism was not nuclear disarmament, he said, but nuclear preparation. His speech was applauded by the attendees; SANE’s vision of mutual disarmament was unlikely to emerge from either political party.

SANE continued on, however unsuccessfully, in pushing for nuclear test bans and nuclear disarmament. The Old Left, individuals associated with or members of leftist political parties, made up an influential core of SANE support, though that support would later be inhibited by SANE’s tactical use of socialist exclusion. These leftists were nevertheless unified with liberals who feared nuclear proliferation. Many of SANE’s supporters made up an intellectual elite, populating the nation’s universities and think-tanks. Prior to the Vietnam War, SANE never received the type of decentralized grassroots support that later peace movements enjoyed. This difference may be attributable to the massive public attention given to Vietnam by the American press. With its tremendous human costs early in the conflict, Vietnam drew much more national media attention, and this attention, especially in universities, helped explain the initial surge of peace activism from groups like the Students for a Democratic Society.

The constituency represented by SANE were opposed to American military policy, but they were not universally pacifists or peace advocates. Of course, individuals who maintained a moral conviction of non-violence supported the goals of SANE. Nevertheless, the full range of their activism was shrouded by SANE’s singular focus on disarmament.

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<sup>77</sup> “Nuclear Warning Jars Democrats,” *New York Times*, June 18, 1960.

To groups like the War Resisters League, denuclearization was but one checkpoint towards a much broader objective.

The destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the hands of American atomic weaponry, and the subsequent cessation of conflict in the Second World War, formed the basis for the WRL's first newsletter issue. Rather than pivot their anti-conscription energies into the atomic question, the WRL instead pursued its antiwar objectives with renewed vigor. At an August 1945 meeting of the WRL executive committee, the group resolved to "pursue its objective of the abolition of war." The League would work tirelessly towards "rousing [the] will of the peoples of the earth to dedicate themselves to human well-being." Later in the newsletter, the WRL articulated its two-fold legislative goal. League members were implored to write to the US government and urge them to vote against militarism, and in favor of food assistance. Continuing, the League urged its membership to continue to resist conscription, for any lengthy occupation of defeated nations would surely undermine the stated desire of the US government to pursue post-war demilitarization.<sup>78</sup> In contrast to the activism of SANE, the WRL proved a far more pacifistic organization in perspective. Moreover, despite its decidedly non-ideological face, many of the statements made by the WRL in this time echoed the same rationales used by leftists, especially with their emphasis on poverty amelioration versus military expenditures.

From June 14-16, 1946, the WRL held their 17<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in Butler, New Jersey. The conference had 107 attendees, a respectable but miniscule figure. These members nevertheless steeped themselves in a rousing moral clarity. Addressing the conference, National Chair Evan W. Thomas called for a stricter morality, imbued with a

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<sup>78</sup> War Resisters League, *WRL News* no. 1 (September 13, 1945), <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/nva0>.

Kantian moral universalism that would promote “a personal integrity resting on the unity of life.” Other sessions urged membership to organize within the workplace and the laboratory, to get “workers and scientists to see that opposition to war will be effective only as it results in non-cooperation with war *even after war is declared*” [emphasis added].<sup>79</sup> Early in their existence, the WRL established itself not just as an antimilitarist organization, it was firmly a *resistance* organization. Pacifism, as a moral theory, required active resistance on the part of its members, beyond the electoral tools employed by SANE.

The division in tactics employed by the WRL and SANE was not acrimonious, however. In issue 102 of *WRL News*, the May 19, 1960 SANE National Conference is covered under the heading “Biggest N.Y. Peace Walk.” Within the short column, the march is celebrated as the biggest peace walk in recent memory.<sup>80</sup> Nevertheless, while public protests were celebrated by the WRL, considerably more attention is paid within the newsletter towards actions of civil disobedience. Eroseanna Robinson, an Olympic athlete and activist, embarked on a hunger strike to protest her imprisonment for tax refusal. Seen as an ultimate form of non-cooperative war resistance, the WRL endorsed tax refusal as a tactic, and was visibly supportive of efforts to free Robinson from prison. Peacemakers, per the WRL’s enrollment statement, must refuse to support any kind of war while striving to remove all the causes of war.<sup>81</sup> The breadth of this sentiment was of course far beyond what SANE was willing to endorse, and despite their collaborative relationship, WRL and SANE represented two poles of the antimilitarist spectrum.

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<sup>79</sup> War Resisters League, *WRL News* no. 7 (June 22, 1946), <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/nva309>.

<sup>80</sup> War Resisters League, "Biggest N.Y. Peace Walk," *WRL News* no. 102 (August 1960), <https://digitalcollections.tricolib.brynmawr.edu/object/wrlnews6>.

<sup>81</sup> War Resisters League, "In Brief," *WRL News* no. 102.

Nearer, at first, to the SANE end of the spectrum of antimilitarism was yet another evolution of the Women's peace movement, Women Strike for Peace (WSP). Founded in 1961 by Bella Abzug and Dagmar Wilson, the group was initiated to protest atmospheric nuclear testing and further nuclear armament. Like the WILPF and WPU before them, the activists of WSP approached their peace activism with specific attention to their femininity and roles as mothers in the US. WSP made their first stand in 1961 by raising attention to Strontium-90, a radioactive compound that was released by nuclear weapons and remained present in the environment. Working with Barry Commoner, a biologist, environmentalist, and progressive activist, members of the Riverdale, NY chapter of WSP raised the alarm that Strontium-90 was present in baby teeth, on account of environmental contamination from atmospheric nuclear testing. The members of WSP, justifying their activism as their motherly duty to their families, began to press alongside SANE for an international treaty against atmospheric testing.<sup>82</sup> Borrowing both the language and tactics of organized labor, WSP's inaugural protest was a 50,000 woman-strong walk-out from their homes and jobs to demand a nuclear test ban treaty on November 1, 1961, in 60 American cities. Predominantly white and middle class, the women represented a cohort that was often absent from most social movement of the day, a fact which brought the march particular notoriety in the press.<sup>83</sup> Rapidly, the scope of their activism widened, as the organization morphed through the 1960s into a generally antimilitarist organization that became a leading moral voice against the Vietnam War.

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<sup>82</sup> Cora Weiss, Cora Weiss Oral History Project: The Reminiscences of Cora Weiss, interview by Ronald J Grele, May 29, 2014, Session 2, 22–29, <https://www.ccohr.incite.columbia.edu/cora-weiss-oral-history>.

<sup>83</sup> Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 2002) 196.

Through their emphasis on the imagery of traditional motherhood, WSP attempted to avoid the redbaiting that had paralyzed so many activist and peace organizations through the post-Second World War period in America. In the public eye, they were mostly successful; articulating opposition to nuclear testing by raising fears of radioactive milk for babies is not an argument that invokes radicalism, economic or otherwise. Nevertheless, to the American government, particularly the FBI and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), WSP represented a grave threat. Fearing that communists had hijacked the American nuclear family, the FBI began an illegal policy of permanent surveillance on the group shortly after its inception in 1961.<sup>84</sup> On December 11, 1962, members of WSP were called to testify before HUAC on suspicion of communist activity within the organization. Over three days, members of the Committee questioned members and leadership of WSP in an attempt to establish these connections to communist organizations. Throughout the testimony, the strikers made clear that they were not, in fact, dictated to by communists foreign or domestic, and that if there were indeed communists within their membership, they would welcome them in order to better agitate for peace. Dagmar Wilson, on December 13, made this abundantly clear. Asked by the committee if she would take “action designed to prevent Communists from assuming positions of leadership in the movement or to eliminate Communists who may have already obtained such positions,” Wilson answered curtly “certainly not.”<sup>85</sup>

This answer hinted at two fundamental aspects of WSP and their organizational tactics. For one, the women affiliated with WSP did not keep membership rolls, nor did

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<sup>84</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*, 196.

<sup>85</sup> “Communist Activities in the Peace Movement (Women Strike for Peace and Certain Other Groups)” (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1963), 2200, <http://archive.org/details/communistactivit63unit>.

they require dues. WSP was thus conceived by its leaders as an idea and tactic, and they courted the participation of women anywhere at any time. From the November 1, 1961, strike onwards, WSP was a grassroots organization, in a fashion to be repeated by the New Left. Second, all the women associated with WSP associated themselves with the organization on their own volition in order to agitate towards peace and no other political goals, and they refused to question the motives of any other strikers as a matter of principle. Anyone, whether accused of being subversive or not, was welcomed to engage in action to promote peace. Over the three days of questioning, members of the Committee subjected the subpoenaed women to a barrage of misogynistic questions<sup>86</sup> in an attempt to unravel a communist conspiracy in the organization of WSP, and the women stood firm in their repeated affirmations that they were not particularly organized, and that they were simply concerned as mothers for the future of their children and the future of humankind. While questioning Ruth Meyers, counsel for the Committee asked Meyers five times in a row if she was a communist, ever had been a communist, or had ever organized on behalf of the Communist party, to which Meyers invoked the fifth amendment and stressed that her only objective with WSP was to “promote a basic program for working towards peaceful alternatives in this world.”<sup>87</sup> As a movement, WSP did not care to engage with the political past or present of the activists who identified with it, as these were mere distractions from their intentions as a peace group. As such, they did not exclude any participant on account of their political beliefs; the strikers stood united as women and mothers, not leftists nor subversives.

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<sup>86</sup> See for instance the questioning into Ruth Meyers, where Congressional counsel insulted Meyers for mishearing a question: “Communist Activities in the Peace Movement,” 2096–97.

<sup>87</sup> “Communist Activities in the Peace Movement,” 2100–2103.



Typically, but not always, leftist organizations occupied a space along the antimilitarist spectrum. Crushed by factional squabbles, rigid dogmatism, and a healthy dose of government interference, these stalwarts of the Old Left had lost most of their relevance by the 1960s. The interrelated causes of antimilitarism, anti-imperialism, and workers' liberation had always animated the minds of peace advocates, but rarely did organizations attempt to synthesize these fully into a unified ideal. Amidst the tactics of HUAC and the FBI, leftwing organizations had crumbled to near irrelevancy by 1960. The ideas that animated them, ideas of egalitarianism and workers liberation, did not leave the public consciousness, instead evolving into new forms, forms that were very receptive to the pressing issue of militarism and its consequences for American society.

#### **D. The Birth of the New Left**

In any society, there is a range of commonly accepted and normalized political positions, referred to by political scientists as the Overton window, a term coined by American policy analyst Joseph Overton.<sup>88</sup> In the aftermath of the Second World War, the Cold War shifted this window continually to the right in the US as McCarthyite anticommunism became the political vogue, prompting Western leftists to regroup. A new constituency emerged, first in Europe, and then the US, known as the “New” Left. Eschewing the socialist party politics of the Old Left, the New Left in the US attempted to merge a variety of issues, both economic and social, into a novel political program. This was articulated most completely in Tom Hayden’s “Port Huron Statement,” written and adopted by SDS in 1962. The issues written about by Hayden began to take shape much

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<sup>88</sup> See: Shyam Gouri Suresh and Scott Jeffrey, “The Consequences of Social Pressures on Partisan Opinion Dynamics,” *Eastern Economic Journal* 43, no. 2 (March 2017): 242–59, <https://doi.org/10.1057/ej.2016.6>.

earlier, however, and the New Left represented a confluence of issues that steadily gained relevance over the 1950s.

The most obvious of these issues was the fight for civil rights. Throughout the 1950s, great strides were made in the fight against White supremacist segregation. These gains were won through carefully planned activism by a collection of students and religious leaders, of whom Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was most conspicuous. In 1956, King, as leader of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), helped to lead a boycott against segregated bussing in Montgomery, Alabama. Collaborating with many dedicated activists, the people of the MIA ushered in a newly energized civil rights movement, built upon the ideals of bottom-up, participatory democratic protest.

Some recent histories have ignored the leftist orientation of early civil rights organizations, which obscures their contributions to the formation of the American New Left. In the late 1950s, organizers like E.D. Nixon and Rosa Parks worked to distance themselves from their allies in radical leftist circles, not out of political differences, but out of a tactical necessity to evade the repression of the Red Scare.<sup>89</sup> Nevertheless, these organizers had heartfelt leftist convictions, evidenced by Dr. King's qualified support for socialism, and the collaborations between the National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples (NAACP), MIA, and labor organizations.<sup>90</sup> Critically, however, leftwing ideology was always conceived of as a secondary objective in this time; social

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<sup>89</sup> Danielle L. McGuire, *At the Dark End of the Street: Black Women, Rape, and Resistance - A New History of the Civil Rights Movement from Rosa Parks to the Rise of Black Power* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011) 45-47.

<sup>90</sup> Martin Luther King, "To Coretta Scott," July 18, 1952, <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/coretta-scott>.

reformation and the abolition of segregation/Jim Crow laws was the prime directive of any civil rights group.

More than any other organization, the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) influenced the development of the American New Left in the early 1960s. As an organization of mainly young people, SNCC boldly challenged both segregated businesses and voter disenfranchisement through courageous nonviolent direct action. SNCC took this role in a consciously intersectional fashion. College-aged activists of all races acted in unison to forcibly desegregate the southern US. In doing so, these students created the formula upon which student antiwar activism, and student leftism more broadly, would come to operate.

SNCC was formally organized in 1960, led by the guidance of veteran NAACP organizer Ella Baker. Their Statement of Purpose, adopted April 17, 1960, affirmed the “philosophical or religious ideal of nonviolence as the foundation of [their] purpose.” The document is short and cogent, emphasizing an optimistic view of human possibility. The statement emphasized SNCCs belief that nonviolent resistance could reverse American racism via love’s “enduring capacity to absorb evil.”<sup>91</sup> In essence, this attachment to nonviolent resistance was a secularization of the Christian pacifist ethos espoused by thinkers like Ernest Crosby and Leo Tolstoy and actuated by Dr. King. SNCC began their resistance with sit-ins, forcing segregationists to confront the physicality of their restrictive discrimination policies. Critically, SNCC organized through university students, galvanizing a previously untapped well of resistance and showing the US the potential for young people to reshape the government.

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<sup>91</sup> Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, “Statement of Purpose,” April 18, 1960, [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/600417\\_sncc\\_statement.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/600417_sncc_statement.pdf).

Once exposed to the power of organizing, students who had worked with SNCC, either directly or as tacit approvers, began to seek ways to employ this power towards other objectives via alternative organizations. Progress in civil rights was slow-going, and SNCC and its allies faced innumerable setbacks, particularly in the face of violent reactionary backlash to their desegregation initiatives. Still, individuals who organized alongside SNCC viewed their circumstances in decidedly optimistic tones. Reactionary backlash did not discourage these committed radicals, rather, it galvanized them, forcing them to believe even deeper in the righteousness of their cause. This would in turn imbue the organizations founded in the footsteps of SNCC with a strong, independent sense of power and influence.

In 1960, members of the Student League for Industrial Democracy (SLID) made the decision to rebrand. Originally an offshoot of the League for Industrial Democracy (LID), SLID grew weary with the rigid social-democratic, anticommunist dogmatism of LID, and hoped to broker a more independent course rooted in non-exclusionary participatory democratic politics. The new organization was named Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). In taking this step towards independence, SDS did little else to advance a new avenue for leftist organizing. This inaction changed in 1962, in Port Huron, Michigan.

The 1962 SDS national committee meeting in Michigan would prove to be immensely impactful, both for the organization and for the broader New Left in totality. There, the National Committee ratified Thomas Hayden's "Port Huron Statement," which served as a founding manifesto for SDS' new course. Synthesizing the fears of liberal internationalists, like Jane Addams, while invoking the warnings of politicians like former President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Tom Hayden railed against the military industrial

complex that emerged during the Second World War. He described an economy intimately connected to warfare, a type of cronyism brought on by authoritarian and oligopolistic structures of American society.<sup>92</sup> This, he warned, established the conditions that led to his generation being the first to grow up under the threat of nuclear cataclysm.<sup>93</sup>

Critically, the “Port Huron Statement” was written consciously to include the context of the social and political currents of the nascent New Left. Within the introductory paragraphs, Hayden is explicit in his invocation of the struggle for civil rights, calling the “Southern Struggle against racial bigotry” his generation’s first exposure to “the permeating and victimizing fact of human degradation.”<sup>94</sup> The fight against racial injustice was the first act that compelled SDSers to enter the arena of activism, according to Hayden, underscoring the dense web of interconnected objectives fought for by the New Left. The second troublesome development, Hayden observed, was the ever-weighting presence of “The Bomb” in American life. One could “deliberately ignore...all other human problems, but not [those] two, for [they] were too immediate and crushing in their impact.”<sup>95</sup>

The influence from groups like SNCC and SANE is laid bare in the first few pages of the Statement. The words that followed, however, echoed most of the themes that Old Leftists trumpeted throughout their period of relevance in the US. Hayden wrote passionately about the possibilities of material abundance which were thwarted by the “superfluous abundance” of the upper classes.<sup>96</sup> It is critical to note, however, that these echoes are not without substantial qualification. Indeed, in order for the New Left to

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<sup>92</sup> Thomas Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society” (Students for a Democratic Society, 1962), 15–16.

<sup>93</sup> Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” 16.

<sup>94</sup> Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” 1.

<sup>95</sup> Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” 2.

<sup>96</sup> Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” 2-3.

consider itself “new”, it sought to reshape or replace existing leftist frameworks of analysis in favor of novel political developments. Hayden did so in two ways. First, he critiqued the sloganeering and politicking of previous liberal and socialist organizations. The New Left, he urged, must be willing to abandon the rigid commitment to procedure and method which plagued older organizations with inefficiency and lack of program. Second, Hayden implicitly rejected Marxist materialism. In a celebration of revolutionary idealism, Hayden proclaimed that the idealistic thinking of old was perverted by “theoretic chaos.”<sup>97</sup> Stalinism was, for SDS, a movement which shattered the dreams of previous visionaries. In contrast, idealists like Hayden were castigated by Old Leftists as delusional. Rigid materialist dogmatism was deemed the more realistic alternative, but this dogmatism was identified by SDS as needlessly fatalistic and unimaginative.

It is here where SDS becomes more clearly attached to the intellectual history of the peace movement in America. Although SDS was categorically much broader than peace advocacy, the devotion to idealist (or Utopian, depending on one’s intellectual orientation) principles share a common starting point with the ideals of Tolstoyan pacifism and Addams’ internationalism. Leaning on the analysis of Martin Luther King, Jr., whose well known pacifism was influenced by Tolstoy’s great disciple in Gandhi, the “Port Huron Statement” clarified SDS’ dedication to non-violence. Hayden explained that the organization found “violence to be abhorrent because it requires generally the transformation of the target, be it a human being or a community of people, into a depersonalized object of hate.”<sup>98</sup> He stressed the moral imperative for the New Left to

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<sup>97</sup> Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society," 4.

<sup>98</sup> Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society," 6.

abolish the means of violence while it simultaneously encouraged non-violent resistance to develop as a key stratagem of resistance.

Another key facet of SDS' novel strategy, shared by the organizers of SNCC, was the choice to organize among students. Hayden observed that students were becoming uniquely alienated from material reality in the course of their studies, an alienation which bred apathy and disinterest. In this light, students held untapped potential, they were a well from which new energy could be drawn into activism. Importantly, Hayden identified apathy as a critical flaw of American society in general, a symptom of the greater malaise that the most prosperous body politic on earth was suffering from. Here too, students held boundless potential to rouse the masses towards effective change. The University, argued Hayden, was located in a "permanent position of social influence."<sup>99</sup> SDS, like SNCC, thus resolved to organize via the campus, a decision which enabled them to exist at the forefront of modern American peace advocacy.

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<sup>99</sup> Hayden, "The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society," 56.

### **III. The Movement Begins, 1963-1965**

#### **A. Buddhist Self-Immolation, Draft Resistance, and the Beginnings of “The Movement”**

In both Vietnam and the US, individuals acting on their own moral impulse inaugurated the initial wave of protest activity. In response to Ngo Dinh Diem’s repressive governance, Buddhists in South Vietnam spoke out. Students formed an important constituency in this movement as well, mirroring the development of protests in the US. As this unrest progressed in South Vietnam, the US forces deployed there – in an advisory capacity – reluctantly attempted to support the regime through its military leadership.

On June 11, 1963, Thich Quang Duc—a Buddhist Monk—sat in the lotus position on a cushion in an intersection a few blocks from the Presidential Palace and began to pray. Another monk then emptied the contents of a gasoline container over Thich’s head, before Thich struck a match, and self-immolated. As the flames engulfed his body, Thich continued to sit, holding his wooden prayer beads.<sup>100</sup> This act proved remarkably significant, both in Vietnam and the US. In Vietnam, Thich’s self-immolation helped crystallize discontent, sharpening public critiques of the Ngo regime. In the US, it forced Americans for the first time to confront their nation’s foreign policy choices in Vietnam, a war-weary Asian nation that was far outside the scope of public interest in 1963. Though the first, Thich would not be the only immolation in Vietnam. Months later, another monk immolated in Hue, as martyrdom became a more common avenue for resistance against repression.

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<sup>100</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 86.



For the first time, massive amounts of Americans were cognizant of the growing intensity of American commitment in Vietnam. More critically, Thich forced a new moral evaluation among certain sects of religious Americans. This was most pronounced among the Quakers, who in 1963 embodied the sharpest resistance to American militarism abroad. Importantly, the method of protest employed by Thich inspired some radical pacifists to do the same in the US. Self-sacrifice became an act of moral martyrdom, wherein pacifists could signal to their government that the US support for the Diem regime, as well as the increasingly violent Vietnamese civil war, was degenerating the collective soul of humankind.

It is critical to view these acts of self-destruction on the terms of those who conducted them. As observed by Marjorie Hope, a writer who visited South Vietnam in November 1963, the decision of Buddhists to self-immolate was not one that was conducted rashly, nor was it one preempted by psychological illness. Indeed, though many American observers, especially Catholic ones, believed the act to be sinful, the monks who self-immolated saw it as an ultimate sacrifice of one's "little self" in the pursuit of greater justice, fulfilling a complex web of obligations passed down through the intersection of Confucian and Buddhist teachings. Immolation was not an act of suicide, it was a sacrifice, giving up one's own worldly life so that their community could better enjoy their own.<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately, the sacrifices made by these courageous monks would not amount to much positive change, as the Diem regime continued its repressive policies, backed publicly by the United States.

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<sup>101</sup> Marjorie Hope, "The Reluctant Way: Self-Immolation in Vietnam," *The Antioch Review* 27, no. 2 (1967): 149–63, <https://doi.org/10.2307/4610829>.

Throughout the first half of the 1960s, successive presidential administrations, from Eisenhower, to Kennedy, and then Johnson, committed increasing numbers of American military advisors to South Vietnam. These advisors, alongside intelligence agents and economic developers, were deployed in Vietnam to support the Ngo Dinh Diem regime in their fight against the North Vietnamese. Replicating the British strategy in Malaysia, American advisors pushed the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) to move members of the countryside into strategic hamlets, hoping to shield an apolitical peasantry from the looming menace of international communism. Predictably, this did not endear the populace to the Republic of Vietnam's regime, nor to the American troop presence. Forced displacement along the countryside did little to deter communist infiltration, but it did poison opinion against the military forces, whose soldiers became the faces of upheaval and displacement in rural South Vietnam.

The US had not formally entered the war against the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), but by 1963, growing numbers of American servicemembers were stationed in South Vietnam, many of them seeing combat, and increasingly dying as well. By March 6, 1963, forty-five American soldiers had died in Vietnam in their advisory capacity. Writing to Bobbie Lou Pendergrass, the sister of slain soldier James McAndrews, President Kennedy explained that advisors were deployed to the country to prevent "complete Communist domination" in Southeast Asia. Continuing, Kennedy stated plainly his belief that the "threat to the Vietnamese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free World community."<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> John F. Kennedy, "Letter Response to Bobbie Lou Pendergrass," March 6, 1963, [https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Pendergrass\\_letter\\_response\\_JFK.pdf](https://www.jfklibrary.org/sites/default/files/2018-06/Pendergrass_letter_response_JFK.pdf).

Kennedy's belief in Eisenhower's domino theory notwithstanding, a growing chorus of discontent mounted in both the US and South Vietnam. Knowledge of the Ngo regime's repression was free-flowing, and called into question what precisely the US was supporting. Surely, a government which repressed the religious majority of its people, plagued with rampant cronyism, could not be the bulwark of the "Free World community." Radical pacifist organizations, like the WRL, began to pay closer attention to the growing violence in Vietnam. In addition to their typical demonstrations against nuclear testing and compulsory drilling in schools, the WRL sponsored pickets against Madame Nhu, the wife of Ngo Dinh Nhu, when she arrived in New York on a tour of the US.<sup>103</sup> This demonstration, on October 9, 1963, signified the growing resentment American peace organizations began to feel for the Ngo regime, which maintained power via the auspices of the US military.

Despite the growing acknowledgement from groups like WRL, the Vietnam war was, at this time, an afterthought for most peace-minded Americans, who instead focused their energies on the looming threat of nuclear war, on the prospect of war with Cuba, or on the ongoing conflict in Laos. Thich's immolation caught the eyes of the international press, and members of the preexisting peace organizations in the US sought to bring greater attention to the support given to the Diem regime by the US government. Igal Roodenko, Vice-Chairman of the WRL, initiated a picket on July 25, 1963, to protest the anti-Buddhist repression of the Diem regime and to call into question the American support.<sup>104</sup> In addition, the organization, coordinated by David McReynolds, established a pilot project called the Peace Action Committee. This committee, which featured both Roodenko and

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<sup>103</sup> War Resisters League, "Picket Madame Nhu," *WRL News* 122, December 1963.

<sup>104</sup> War Resisters League, "On the Peace Front," *WRL News*, 121 October 1963.

Jim Peck, was called to organize additional protest activity in favor of greater liberty for South Vietnamese Buddhists. Similar committees were formed to serve other resistance aims, both political and educational, all with the same effort of turning the tide towards a more equitable foreign policy in Vietnam which centered pacifistic virtues of nonviolence and freedom.<sup>105</sup>

Meanwhile, over the course of 1963 and 1964, sporadic bouts of peace advocacy, from protest to active resistance, increased in frequency. On Armed Forces Day 1964, twelve demonstrators burned their draft cards at an antidraft rally in New York City. The event, sponsored by the Student Peace Union (SPU), Committee for Nonviolent Action (CNVA), Catholic Worker, and WRL, was miniscule in scale, but it marked an inauguration of public acts of civil disobedience in response to American foreign policy in Vietnam.<sup>106</sup> Actions like this would continue over the course of the year, seldom larger than 100 people, as small groups of primarily pacifists expressed their dissent to an apathetic American public.

### **B. SDS and the Inauguration of Mass Protest Against the Vietnam War, Spring 1965<sup>107</sup>**

Throughout 1964, the North Vietnamese adopted an increasingly ambitious strategy in the Vietnamese Civil War in accord with First Secretary Le Duan's two-phase strategy for victory. In response, the US escalated their military support to the South Vietnamese government, continually adding more US military advisors and leading more

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<sup>105</sup> War Resisters League, "League Tries Pilot Project," *WRL News*, 121 October 1963.

<sup>106</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 96.

<sup>107</sup> Components of this segment have previously been published with the *Crimson Historical Review*. See: Jason Long, "Organized Labor and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement: Early Union Mobilization," *Crimson Historical Review* 5, no. 1 (Fall 2022): 13–32.

military operations. As the American commitment deepened, the war became a leading topic of political and intellectual discussion, while occupying a central part of the campaigns of both President Lyndon B. Johnson and his Republican challenger, Barry F. Goldwater. After the DRV attacked U.S.S. *Maddox* in the Gulf of Tonkin during a US-led South Vietnamese assault on two DRV islands, President Johnson sought greater authority to pursue a more aggressive policy. In a morning phone call with Secretary of State Robert McNamara, Johnson argued that in response to further attack from North Vietnamese forces in the Gulf of Tonkin, the US ought to simultaneously strike back while also sabotaging several bridges in the North. Later in the conversation, the two mused over strategic guidelines for counterattacks, with McNamara quoting Defense Secretary Dean Rusk in favor of a shortening the US recognition of North Vietnamese territorial waters to three miles while in air pursuit. Rusk's argument was based in plausible deniability, that is, that US planes could pursue North Vietnamese ships by air at a provocative distance without running afoul of Congressional authority, allowing the administration to deny the provocation.<sup>108</sup> In subsequent conversations, Johnson made clear his desire to attain broader authority from Congress to widen his policies in the conflict. After the U.S.S. *Maddox* reported another attack, the details of which were clouded by controversy, Johnson got his wish.

On August 7, 1964, Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution, giving President Lyndon B. Johnson nearly limitless power to promote “international peace and security” in Southeast Asia.<sup>109</sup> Couched in the rhetoric of Cold War era anti-communism, the US

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<sup>108</sup> “Telephone Conversation # 4658, Sound Recording, LBJ and ROBERT MCNAMARA,” Sound Recording, Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations and Meetings, August 4, 1964, 9:43AM, LBJ Presidential Library, <https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/tel-04658>.

<sup>109</sup> “Tonkin Gulf Resolution,” Pub. L. No. 88–408 (1964).

Government justified the war to the American public on the virtues of strengthening the Western coalition against their Chinese and Russian enemies. In the years following the 1964 joint resolution, President Johnson consistently escalated the conflict in Vietnam, deploying increasing numbers of US troops annually. His successor, President Richard Nixon, followed the same course, and took the war beyond the boundaries of Vietnam and Laos into Cambodia. Throughout all of this, some facet of American society always opposed the war.

Already, pacifist organizations displayed their dissent over the government's policy in Vietnam, and this dissent was only intensified by the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. None of these organizations had truly embarked on a mass movement, however, instead only managing to get meager turnouts to otherwise forgettable protests. Far more important were individual acts of resistance, like tax refusal and draft-card burning, in the sense that these actions had at least made a material impact on the U.S.' ability to conduct war. Pacifists grew increasingly frustrated by their government's warmongering, as they grappled with the moral consideration of what *they* could do to stop their country's seeming genocidal intent in Vietnam. Some pacifists, like the 82-year-old Quaker Alice Herz, reached the same conclusion as some monks in South Vietnam, who elected to sacrifice themselves for the cause of peace. Herz was a member of WILPF, and as a seasoned activist, was unwilling to wait for carefully planned protest actions any longer. Choosing spontaneity, she self-immolated on March 16, 1965.<sup>110</sup>

Among the established peace advocacy organizations, there seemed to be a staggering sense of inertia and inaction. The vacuum in moral leadership was filled not by

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<sup>110</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 107.

seasoned pacifists, but rather by a recently tapped constituency—students. It was students who had mobilized some of the most effective civil rights campaigns in the previous half-decade, and it would once again be students who began to move the needle of public opinion away from the Vietnam War. Thus, it was not the WRL, CNVA, or WILPF who staged the first truly mass demonstration against the Vietnam War, it was SDS. Inspired by the peace marches of groups like SANE and motivated by their experiences working with SNCC, SDS embraced the movement against the war in Vietnam as an opportunity to change American society for the better. Optimistically, SDS looked to transform the US towards a more democratic system, imbibing fully the humanistic idealism articulated by Tom Hayden in 1962. The war, and protesting it, was their opportunity.

The strategy employed by SANE—non-violent protests, newspaper advertising, and pamphleteering—inspired young activists at the start of the American portion of the Vietnam War, and SDS modeled themselves off SANE as well as civil rights organizations such as SNCC. Considerable crossover participation between early SDS members and SNCC members meant that many SDSers learned their organizational strategy and protest tactics from the Civil rights organizers who preceded them.<sup>111</sup> By March 1965, SDS's focus shifted away from generalized non-communist leftism into an ardent and focused antiwar campaign. Paul Booth, the Coordinator of the SDS Peace Research and Education Project, helped organize a national march on Washington in April 1965 to oppose the war. Writing in a March 1965 edition of the *SDS Bulletin*, Booth cautioned readers that the war threatened irreparable injury to Vietnamese and Americans alike. Criticizing the lack of transparency from officials in Washington D.C., and praising individual groups of student

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<sup>111</sup> See: Howard Brick and Christopher Phelps, *Radicals in America: The US Left since the Second World War* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 117–31.

protesters, Booth called for a massive demonstration in opposition to the war to be held on Easter Sunday, a traditional day of pacifist action. The April 17, 1965, March on Washington was such a demonstration, serving as the true birth of the national Vietnam-era antiwar movement.<sup>112</sup>

The SDS-led March on Washington echoed the sentiments of earlier peace demonstrations in the US. Attendees constantly stressed the link between domestic poverty and aggressive foreign policy, and students carried signs calling for a “War on Poverty, Not War on People.”<sup>113</sup> In an interview with the *New York Times*, Paul Booth rearticulated the aims of the SDS, stating that they were “really not just a peace group ... [they were] working on domestic problems—civil rights, poverty, university reform.” Booth stated that an American-led war in Asia would destroy the domestic goals of SDS.<sup>114</sup> This type of focus on domestic poverty was central to the rhetorical impulse of groups like SDS. In the “Port Huron Statement”, Tom Hayden explained that poverty and deprivation were an unbreakable dimension of American life, even despite the massive economic prosperity and affluence that followed the Second World War.<sup>115</sup> Highlighting domestic poverty emerged as a mainstay of Vietnam-era antiwar activism, calling back to the historical connections drawn between luminaries like Jane Addams<sup>116</sup> and her allies within the WPU,

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<sup>112</sup> Paul Booth, “Crisis in Vietnam,” *Students for a Democratic Society Bulletin* 3, no. 6 (March 1965); “15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War.”

<sup>113</sup> “15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War.”

<sup>114</sup> “15,000 White House Pickets Denounce Vietnam War.”

<sup>115</sup> Hayden, “The Port Huron Statement of the Students for a Democratic Society,” 12.

<sup>116</sup> Addams deemed her pacifism to fit perfectly within a generally patriotic framework, despite claims to the contrary from her detractors. By emphasizing domestic downturn, activists attempted to frame their antiwar activism as a patriotic calling, an attempt to protect the nation from the harms of militarism. This was replicated by SDS members in 1965 who sought to organize against the war while simultaneously affirming their loyalty through service in other, non-violent methods. See: “Jane Addams Admits Stand Against Her,” *Dayton Herald*, January 25, 1919.



while infusing the rhetoric of Eugene Debs to describe the costs of military spending at the expense of the working classes.<sup>117</sup>

Aside from fears of domestic downturn, SDS opposed the war on moral and ideological grounds as well. On the day of the March on Washington, SDS president Paul Potter exclaimed to the world that President Lyndon B. Johnson's policies mocked freedom both in Vietnam and in the US. More revealingly, Potter argued that the cause of the war in Vietnam was the interconnection between power politics and diplomacy. He proclaimed that if the people of the US wished to end the war in Vietnam, they must first change the institutions of the country that created it—to put material value before human lives was a repudiation of freedom.<sup>118</sup> This image of institutional upheaval would remain a constant element of SDS speeches and literature; transformational change via participatory democracy—with an emphasis on humanism—was the ideological basis for many New Leftists, a contrast from the materialist analysis of traditional socialist organizations.

Potter's speech that day is essential to understanding the SDS, especially in its initial construction and early years. The students who filled the streets of Washington were not of strong ideological dogmatism, nor had their activist careers begun in the pacifist movement. These students were unified along basic ethical ideals of freedom and liberty, with a non-aligned leftward bias. They took cues and strategies from the peace movement and the Old Left, but primarily, student radicals who opposed the war in Vietnam in 1965 did not do so out of some commitment to socialist ideas.

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<sup>117</sup> In Eugene Debs' Canton Ohio antiwar speech, he drew connections between the Great War and government hijacking of the rail-industry. In general, Debs attributed many of the evils of capitalism to its propensity to warfare, connecting the two as inextricable from one another, and identifying both as the cause of working-class malaise. See: Debs, "The Canton, Ohio, Anti-War Speech."

<sup>118</sup> Potter, "The Incredible War," 229-32.

Differing opinions aside, there were intersections between the various leftwing groups, Old and New, in this period. Peace organizations, like SANE and the WRL, endorsed the Easter march. Various well-known leftwing intellectuals, like Howard Zinn and Staughton Lynd, joined the chorus as well. Some labor unions, like Retail Workers Union district 65, collaborated with the SDS over the entire course of the war.<sup>119</sup> Ultimately, however, it was SDS who undertook the initiative to organize the March, and it would be students who paved the way for antiwar activists in the years that followed. Collaboration between students and other groups, like labor unions, waxed and waned over the course of the war, with national labor organizations like the AFL-CIO taking an official position against the demonstrators.<sup>120</sup> This did not stop SDS from attempting to strengthen their relationship with organized labor, evidenced by their continued attention paid in the latter half of the decade towards worker's movements throughout America, but the initial repudiation of the AFL-CIO did color the initial composition of the movement and helped prompt a growing rift within the labor movement.

Between fifteen and twenty thousand people participated in the March on Washington to End the War in Vietnam. Despite the impressive showing, antiwar sentiment was still uncommon among the American public. By the end of 1965, only 24 percent of Americans felt that it was a "mistake" for the US to enter Vietnam. In 1966, only 26 percent said that they agreed with the "doves" on Vietnam policy.<sup>121</sup> As the war continued to unfold, and Johnson continued to escalate, the American public began to lose

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<sup>119</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 174–75. See also: Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*.

<sup>120</sup> "Meany Blasts Critics of Johnson Policies," *AFL-CIO News*, May 15, 1965, <https://archive.org/details/mdu-labor-026270/page/n207/mode/2up>.

<sup>121</sup> Lydia Saad, "Gallup Vault: Hawks vs. Doves on Vietnam," Gallup Vault, May 24, 2016, <https://news.gallup.com/vault/191828/gallup-vault-hawks-doves-vietnam.aspx> [accessed November 25, 2022].

faith in the federal government. That was a slow-going process, however, and student radicals remained an outlier among a largely apathetic US public.

It is worth repeating here that SDS, despite their new foray into peace advocacy, was decidedly not a peace group. Their ambitions were much broader, and more than anything else, they focused their attention at this time on the domestic struggle for civil rights. Different perspectives shape this interpretation. Members of SDS themselves saw their organization as a movement for radical social change, with members like Hayden and Richard Flacks arguing that the US must choose between maintaining its military superiority or meeting the desperate needs of its people.<sup>122</sup> In the opinion of Charles DeBenedetti, SDS was essentially operating out of self-interest, sincere in their opposition to war but more eager to accelerate the causes of the New Left.<sup>123</sup> Staughton Lynd's recollection of SDS in this time differs slightly, arguing that antiwar activism was not approached out of opportunism, that if anything, it was a distraction from SDS' initial idea to create an interracial movement of the poor.<sup>124</sup> In any case, as far as the members of SDS were concerned, they held the power to shift American society for the better, whether, as in 1964, for amelioration of poverty and abolition of segregation, or in 1968, the downfall of American imperialism. Holding this power, they intended to use it.

### **C. The Teach-In**

Before SDS ever sponsored a demonstration against the war, faculty at the University of Michigan, with SDS support (it was, after all, the home to SDS leadership), attempted to proselytize an antiwar message. The method, based on the successful direct-

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<sup>122</sup> Richard Flacks, quoted in DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 111.

<sup>123</sup> DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal*, 101–11.

<sup>124</sup> Staughton Lynd and Andrej Grubacic, *Wobblies & Zapatistas: Conversations on Anarchism, Marxism, and Radical History* (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2010), 166.

action campaigns of SNCC and the SCLC, was the teach-in. Overnight on March 24, 1965, professors and students organized a series of debates and lectures over the war. Forced by administration officials to hold the event in the evening, rather than during class time, SDS members expected a paltry turnout. Instead, over three thousand people attended, and discussion lasted until 8:00 am the following day. Not only did the event move students at the University of Michigan to reconsider their positions on the war, it also acted for SDS as a massive marketing drive, helping to spread the word further of their planned April 17 protest march.<sup>125</sup>

Throughout the rest of the spring, activists held many more teach-ins throughout the country, organized both independently by faculty as well as by sponsoring organizations, like the Vietnam Day Committee (VDC) in Berkeley, CA. The teach-in there, initially organized by Jerry Rubin and Barbara Gullahorn, brought together over thirty thousand participants in the thirty-six-hour span that it ran.<sup>126</sup> These events, in contrast to demonstrations and marches, were very academic in tone, forcing students on either side of the war debate to describe their positions and argue them on their merits. As such, they could not be decried as mere sloganeering or propagandism, even if White House officials attempted to do so. Beyond this, the teach-in was a culmination of SDS's other efforts, particularly their emphasis on "democratizing" the college campus and empowering students to speak on a freer, more equal footing with their professors.

#### **D. The Movement Grows, Fall 1965**

Over the summer of 1965, particularly because students left their campuses at the conclusion of the spring semester, the visibility of SDS and its affiliates began to wane.

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<sup>125</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 23–25.

<sup>126</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 24.

Furthermore, SDS, despite their seizure of the moment before any of the established peace groups, was not itself a peace advocacy movement. The scope of SDS activities was much wider than the Vietnam War, and as such, by fall of 1965, SDS began to focus their attention on other initiatives, particularly anti-poverty. Their April protest, as well-attended and well-publicized as it was, did not move the needle in Washington. Therefore, in fall 1965, pacifists in the US, who represented themselves in myriad organizations, took the cue to begin their mass actions.

Though they had yet to sponsor mass demonstrations, the existing elements of American peace advocacy were on record with their opposition to the war even before Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution. In January 1965, a coalition of the Catholic Worker movement, CNVA, SPU, and the WRL began to circulate a pamphlet entitled “The Declaration of Conscience Against the War in Vietnam.” The document, distributed at meetings and demonstrations, urged its signatories to reject the barbarism of US foreign policy, refuse to cooperate with the war effort, and object to the draft. Staughton Lynd, a historian at Yale who had worked alongside SNCC to agitate for civil rights was one of its signatories.<sup>127</sup>

Lynd, a committed Quaker pacifist, began to work alongside any group who sought to obstruct the conduct of the US government in Vietnam. He attended teach-ins around the country, collaborated with the newly formed VDC in Berkeley, SDS (as one of the speakers at the April March on Washington), SNCC, CNVA, and more. He and his wife, Alice, officially announced their intent to refuse to pay taxes, a tactic learned from the WRL. In August, Lynd, alongside David Dellinger, a pacifist connected to a wide range of

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<sup>127</sup> Stewart, *My Country Is the World*, 15–25.

organizations, and Robert Parris Moses (known colloquially as Bob Moses) an organizer with SNCC, attempted to refocus mass attention once again onto the war, filling the void left by SDS that summer.

The culmination of Lynd, Dellinger, and Parris' efforts was the Assembly of Unrepresented People. In reality, those three cannot take full credit; the Assembly was organized by about thirty individuals, connected to groups like WSP, SDS, WRL, CNVA, Catholic Worker, and more. CVNA and the SPU had spent the previous weeks of the summer organizing in Washington, D.C., making plans for the Assembly and setting the groundwork for future actions. In the pamphlet circulated in advance of the planned demonstrations, set to take place from August 6-9, 1965, the organizers stressed the connections between the nascent antiwar movement and the Civil Rights Movement. Comparing Mississippi and Washington, D.C., the pamphlet analogized voter suppression in the former with undemocratic warmongering in the latter. Further evidencing the intersectional intentions of the Assembly, the call to action invited “not only those active in organized protests, but ministers, members of the academic community, teachers, women, professional people, students, people from the newly formed community groups in slums and rural areas, industrial workers,” and anyone else willing to speak out against the war.<sup>128</sup>

The decision to demonstrate at the Pentagon was a conscious one, for Lynd and the other organizers sought to force a confrontation between the civilian employees of the Department of Defense and the “unrepresented” American body politic. They believed that by confronting the officials who made the decisions to send napalm and Americans to

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<sup>128</sup> “Call for an Assembly of Unrepresented People in Washington, D.C., August 6-9,” 1965, retrieved from [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508\\_aup-flyer.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/6508_aup-flyer.pdf) [accessed March 13, 2024].

Vietnam, the peace advocates might be able to put a human face to the moral appeals they made. Additionally, in choosing August 6-9 as the dates for the event, the organizers of the Assembly invoked the memory of the US attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki, where for the first time, the horror of nuclear weaponry was used at war.<sup>129</sup>

On August 6, 1965, American Nazi Party members attacked Staughton Lynd, David Dellinger, and Bob Moses with red paint while they marched against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. as members of the Assembly. The goal of their four-day demonstration was to recite the Declaration of Conscience, previously circulated by A. J. Muste, Lynd, and other activists, within the halls of Congress. Receiving over 6,000 signatures, the declaration asserted total refusal to assist in the American war efforts in Vietnam and the Dominican Republic, where the Johnson administration had also sent troops in 1965. Photos of the event, particularly Dellinger, Lynd, and Moses covered in red paint, were immortalized on the cover of a later issue of *Life* magazine, where, as Luke Stewart points out, Moses was conspicuously cropped out, a purposeful obfuscation of the growing interconnection between antiwar and civil rights agitation.<sup>130</sup> In comparison to the previous demonstration led by SDS in April, or to the VDC acts of civil disobedience in Berkeley that summer, the Assembly was a minor ordeal. Its impact on the trajectory of the antiwar movement was outsized, however, far extending the reach of the admittedly small attendance.

First and most importantly, the Assembly was the birth of the ad hoc style of antiwar activism in this period. Over the course of the long twentieth century, peace advocacy typically took two forms – it was either the action of individuals who expressed

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<sup>129</sup> Stewart, *My Country Is the World*, 43–55.

<sup>130</sup> Stewart, *My Country Is the World*, 46.

a moral conviction against militarism, as in the cases of William James or Ernest Howard Crosby, or it was the action of established peace groups, as demonstrated by the WRL, WILPF, or the myriad arbitration societies of the pre- and inter-war periods from 1900-1945. Political organizations were of course a part of this formulation as well, though the very nature of electoralism as a reform tactic was perpetually called into question by a movement which ostensibly sought to resist government policy. Over the course of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement, however, numerous ad hoc antiwar coalitions were formed, disbanded, reshaped, and modulated over the course of the war. Organizations that had already existed, whether peace focused or not (like SDS), would periodically pool resources together, plan collaborative actions, and stage large, comprehensive events. The Assembly thus set the stage for the larger pattern of antiwar demonstrations over the next six years, where multiple times each year (often in the spring and again in the fall), peace, civil rights, and other reform organizations banded together to sponsor mass action against the war in episodic fashion. In practical terms, the Assembly brought together the minds who organized the next wave of ad hoc protest activity, culminating in the creation of the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam (NCC) and the planning of the October International Day of Protest.<sup>131</sup>

Second, the Assembly helped further bring together the Civil Rights Movement and the antiwar movement into a unified body. This had of course already started in 1963, but the Assembly marked one of the earliest examples of successful intersectional organizing. By forcing the Johnson administration to consider the interplay between his professed Great Society initiatives at home and the Vietnam War abroad, the organizers of the

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<sup>131</sup> Stewart, *My Country is the World*, 49.



Assembly hoped to shore up greater support for a peaceful foreign policy that refocused its energies not on interfering with a civil war, but instead on waging war against injustice at home. This combination was of course incomplete, as not all civil rights groups joined the chorus of antiwar activism, nor did all antiwar activists agitate for civil rights, but the intersectional character of peace advocacy continued to strengthen over the duration of the movement from this point forward.

As the organizational apparatuses of the movement continued to expand and evolve, so too did the individual call to protest the war. On November 2, 1965, Norman Morrison drove to Washington D.C. with his infant daughter. After leaving the car, Morrison approached the Pentagon, stood within view of Secretary McNamara's office, and self-immolated. He was 31, a father in a growing family, and deeply committed to the religious principle of non-violence. A Quaker, like Alice Herz, Morrison was active in the nascent movement to end the war and tortured by the government's continued violent onslaught against the Vietnamese. Morrison's self-inflicted martyrdom tortured Secretary McNamara as well, though he did not admit to that fact until thirty years later with the publication of his memoir.<sup>132</sup> In any case, even by 1965, many activists believed the war had gone on for far too long, and they became increasingly desperate in their attempts to halt it.<sup>133</sup>

The movement grew in other places too, particularly within the realm of organized labor. In Chatfield's "At the Hands of Historians: The Antiwar Movement of The Vietnam

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<sup>132</sup> Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1996), 200–202.

<sup>133</sup> "Ex-Wooster Student Morrison Takes Life in Vietnam Protest," *Wooster Voice*, November 5, 1965; John-Paul Flintoff, "I Told Them to Be Brave," *The Guardian*, October 15, 2010, sec. Life and style, <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2010/oct/16/norman-morrison-vietnam-war-protest>.

Era,” there is brief discussion of union antiwar activism, where he claims that organized labor visibly joined into the chorus of antiwar voices in 1968. This is a turning point year in his analysis, the year when antiwar demonstrations became mainstream, and when public sentiment was heavily mobilized against the war.<sup>134</sup> As noted above, however, union voices were a part of the conversation from the very start. Organized labor’s participation was mainly at the behest of individual unionists, but official calls for peace began as early as 1964. Take for instance Leon Davis, president of Local 1199, Drug and Hospital Employees Union, Retail Workers and Department Store Union (RWDSU), AFL-CIO. Davis spoke out against the “aggressive and dangerous foreign policy” pursued in Vietnam.<sup>135</sup> A solitary voice in 1964, Davis was joined by more unionists within the next year. The first public union opposition to the war is visible in an editorial within a February 1965 edition of *The Dispatcher*. This paper, published by the west coast branch of the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU), voiced a tepid concern against American escalation. Later editions of the paper included further antiwar commentary.<sup>136</sup> On February 24, 1965, Davis’s union was the first to officially come out against the war. In a statement signed by Davis, William J. Taylor, first vice president; Edward Ayash, treasurer; Moe Foner, executive secretary; and 21 other members of the executive council, Local 1199 sent a telegram to President Lyndon B. Johnson urging immediate settlement of the Vietnam conflict.<sup>137</sup> In addition, Davis’ union took out an advertisement in the November 23, 1965 edition of the *New York Times*. Short and to the point, the

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<sup>134</sup> Charles Chatfield, “At the Hands of Historians: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era,” *Peace & Change* 29, no. 3–4 (July 2004): 498, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0149-0508.2004.00300.x>.

<sup>135</sup> John P. Windmuller, “The Foreign Policy Conflict in American Labor,” *Political Science Quarterly* vol. LXXXII (June 1967): 232-232, quoted in Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 12.

<sup>136</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 16.

<sup>137</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 17.

advertisement had three requests of the United States government: “stop the bombings; seek an immediate cease-fire; and negotiate an international settlement.”<sup>138</sup> In the years to follow, discontent mounted within the AFL-CIO establishment, mirroring the trends of broader American society, and setting the stage for the antiwar movement to grow and diversify along broader ideological ground.

Finally, other preexisting pacifist and peace organizations began to sponsor mass marches on their own, outside of the ad hoc formulation. On November 27, 1965, upwards of thirty-five thousand antiwar protesters marched on Washington in a protest organized by SANE. Days later, the co-chairpersons of the organization—Dr. Benjamin Spock and Professor H. Stuart Hughes—sent a cable to Ho Chi Minh in North Vietnam, urging him to negotiate a peace with the US.<sup>139</sup> Unlike the SDS March in April, the SANE March emphasized specifically pacifistic virtues of nonviolence. In a second tactical difference, organizers of SANE stressed negotiations rather than a unilateral American pullout. It is this distinction which would continue to divide the antiwar movement in the following three years.

#### **E. Reception of the Movement in the American Government**

The Johnson Administration was resolute through 1965 to pursue the war with tenacity, believing that a quick, decisive victory would suffice to placate the growing chorus of domestic discontent. On April 17, 1965—the same day as the SDS March to End the War—President Johnson delivered a televised speech about the Vietnam War and the commitment of the United States. Reiterating the American plan in Vietnam, he exclaimed that the US “[would] remain as long as is necessary, with the might that is required,

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<sup>138</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, front matter.

<sup>139</sup> McNamara, *In Retrospect*, 202.

whatever the risk and whatever the cost.”<sup>140</sup> The President was true to his word. In the years following this statement, the US steadily increased its commitment of troops to the Vietnam conflict. Bombing campaigns, as well as the continual use of the military draft, stretched the bounds of Congress’ initial 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution.

From the earliest stirrings of discontent over US foreign policy, President Lyndon B. Johnson was perplexed. In the early phases, he was most concerned with opposition that stemmed from civil rights groups, given his record on that issue. In an April 29, 1965, telephone conversation with journalist Robert Spivack, Johnson articulated his belief that the students who demonstrated in the weeks prior were being misled by foreign communist agitators. Worse still, Johnson argued that these acts of domestic protest were undermining the war effort, undermining the legitimacy of the American invasion, and improving enemy morale.<sup>141</sup> Johnson was of course mistaken in his beliefs that the whole of the protest movement was being dictated by outside agitators. His observation that groups like the W.E.B. DuBois Club, a youth organization of CPUSA, were active in the protest movement was accurate, but he fundamentally misattributed their influence in the development of the April 17 march on Washington. In reality, the bulk of the demonstrators considered themselves as solidly liberal, not leftist, evidenced by Potter’s remarks at the demonstration.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> Lyndon B. Johnson, “Statement by the President: ‘Tragedy, Disappointment, and Progress’ in Vietnam,” in *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States - Lyndon B. Johnson*, vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1965), 428–30,  
<https://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/items/show/223>.

<sup>141</sup> “Telephone Conversation # 7378, Sound Recording, LBJ and ROBERT SPIVACK, 4/29/1965, 12:43PM ,” Recordings and Transcripts of Telephone Conversations and Meetings, LBJ Presidential Library, accessed March 14, 2024, <https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/tel-07378>.

<sup>142</sup> Potter, “The Incredible War,” 229–32.

To confirm these fears, Johnson began directing his intelligence agencies, primarily the Federal Bureau of Investigation under the leadership of J. Edgar Hoover, to surveil and observe the supposed communist influence on antiwar groups. Hoover's FBI had already been engaged in surveillance of those connected to the civil rights movement for years by 1965. Given the deep interconnection of that movement with the nascent antiwar movement, his task of observing the leadership of antiwar groups was easy to get off the ground. The tactics employed were illegal and clandestine, as the FBI began, at the urging of members in American government, the escalation of surveillance activity into members of the antiwar movement.

In January 1965, after lying to Tom Hayden's mother about the nature of their investigation, the FBI began an intense period of investigation into Hayden's political activities as well as his whereabouts. Agents from the Detroit field office reported to J. Edgar Hoover that Genevieve Hayden described her son as "very idealistic... [concerned] with some type of an idealistic project in behalf of underprivileged groups and classes."<sup>143</sup> The nature of this investigative meeting was of course not to discuss Hayden's idealism, rather, it was to enhance FBI surveillance efforts and bring field agents up to date regarding Hayden's whereabouts.

Over the next several years, both Johnson and later Nixon tasked the FBI, as well as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), to show proof of communist interference within the movement. Johnson's immediate consternation over the antiwar demonstrators was relatively subdued in 1965. Correctly, he identified that the American public was

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<sup>143</sup> Detroit SAC to J. Edgar Hoover, Memorandum, February 23, 1965, retrieved from "Tom Hayden," FBI Records: The Vault, <https://vault.fbi.gov/tom-hayden/tom-hayden-part-01-of-02/view> [accessed March 14, 2024].

overwhelmingly on his side. Historians of the Johnson presidency have pointed out, however, that his intense nationalism colored his reception of the antiwar movement from the start. Believing that American citizens had a duty to embrace the actions of their country, he chauvinistically saw his foreign policy as perfect in its anticommunist intention. Thus, his predisposition towards chauvinism and nativism led him to believe incorrectly that any dissent over his war policy, especially from the left, was at the hands of both the coastal elite as well as foreign communists.<sup>144</sup> This framework informed his early suspicion of the movement as well as his attempts to thwart it with the intelligence state.

Johnson's application of the intelligence state was not always well thought out, however. Indeed, he supported the illegal surveillance activities orchestrated by Hoover wholeheartedly, and from 1966-1968, gave his tacit approval to continually widen the net of FBI observation. In other instances, however, Johnson's reliance on the security system led some of his aides to charge him as falling to "paranoid disintegration." In June 1965, poet Robert Lowell announced a boycott of the White House Festival of the Arts in protest of Johnson's war policies. Other artists and writers followed suit, as Johnson denigrated them to his staff as unpatriotic "sonofabitches." After Dwight MacDonald, a writer, circulated an antiwar petition at the festival, Johnson declared that any guests to the White House would need to first pass FBI clearance, an unusual step.<sup>145</sup> The press coverage of the event, which focused more on the antiwar demonstrators than the art itself, hurt

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<sup>144</sup> Charles DeBenedetti, "Lyndon Johnson and the Antiwar Opposition," in *The Johnson Years, Volume Two: Vietnam, the Environment, and Science*, ed. Robert A. Divine (University Press of Kansas, 1987), 23–53, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1p2gk94>. See also: Melvin Small, "Influencing the Decision Makers: The Vietnam Experience," *Journal of Peace Research* 24, no. 2 (June 1987): 185–98, <https://doi.org/10.1177/002234338702400207>.

<sup>145</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 26–29.

President Johnson, who felt the whole affair to be unfair and impolite, according to White House aide Jack Valenti.<sup>146</sup>

Other members of the administration were apoplectic in their response to the growing movement to end the war as well. Secretary of State Dean Rusk described antiwar demonstrators as gullible and stubborn during a speech. Valenti charged MacDonald with impoliteness and incivility, as well as multiple allegations of bad breath. McGeorge Bundy, Johnson's National Security Advisor and a former dean at Harvard University, decried those academics that spoke out against the war as mere propagandists.<sup>147</sup> Believing that the nexus of antiwar activism was the college campus, administration officials drummed up a plan to tour the nation's campuses in support of the war, hoping to meet intellectuals and students on their own turf in order to show them the error of their ways.

Outside of the White House, members of Congress voiced their displeasure with the movement as well, particularly the student front. The issue of draft resistance, already taken up by the radical pacifist factions of the movement, had divided SDS organizers. The split fell on tactical grounds, with the national leadership at the time believing that organizing from within the Democratic Party was the ticket to success. Thus, these members of SDS sought to temper their activism, so as not to lose support of any sympathetic policymakers who were averse to apparent radicalism. Nevertheless, over the summer of 1965, a proposal was made to the National Office to educate the public on legal forms of draft resistance. Relatively tepid in nature, the proposal outlined ways that individuals could register for Conscientious Objector (CO) status and emphasized the

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<sup>146</sup> Jack Valenti, Interview 5, interview by Joe B. Frantz, July 12, 1972, <https://www.discoverlbj.org/item/oh-valentij-19720712-5-78-73>.

<sup>147</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 27–28; Valenti, Interview 5.

legality of doing so. The proposal was rejected by the National Office, but that did not stop the American press from catching wind of it.<sup>148</sup> National columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak—well known anti-communist crusaders—penned an article on October 14, 1965, which lambasted the SDS as treasonous saboteurs who sought to undermine the American war effort. Ignorant of the fact that the National Office rejected the proposal, the American press and some conservative politicians like Senator John Stennis of Mississippi, declared that the SDS members were engaging in “deplorable and shameful activity.”<sup>149</sup>

Stennis’ remarks are particularly notable for two reasons. First, he astutely observed that the SDS, like most protest organizations, relied on publicity to grow in number and reach sympathetic individuals. Stennis remarked that national publicity gave the SDS “encouragement and stimulation to continue their unwarranted and disgraceful campaign.”<sup>150</sup> It bears repeating that the SDS did not, at this time, have a nationally coordinated campaign against the draft, but this did not stop CBS, the broadcaster mentioned in Stennis’ speech, from cautioning the American public that there was a subversive campaign against the war. The second point of Stennis’ remarks that merits attention is his proclamation of the illegality of draft resistance. Branding it a conspiracy to undermine the American military, he implored the Department of Justice to “immediately move to jerk [the] movement up by the roots and grind it to bits.”<sup>151</sup> In a press conference the following day, Attorney General Nicholas Katzenbach echoed Stennis’ sentiments. Speaking in Chicago, Katzenbach argued that draft resistance was moving in the direction of treason. He added that, in his view, communists were infiltrating

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<sup>148</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 226–30.

<sup>149</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 229; 89 Cong. Rec. 27099 (October 15, 1965) (statement of Sen. John Stennis).

<sup>150</sup> Stennis, “Organized Campaign to Encourage and Instruct Young Americans to Avoid the Draft,” 27099.

<sup>151</sup> Stennis, “Organized Campaign to Encourage and Instruct Young Americans to Avoid the Draft,” 27100.



and directing SDS, though he did not specify what chapters or which individuals were suspected.<sup>152</sup>

By this point, the stage was set for the following years of antiwar agitation. With each action, whether it be a simple demonstration or an action of mass resistance, the American government looked for ways to deride and defame the movement as being controlled from afar by the nation's adversaries. Protests and demonstrations, even the most tepid ones, faced charges of gullibility at best and treason at worst. As the movement grew beyond the campus, the paranoia on display by the White House grew in response, proving both the fact that Johnson's staff had miscalculated the degree of public support the war would have, and also that the protests were having an impact.

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<sup>152</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 230.

#### **IV. The Movement Matures – 1966-1968**

##### **A. The Popularization of Ad Hoc Groups to End the War**

After 1965, antiwar activism in the US was bifurcated into two parallel streams. On the one end, established peace and issue groups like WRL, SANE, WSP, or SDS continued to stage demonstrations and other moments of direct action. On the other hand, building on the trend established by the Assembly for Unrepresented People, an explosion of ad hoc groups hit the scene, forming, protesting, and disbanding in regular intervals every spring and fall. Groups like Mobilization Committee to End the War (MOBE), Vietnam Summer, New Mobilization Committee (New MOBE), and others staged the largest and most conspicuous mass demonstrations from 1966 on, especially as student and pacifist groups began to endorse more radical modes of dissent. It is crucial to note, however, that the bifurcation on display was not a complete break in continuity between activists, as there existed considerable crossover and collaboration between most antiwarriors. Despite myriad differences in political and moral perspectives, these activists remained united in their shared opposition to the war as well as their shared belief in their ability to change it.

The teach-ins of 1965, successful as they were at establishing an on-campus network of antiwar activism, did not do much to grow the movement in middle America. Realizing the need to go further in their activism, the architects of the teach-in tactic, organized as the Inter-University Committee for Debate on Foreign Policy (IUCDFP), began to lay plans for a national committee to mobilize mass action over the summer of 1966. To that end, they organized a convention in Cleveland, Ohio, in July 1966, to formulate the structure of a new organization to foment mass protest against the war. Sydney Peck, one of the organizers, articulated at this convention his belief that national demonstrations were the

essential next step for the academic dissenters to reach the center of American political life. The convention resolved to sponsor mass demonstrations along the same lines as the 1963 Civil rights march for Jobs and Freedom, a successful mass action spurred by A. Phillip Randolph. Peck was clear, however, that the mass mobilizations would not be addressed to changing President Johnson's mind. Already in 1966, many antiwar organizers had acknowledged to themselves that the administration would not ever acquiesce to their demands, and instead pivoted towards changing national opinion so that a Democratic challenger would emerge as a new antiwar opponent to Johnson. At the July convention, the organizers set in motion the largest and most influential of the ad hoc groups to end the war, titled the National Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam (MOBE), and beginning in 1967, MOBE sponsored the largest mass demonstrations against the war every fall and spring, centered around San Francisco, New York City, and Washington, D.C.<sup>153</sup>

Curiously, two of the largest groups associated with the Vietnam-era antiwar movement were absent the July 1966 organizational convention that established MOBE – SANE and SDS. As one of the architects of MOBE's mass action and organizational policy, A.J. Muste had pushed the organization towards non-exclusionism. For Muste, any and all activists were welcome if they could agitate public opinion against the war, and exclusionary policies, the great failure of Old Leftist and Liberal unity in the 1940s-1950s, should have been left in the dustbin of history. This perturbed SANE, who attempted to maintain their cleanliness as a palatable liberal organization, after falling under the watchful eye of the US government early in their existence. At the other end of this spectrum was SDS, who by summer of 1966 had resolved that national demonstrating was

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<sup>153</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 91–95.

a fruitless endeavor. Activists within the national leadership, like Carl Davidson, SDS vice president in 1966, no longer saw organizing within the Democratic Party as a useful tool, for liberals and reactionaries alike were the enemy of working people. Reform was becoming a vestige of the old-guard, and the new crop of SDSers looked ahead to revolution.<sup>154</sup> This division grew deeper and deeper in the face of greater institutional meddling in 1967 and 1968, prompting SDS's hard turn towards radicalism and eventual disintegration in 1969.

In great part, SDS' disinterest in mass demonstration and favorability towards revolutionary ideology was a response to the growing radicalism of certain segments of the Civil Rights Movement, especially SNCC. Now headed by Stokely Carmichael, SNCC had in 1966 began to endorse Black Power as the basis of their dissent from the US government, a move which SDS heralded. SDS had tried and failed to reform Congress from within, leading members like Bill Higgs to conclude that their aim from 1966 onward ought to be the neutralization of a hostile government, in order to advance the interconnected aims of civil rights, peace, and redistribution of wealth and power.<sup>155</sup> The final aim of SDS, articulated by members like Allen Greene, was still to live up to the ideals of Tom Hayden's "Port Huron Statement", to establish a new, internationalist and integrated society with political power emanating from below, but the means to achieve that end were increasingly seen to be revolutionary rather than parliamentary.<sup>156</sup>

SDS was increasingly steeped in revolutionary fervor and began to conceive of the world in the Marxist language of dialectical materialism, a departure from the Kantian

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<sup>154</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 94–95; Carl Davidson quoted in Wells, *The War Within*, 95-96.

<sup>155</sup> Bill Higgs, "The Waning of Congress," *New Left Notes*, October 14, 1966.

<sup>156</sup> Allen Greene, "For A Revolutionary Ideology," *New Left Notes*, October 14, 1966.

idealism of Hayden's "Port Huron Statement." The ultimate objective however was still a humanistic one, as SDS members attempted to synthesize Marxism alongside other philosophical persuasions, maintaining the organization's initial idealistic outlook. This idealism was reflected within MOBE, as well, despite the obvious contradictions in policy between the two organizations. Sydney Peck believed that through capturing the center and by dismissing attempts to change Johnson's mind, MOBE could usher in a new America, one based on shared principles of democracy and justice. SANE, MOBE, and SDS were three positions along a diverse activist spectrum, but these three positions were all formulated with similar goals in mind. MOBE modeled their organization on their forebears, too, with an emphasis on local grassroots organizing to establish a multi-issue platform of activism, sharing in the history of groups like WSP. In practice, MOBE did not entirely actuate this design, but it nevertheless was at the forefront of the minds of people like Peck.<sup>157</sup>

With the marriage of civil rights agitation, peace advocacy, and social-democratic/New Leftist reform fully underway in 1966, it is critical to acknowledge that students were not absent from the mass action of groups like MOBE, even as the national committee of SDS committed themselves to greater confrontation. In truth, SDS leadership grew increasingly radical, but broader American society, students included, did not heed the call. Instead, student activists continued to embrace mass action via their support for existing peace groups like WRL as well as ad hoc groups like MOBE. To that end, in December 1966, the student mobilization committee was formed (SMC) as an offshoot of National MOBE.

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<sup>157</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 94–95.

In December 1966, Bettina Aptheker, Communist Party member and antiwarrior, called a meeting in Chicago of young antiwar activists to propose a new direct action campaign against the war. Inspired by the student strikes of the 1930s, Aptheker believed that a student strike would simultaneously reinvigorate the student peace movement, which had grown restless with lack of progress, as well as signal to the rest of the country that opposition towards the war was swelling on the nation's campuses. This plan for a student strike would wait, however, as the students present at the Chicago convention were preoccupied with raising support for the pending MOBE march, planned for April 15, 1967. By the end of 1966, peace activists across the country concentrated all their effort on the Spring Mobilization (as MOBE was then referring to itself) effort for 1967, leaving other proposals at the wayside. Aptheker did not cease her agitation for a student strike, however, a premonition for the coming conflagrations of 1968. In the meantime, the Spring Mobilization Committee was courting the attention of someone other than students who had already entered in league with MOBE: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. David Dellinger, now a key figure within the Spring Mobilization Committee, believed that Dr. King was the perfect person to spread the reach of the antiwar movement into the apathetic working-class neighborhoods of the US. Further, Dr. King would help legitimize the mass action in the eyes of cautious liberals, who feared the non-exclusionary politics of MOBE but sympathized with the Civil Rights Movement's cause.<sup>158</sup>

Dr. King did not offer his support easily, however. Despite being personally opposed to the war, particularly the Selective Service System's disproportionate harm towards Black Americans, he and many other legends of the Civil Rights Movement had stayed at

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<sup>158</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 115–17; Dellinger quoted in Wells, *The War Within*, 116.

the sidelines of the antiwar movement, careful not to distract attention from their primary causes. By 1967, however, after seeing photographic evidence of the horrors of napalm unleashed onto a captive population, King resolved to oppose the war as earnestly as he opposed segregation. Joining MOBE was still a hard sell, however, as King was resistant to appear alongside the CPUSA members who had endorsed the Spring Mobilization. Additionally, he feared that speaking alongside Stokely Carmichael, one of the scheduled addressors, would damage his image in the eyes of moderate civil rights allies. Dellinger managed to convince him to acquiesce, emphasizing the great historicity of the moment and the opportunity for King to support the outgrowth of a genuinely grass-roots pacifism. In a great reversal of his initial apprehension, King appeared at the head of the April 15, 1967, march, alongside Dr. Benjamin Spock (of SANE) and Catholic Worker ally Msgr. Charles Owen Rice.<sup>159</sup>

The April 15 Spring Mobilization was a massive success. Two marches were held, in San Francisco and in New York, where King appeared, hosting hundreds of thousands of non-violent demonstrators. King publicly entered the antiwar fold earlier that month, delivering an address to demonstrators at Riverside Church, in New York, under the auspices of Clergy and Laity Concerned about Vietnam (CALCAV) on April 4. In his speech, titled “Beyond Vietnam,” Dr. King clearly articulated that despite protests to the contrary, civil rights agitation was inextricably linked to antiwar activism, a position that he had arrived at in 1965. King assured his listeners that his words were not directed at Hanoi, nor the NLF, but the American people. He moved on to list seven reasons for his opposition to the war, the first being the fact that the war was an “enemy of the poor.” As

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<sup>159</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 116–17; Dorothy Day, “Spring Mobilization,” *Catholic Worker*, May 1967.

a civil rights activist, he looked on with optimism at President Johnson's Great Society initiative as a "real promise of hope for the poor," hope that the misadventure of Vietnam threatened to destroy.<sup>160</sup>

True to the title of the speech, Dr. King's words went beyond the war in Vietnam and his demands of the US government to change its destructive policies. To King, the war was "a symptom of a far deeper malady within the American spirit." Preempting the divide between activists in SNCC and SDS with the US government, he continued by quoting John F. Kennedy's warning that "those who make peaceful revolution impossible ... make violent revolution inevitable." To this end, King called for a revolution of moral values in the US, lest the country approach a spiritual death.<sup>161</sup> At the April 15 MOBE march, King echoed these same arguments, while taking on a more adversarial tone against the US government. In this address, King contended that the US had become arrogant in its power, arrogant in its professions of freedom, and arrogant in its misuse of wealth in the face of abject poverty. King clarified however that his position was not one of universal anti-American sentiment. It was because he was patriotic, because he loved the US that he spoke out against the war, a war which filled his heart with anxiety and sorrow. Sharing the sentiment of the "Port Huron Statement," King urged his compatriots to address the triple evils of racism, extreme materialism, and militarism, evils which the war had only served to exacerbate.<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>160</sup> Martin Luther King, "Beyond Vietnam - A Time to Break Silence" (Speech, CALCAV Meeting, Riverside Church, New York City, April 4, 1967), <https://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm>.

<sup>161</sup> King, "Beyond Vietnam".

<sup>162</sup> Martin Luther King, "Address by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. - April 15 Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam" (Speech, Spring Mobilization to End the War in Vietnam, New York City, April 15, 1967), <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/mlkviet2.htm>.



In addition to the Spring Mobilization, MOBE worked over 1967 to sponsor antidraft actions, both in the form of draft card turn-ins on October 16 and December 4, as well as public draft card burnings at the mass demonstrations. Draft resistance in all forms had become increasingly accepted within most segments of the peace movement, with groups like WRL and Catholic Worker supporting it even before Congress passed the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, to groups like SNCC and SDS who endorsed resistance in 1966. Opposition to the draft became especially common among student and campus-focused organizations, a logical impact of the draft's growing reliance on previously exempted individuals. As evidenced by the 1965 statements of people like Senator Stennis, draft resistance was massively unpopular within government, something that, if anything, helped prove its legitimacy to students who had grown increasingly radical in their modes of dissent.

In 1967, across the nation's campuses, a new ad hoc organization formed known as Vietnam Summer. Hoping to replicate the successes of the 1964 Freedom Summer project, Vietnam Summer was a movement which focused on educating Americans throughout the country about the war in hopes of mobilizing public opinion against it, especially the draft. On April 23, 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Benjamin Spock, and Robert Scheer announced the new community project. The initial idea for the initiative was proposed by Gar Alperovitz, a former aide within the State Department, and the basic impetus behind Vietnam Summer was the growing belief among the peace movement that marches, protests, and petitions had exhausted their potential to reach new individuals.<sup>163</sup> A May 1967 draft of the organization's prospectus makes this fact obvious. The authors wrote that

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<sup>163</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 138–39.

despite marches and protests, letters and petitions, the escalation of the war continued, necessitating an escalation of opposition. Three specific actions were proposed within this prospectus: the teach-out (a door-to-door inversion of the successful teach-ins from the previous year); purposeful agitation within the mostly untouched poor and working-class areas in an attempt to recruit new support; and draft counseling initiatives to better educate prospective draft-resisters about their legal options for draft opposition.<sup>164</sup>

Vietnam Summer's organizational structure was loose and anarchistic, with local chapters existing primarily autonomously in much the same way as WSP and SDS were structured. There was a national committee, which dictated particular points of emphasis for the volunteers and employees of the organization, and also produced the written material distributed by the activists, but the committee did not actively proscribe the activities of the constituent chapters. This committee was primarily filled by academics, mainly from elite universities like Harvard, Yale, and MIT, as well as a smaller number of religious figures and SDS veterans, like Paul Potter.<sup>165</sup> At the head of the organization were Richard Fernandez, of CALCAV, and Lee Webb, of SDS.<sup>166</sup>

Reflecting the geographic location of most of the organizers, Vietnam Summer's advocacy was designed near Cambridge, Massachusetts, but the bulk of its successful agitation occurred on the West Coast, a logical location given the predominance and crossover of those affiliated with SDS (who had a very strong presence within the University of California system) and MOBE, who had a headquarters in San Francisco.

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<sup>164</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Draft Prospectus," May 9, 1967, retrieved from Organizational: Prospectus, 1967 (May), Box: DG 067: Series I: 1 [Off site: SCPC-6304]. Vietnam Summer Records, SCPC-DG-067. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>165</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Membership List," 1967, retrieved from Organizational: Early Organization, Box: DG 067: Series I: 1 [Off site: SCPC-6304]. Vietnam Summer Records, SCPC-DG-067. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>166</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 139.

Tactically, the organization's prime directive was the teach-out. Continuing to rely on advertisements and antiwar literature was mere pandering to the individuals who had already resolved to oppose the war; Vietnam Summer's activists wished to make use of "eyeball-to-eyeball" discussions. Their target were members of suburban communities who were "worried" about the war but unwilling to come forward in opposition on their own initiative. In order to hold these discussions, the organization tapped the labor of experienced peace-workers (those active with other, pre-existing pacifist organizations), student activists, religious leaders, academics, and housewives (an attempt to build on WSP's grassroots agitation techniques).<sup>167</sup> Through their door-to-door activism, the members of Vietnam Summer would, ideally, mobilize opinion against President Lyndon B. Johnson, building support well ahead of the 1968 campaign season for an antiwar candidate. Thus, Vietnam Summer aimed to establish itself as an organization who obstructed the war through the political arena, rather than the direct action campaigns of draft and tax resisters in WRL.

Though Vietnam Summer operated in a distinct fashion to SDS, their outlook on the role of organizing was similar. In the teach-out informational pamphlet that articulated their strategy, they boldly proclaimed that Vietnam Summer was only the beginning salvo in a larger battle against foreign intervention as well as the fundamental failures of the political, economic, and social systems.<sup>168</sup> The fact that the organizational committee was populated by academics and student activists made for a rational link between broader social and political activism and the specific goal of ending the Vietnam War, in a

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<sup>167</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Teach Out Brochure," ca 1967, retrieved from Organizational: Early Organization, Box: DG 067: Series I: 1 [Off site: SCPC-6304]. Vietnam Summer Records, SCPC-DG-067. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>168</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Teach Out Brochure".

replication of the earlier coalitions who worked in favor of the 1953 limited nuclear test-ban treaty.

Like many of the ad hoc groups that emerged to oppose the war in Vietnam, Vietnam Summer suffered from its spontaneity and organizational decentralization. By the end of May 1967, the steering committee was forced to simultaneously navigate the process of hiring a full-time staff while also being evicted from their office space in Harvard Square. Nevertheless, the organization was beneficiary to support from more robustly established allies, especially the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), who gifted the organization \$10,000.00 and loaned another \$10,000.00. Early in their existence, Vietnam Summer occupied a precarious position within the broader peace movement, in that they were reliant on the support of other organizations, like AFSC and SDS, but did not wish to be dominated by them. At the same time, meetings of the steering committee confirmed the remarkable similarity between the early phases of SDS' antiwar agitation and that of Vietnam Summer. In 1965, SDS had endorsed the antiwar position both in earnest opposition to the war and also in order to extend their reach into working class communities in pursuit of their domestic initiatives. A May 26, 1967, meeting of the Vietnam Summer steering committee suggested a similar course, emphasizing the economic damage of the war in Black communities in order to overcome the unpopularity of peace activism there. Unlike the SDS of 1965, however, Vietnam Summer was receptive to the tactic of draft resistance from the moment they were inaugurated, and they believed that it was this specific tactic that could best create a properly interracial movement against the war.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>169</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Steering Committee Meeting Minutes May 24," May 24, 1967, retrieved from Minutes: Steering Committee, 1967 (May-June), Box: DG 067: Series I: 1 [Off site: SCPC-6304]. Vietnam Summer Records, SCPC-DG-067. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Vietnam Summer's formation in the spring of 1967 was based in a sense of revolutionary optimism. Explicitly, the organizers who developed the project had envisioned it to be a coalition of the student, Old Leftist, pacifist, and liberal peace movements into one unified mass movement. Organizing in any activist capacity, especially over the tumultuous summer of 1967, is tricky business, however, and by the end of the year Vietnam Summer's optimism was contrasted by the coalition's ineffectuality. Early in the summer, the organization was rapidly sliding into debt, while also facing difficulty retaining a full-time staff.<sup>170</sup> At the same time, they faced the troublesome reality that those Americans who had not yet spoken out against the war were not in fact harboring hidden sympathies in favor of the antiwar movement; in general, attitudes within America towards the war were apathetic at best, with the strongly opinionated doves and hawks representing two fringes of public opinion.<sup>171</sup>

Vietnam Summer was both beneficiary and victim to the plurality of voices present in the antiwar movement. Like SDS in 1965, the organization was built along non-exclusionary ideals, working with anyone who committed themselves to peace regardless of tactical differences. This inevitably caused Vietnam Summer to be scorned by some facets of the liberal peace constituency, still insistent in their attempts to temper radicalism in favor of more palatable mass action. Though the activism of Vietnam Summer did not produce immediate results, it did show that a middle course was possible between the radical and liberal poles of the movement. More importantly for the following years of the movement, Vietnam Summer helped to normalize the varied modes of draft resistance

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<sup>170</sup> Vietnam Summer, "Steering Committee Meeting Minutes June 11," June 11, 1967, retrieved from Minutes: Steering Committee, 1967 (May-June), Box: DG 067: Series I: 1 [Off site: SCPC-6304]. Vietnam Summer Records, SCPC-DG-067. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>171</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 182–83.

within the peace movement, legitimizing it as a tool to resist American foreign policy on both moral and political grounds. Most critically, Vietnam Summer's existence helped to reenergize the peace movement itself to continue in its attempts to build mass coalitions in fall of 1967 and through 1968, helping shield the larger movement from the wedge of factional dissent that had begun to drive its differing poles apart. In the words of Charles DeBenedetti, Vietnam Summer had, by year's end 1967, become more than the title for a coalition group, it became the social condition of the United States as disparate social movement groups concentrated more aggressively on the war and its significance at home.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the relative failure of Vietnam Summer (in the sense of their stated purpose of activating previously untapped sources of middle- and working-class war opposition), the organization is representative of the broader ideals of the whole of the peace movement. Its program was rooted in an idealistic outlook that emphasized grass roots activism in much the same fashion as WSP and SDS, while earnestly believing that the righteousness of their cause would bolster their potential to positively affect American society. Moreover, the coalition structure that had begun in 1965 with the Assembly for Unrepresented People, and then replicated by MOBE and Vietnam Summer, would continue to gain popularity in the following years of the movement. Vietnam Summer helped usher in an even deeper commitment among activists to find common ground and work alongside one another towards their unified goal of ending the war, and even as factionalism increased within individual organizations (most conspicuously within SDS), the totality of the national movement became increasingly united.

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<sup>172</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 187.

Following the Tet Offensive in January 1968, the peace movement grew increasingly restless over the lack of appreciable progress to end the war. Widespread acknowledgement that the US government was, at best, purposefully misleading the public began to spread even beyond peace circles. Frustrated with the lack of negotiations or withdrawal, members of the peace movement, within and without the established peace groups, began to endorse radical action with greater unity. Frustration eventually became elation, as on March 31, President Johnson announced to the country his intention not to seek reelection that year, a decision that gave the wavering peace movement a burst of energy.<sup>173</sup> That energy helped drive the most bombastic year of protest activity in American history, as students, housewives, scientists, laborers, and religious figures poured into streets and meeting halls across the nation to register their dissent.

In 1967, Bettina Aptheker articulated her intention to sponsor student strikes in opposition to the war, intentions that went unheeded in favor of the mass mobilizations planned by MOBE. In April 1968, the SMC took Aptheker's call, signifying a change in attitude on the nation's campuses that would shape not only the perception of the antiwar movement for decades to come, but also the direction of student political activity in general. Over the month of April, students across the country's campuses began to organize an international student strike against the war, the draft, and racism. Student newspapers raised the call for a nationwide boycott of university classes to be inaugurated on April 26. As a representative example, a column in the *Kingsman*, the newspaper of Brooklyn College, urged anyone who was "appalled by the atrocities of the war, anyone acquainted with the inequalities of the draft and the war in which the system has been used to punish

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<sup>173</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 262.

dissent, and anyone who is against racism” to stand up for their convictions and join the strike.<sup>174</sup>

On April 26, students across the country heeded the call of SMC, and hundreds of thousands of high school and college students walked out of their classrooms. The following day, MOBE sponsored massive demonstrations in New York and San Francisco, attended by 150,000 people in New York and 50,000 in San Francisco.<sup>175</sup> All over the country, newly enthusiastic protestors staged a variety of demonstrations and actions of mass civil disobedience, the most notable of them beginning on April 23 at Columbia University, the site of the most startling student dissent for those who remained apathetic regarding the movement.

The fact that Columbia coincided with the SMC strikes was incidental. The Columbia Student Strike was, in actuality, a confluence of issues, issues which the war and the draft were a part of, but not central to. Members of the Columbia chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) had worked alongside Columbia SDS to initiate a protest and strike over the decision to build a gymnasium in a residential area of Harlem. Specifically, this coalition protested the design of the gym, with separate and unequal access for Harlem residents and Columbia College students, as being racist. The Columbia SDS chapter organized the seizure of administrative buildings; before long, hundreds of students barricaded themselves into the offices of the dean. Members of SDS and CORE established a coordinating committee. The committee articulated a list of demands, including the call for amnesty for student demonstrators. The two primary objectives of the student strike,

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<sup>174</sup> “‘Kingsman’ Supports: McCarthy for President...and the Strike,” *Kingsman* (Brooklyn, NY) April 5, 1968.

<sup>175</sup> Michael Stern, “Two Day Anti-War Demonstration Begins on Friday,” *New York Times* April 22, 1968; Wells, *The War Within*, 263.



relayed in retrospect by Tom Hayden as well as by the committee themselves, were for Columbia to cease the construction of the gymnasium in Harlem and for Columbia to end all research collaboration with the US Department of Defense. Reflecting the sentiment of David Dellinger, the committee explained that they no longer had faith in the electoral process; they were intent on bringing the war home.<sup>176</sup>

The seizure of buildings endured for several days, only subsiding when university officials brought in police to violently suppress the siege on April 30. This occurred throughout the country, as in most student strikes, university officials utilized the local police to break up protesters and remove the students from buildings they seized. Columbia, both as a result of the scale of the protest as well as the duration, proved to be the most violently confrontational. Police, intensifying the protests and giving students more rhetorical ammunition, treated the demonstrators harshly. “Jocks” on campus who supported university administration supported police as well. Ironically for the administration, violent repression of the protests enhanced the resolve of student demonstrators and made them more likely to take an increasingly confrontational posture.<sup>177</sup>

Across the US and the rest of the world, 1968 is a year remembered by many for its violence and disorder. Individuals and organizations rose against their governments in Prague, Czechoslovakia; Paris, France; Berlin, Germany; Moscow, USSR; and of course, most of the major cities of the US. In America, the frequent bouts of protest were

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<sup>176</sup> David Bird, “300 Protesting Columbia Students Barricade Office of College Dean,” *New York Times*, April 24, 1968; Thomas Hayden, “Two, Three, Many Columbias,” in *“Takin’ It to the Streets”: A Sixties Reader*, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 334–35; Columbia Strike Coordinating Committee, “Columbia Liberated,” in *“Takin’ It to the Streets”: A Sixties Reader*, ed. Alexander Bloom and Wini Breines, 2nd ed (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 336–38.

<sup>177</sup> “Columbia Closes Campus After Disorders,” *New York Times*, April 25, 1968.

punctuated by two startling acts of political violence, the April 4 assassination of Dr. King and the June 6 assassination of Robert F. Kennedy. Both figures had amassed huge significance within the antiwar movement; King for his civil rights legacy as well as his newfound leadership among the antiwar movement, and Kennedy as the preferred presidential candidate for those antiwarriors who still believed in the electoral process. As a result, the summer of 1968, like the summer of 1967 before it, was marred by frequent rioting and violence throughout American city streets, as communities became fed up and distraught over the lack of progress against a seemingly insurmountable culture of racism and oppression.

Throughout the summer, however, antiwar leaders planned their largest, most political action yet – a massive protest at the upcoming Democratic National Convention, scheduled to be held in Chicago on August 26. The ploy to stage a non-violent protest outside the convention was primarily the work of Abbie Hoffman, de facto leader of the counter-culture Youth International Party (yippies, or YIP), as well as David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, and Rennie Davis, of MOBE. In addition, the action received support from Bobby Seale, of the Black Panther Party. This cast of characters contributed tremendous intellectual diversity to the planned action, with the Yippies preferring political absurdism and MOBE opting for a more serious political endeavor.

At a press conference on June 29, 1968, David Dellinger and Tom Hayden announced their intention to conduct disruptive action at the Chicago convention that August. This had not yet been approved by the MOBE hierarchy, but Dellinger pushed hard in meetings to approve the demonstration, succeeding three weeks later. Rennie Davis, coordinator of the action, took steps to decentralize it and broaden its scope, being sure to be inclusive of

the Poor People's Campaign (an advocacy group jump-started by Dr. King and continued after his death), supporters of Eugene McCarthy, and the yippies, who by 1968 Jerry Rubin announced was not an antiwar group, but a group dedicated to teaching Americans how to become Viet Cong.<sup>178</sup> Liberal peace organizations, like SANE, the Friends, and WSP, did not endorse the action, nor did SDS or the Young Socialist Alliance. Their rationales were, naturally, divergent, with liberals believing a demonstration was unnecessary now that Johnson had dropped out, and radicals arguing that such a demonstration was missing the point.<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, the planned action was smaller than either Dellinger or Hayden had desired, though this did not stop their intention to go onward.

In hindsight, SDS' decision not to support the DNC demonstration was rooted in sound analysis, contrary to the dismissiveness afforded to them by DeBenedetti. Though he correctly identified the internal struggle for power that had emerged within the organization as a distracting influence, he unfairly categorized their analysis as purposeless and directionless.<sup>180</sup> To the contrary, SDS elected not to endorse the demonstration on the basis that it threatened to sully the reputation of the non-violent antiwar movement in the eyes of an apathetic public and hostile media. In an incredibly prescient warning, Mike Spiegel and Jeff Jones cautioned the readers of *New Left Notes* that the demonstration had "high potential for playing right into Johnson's hands, permitting him to more easily declare [SDS] as the enemy of the American people and more easily repress us." Further, they feared that the protest would be misconstrued as an endorsement of the Democratic Party

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<sup>178</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 223–25.

<sup>179</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 224; Mike Spiegel and Jeff Jones, "Don't Take Your Guns to Town: A Grassroots Approach to the Democratic Convention," *New Left Notes*, March 4, 1968.

<sup>180</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 224.

and the American electoral system, institutions that the leadership of SDS had long-ago discarded as relics of the crony-capitalist order they wished to overturn.<sup>181</sup>

Nevertheless, the action went as planned. MOBE, alongside the CNVA (who had previously merged with the WRL), attempted to conform to the established legal channels for protest activity, but were repeatedly denied permits by the City of Chicago. The yippie contingent, embracing political absurdism, did not care one way or the other, content with their plan to reject society and nominate a pig, named Pigasus, for President. In advance of the demonstration, Chicago Mayor Richard Daley fortified the city streets with barricades and forced his twelve-thousand-man police force to work in twelve-hour shifts. On August 20, the Governor activated six-thousand National Guardsmen to protect the city from anticipated bedlam. The violence began on August 25, when police attacked demonstrators who encamped themselves in Lincoln Park with Billy-clubs and tear gas. On August 27, Chicago police removed their badges and began indiscriminately beating anyone in the streets, including journalists who were entirely unaffiliated with the demonstration. After the convention decided upon Vice President Hubert Humphrey as the candidate for the party's nomination on August 29, chaos erupted once again, and police continued their policy of indiscriminate violence against the demonstrators, as predicted by those radicals who chose not to attend.<sup>182</sup>

Their lack of attendance at the failed demonstration notwithstanding, WSP had attended the convention to agitate against the war in the political arena. Cora Weiss, speaking on behalf of WSP, delivered testimony before the Platform Committee to articulate a list of demands from the peace movement to the delegates. Reminding the

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<sup>181</sup> Spiegel and Jones, "Don't Take Your Guns to Town," 1.

<sup>182</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 226–28.

delegates of WSP's success in 1963 to achieve the limited nuclear test-ban treaty, and emphasizing the political role of President John F. Kennedy, Weiss despaired over the lack of progress actuated by the Democratic Party in the arena of peace in the previous five years to the convention. Rather than accomplish another step along Kennedy's "thousand-mile journey toward peace," Weiss castigated the Democrats for creating "the horror of Vietnam, a monstrous military behemoth that consumes more than half of [America's] national budget," futile peace talks in Paris, and a punitive draft system. True to their 1961 origin, Weiss stressed the uniquely feminine perspective of WSP, demanding Democrats to answer to the concerns of mothers across the world who could no longer watch their sons fight an illegal war. Weiss then articulated a list of eight demands, the first being an immediate repudiation of the Vietnam War, as well as an elimination of the draft, a decrease of military spending, and a renunciation of Cold War-motivated policies of repression.<sup>183</sup> Bold and inspired, these proposals, as well as those proposed by the liberal coalition of McCarthy, Kennedy, and McGovern camps, were soundly rejected by the Platform Committee, who instead endorsed President Johnson's war policy.<sup>184</sup>

The "Battle of Chicago," as some historians have immortalized the DNC protest, is a useful microcosm of the entire US and the range of dissenting opinion. Most Americans, including Mayor Daley, believed by August 1968 that the US entry into the Vietnam War was a mistake. A larger share of Americans felt that the antiwar movement was harmful, however, and these Americans ultimately molded the political situation in the US in a way

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<sup>183</sup> Cora Weiss, "Testimony Before the 1968 Platform Committee of the Democratic National Convention on Behalf of Women Strike for Peace" (1968 Democratic National Convention, Chicago, IL, August 1968) retrieved from Women Strike for Peace, 1967-1968, Box: DG 222: 2. Cora Weiss Papers, SCPC-DG-222. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>184</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 228.

that pushed Richard Nixon to a narrow election win that November. Despite the fact that internal investigations revealed that the violence at the convention was almost universally initiated by police, 56 percent of Americans polled about the event agreed with police tactics. The antiwar movement, from its moderates to its radicals, continued to occupy a very precarious position, a position where their arguments resonated with the public, but their actions were shunned. The seemingly insurmountable inertia of American foreign policy, in its rigid dedication to finishing and winning the war, coupled with the growing apathy of American society, pushed many segments of the antiwar movement towards increasingly desperate measures.<sup>185</sup>

### **B. Organized Labor and Religious Peace Advocacy<sup>186</sup>**

The ad hoc groups listed above, though receiving much of their legitimacy from the inclusion of union and religious voices, were not led by them. Both groups embarked on substantial efforts from 1966-1968 to not only participate in the antiwar movement, but to lead it, and the antiwar movement grew even more ideologically and socially diverse over that period. Upon the inauguration of mass protest against the war in April 1965, the national hierarchy of organized labor, specifically the AFL-CIO, strongly condemned the student organizers responsible, as well as the union members who supported their movement. In a 1965 address to the Ladies Garment Workers' Union Convention, AFL-CIO president George Meany articulated sharply worded attacks against unionists who backed the antiwar protests. Labeling them appeasers, he cautioned that appeasement of

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<sup>185</sup> Saad, "Hawks vs. Doves on Vietnam;" Linda Lyons, "The Gallup Brain: War and Peace Protests," Gallup News, March 25, 2003, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/8053/gallup-brain-war-peace-protests.aspx> [accessed March 29, 2024].

<sup>186</sup> Components of this segment have previously been published with the *Crimson Historical Review*. See: Long, "Organized Labor and the Vietnam Antiwar Movement: Early Union Mobilization."

Communists in Vietnam would assuredly lead to the outbreak of a third World War. He urged the delegates to the convention to offer their full-throated support to President Johnson's Vietnam policy objectives and show the country that organized labor was unified against communism anywhere. Sharing in this exercise of Cold War rhetoric was the president of the Ladies Garment Workers' Union, David Dubinsky, who added that trade unions must play a "decisive role" in stopping communism and supporting democracy.<sup>187</sup>

Early in 1965, union rank-and-file was divided over support for the Johnson administration, with small numbers, like those affiliated with Retail Workers Union district 65, electing to speak true to their antiwar convictions. Overwhelmingly however, rank-and-file supported both the administration and its war in Vietnam. Throughout the entire war, organized labor adopted a generally hawkish posture, though from 1966-1971, the fissure between hawks and doves within the labor movement grew deeper and deeper, with the number of pro-labor rank and file dropping precipitously over time. As this fissure deepened, union activism against the war took place decidedly outside the labor movement. Dissenters, whether rank-and-file or leadership, acted largely as individuals associated with peace and antiwar organizations, effectively becoming antiwarriors who, by happenstance, were also unionists. This was motivated in great part by the overbearing influence of George Meany, an anticommunist crusader who imposed his personal politics onto the AFL-CIO by strongarming dissenting rank-and-file into acquiescence.

A declaration of the Federation's executive council in October 1965 is illustrative of the schism between leadership and rank-and-file. Not only did the council declare support for the Johnson administration's foreign policy, they also went out of their way to silence

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<sup>187</sup> "Meany Blasts Critics of Johnson Policies."

union dissent on the matter. Pacifists and critics alike, they argued, would serve their cause best by shunning demonstrations and activists. The council argued for national unity at the expense of one's personal principles, indicative of the hardline stance urged by Meany and his peers in the AFL-CIO's leadership.<sup>188</sup> Additionally and perhaps more importantly, the policies of the Executive Council verged on complete censorship of dissenting positions. When student demonstrators interrupted the 1965 AFL-CIO convention from the balcony, calling upon the unions to denounce the war, Meany silenced them and denounced them as "kooks." Explicit in many of the earliest union voices for peace was a direct opposition to the stifling nature of national conventions—individual unions demanded the right to have a voice in the debate.<sup>189</sup>

Institutional opposition aside, labor organizers continued their mission to advocate peace. Leon Davis's Local 1199 was at the forefront of the labor peace initiative, but other unions took part as well. The unions most likely to join in the chorus against the war were those with a pre-existing left-leaning stance (as evidenced by their leaders' association with socialist parties and causes), something that highlights the early similarities between the New Left and the old guard of organized labor. These unions had already been an important faction of SANE—a group that would emerge with new importance to unionists in 1966.

On May 3, 1966, the Methodist office of the U.N. was the site of the founding conference of the Trade Union Division of SANE. The trade union division was formed by union members who had become increasingly perturbed by the AFL-CIO Executive Council and its unfailing support of American foreign policy. Following a New York City

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<sup>188</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 26.

<sup>189</sup> This issue would come to the surface again later, as the relationship between the executive council and member unions became further strained. Even among the unionists who did not care for the antiwar movement, there was trepidation and concern for the executive council's political dogmatism.



demonstration on March 26, trade union members in attendance met and organized the trade union division of SANE. Seventeen different unions, including Leon Davis's Local 1199 and David Livingston's District 65, sponsored the inaugural meeting of the group. At the conference, the members unanimously adopted a statement which bestowed a unique expectation upon unions. The members declared that unionists had a "special responsibility" to contribute to the national conversation of peace.<sup>190</sup>

By summer of 1966, the Trade Union division of SANE began publishing a newspaper. In a moderately self-aggrandizing fashion, the first edition of Trade Union Division *Sane World* included a passage declaring that the absent voice of organized labor had finally emerged in the peace movement.<sup>191</sup> The paper also shed light on the fears of reprisal felt by many unionists. For many, the push towards the peace movement was primarily a push for free speech—rank-and-file had been silenced by Meany's executive council for long enough, and there was mounting discontent as a result.<sup>192</sup>

The executive council responded to these charges—as well as the formation of the Trade Union Division of SANE in general—in predictable fashion. The council unanimously adopted another hawkish position in August 1966, this time including a condemnation of the antiwar activists. Denial of "unstinting support" for the US military was seen as "aiding the communist enemy of [the] country." The US bore the heaviest burden of defending world peace, according to the resolution's text.<sup>193</sup> The fact that the escalating force was the American military was obviously lost on the council.

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<sup>190</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 35–37.

<sup>191</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 40–41.

<sup>192</sup> Wehrle, *Between a River and a Mountain*, 109–26; "Dissent in the Labor Movement," *Vietnam News Service of the National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam*, November 20, 1966, Wisconsin Historical Society GI Press Collection, 1964–1977.

<sup>193</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 41.

Paradoxically, a trend began to emerge wherein both labor rank-and-file and executive leadership were absent from visible antiwar activism. In these earliest moments of the antiwar movement, leading into the changes that would take place in 1967 and 1968, the main source of organized labor opposition to the war was constrained to union functionaries, those individuals in the middle between the rank-and-file and the national leadership. The presidents, vice presidents, secretaries, etc., of the various AFL-CIO locals would become the loudest labor voice in opposition to the war until 1968 and Nixon's escalation of the conflict.

In the aftermath of a horrifically violent and divided summer, the Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace (LLAP), officially founded on November 11, 1967, represented a turning point for union-centered antiwar activism, ushering newfound unity for the liberal wing of the movement. In autumn, a collection of five hundred union members living in thirty-eight states and sponsored by several leaders within the divided labor movement convened the Assembly. Each of these leaders – including Emil Mazey of the United Auto Workers (UAW); Pat Gorman, of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workmen; and Moe Foner, of Hospital Workers Local 1199 – shared a rift with the executive council of the AFL-CIO. This rift did not prove particularly impactful to the antiwar movement itself, but it did have significant consequences for the ability of the AFL-CIO to remain relevant into the 1970s and 1980s. In any case, LLAP was the culmination of efforts inspired by the formation of the Trade Union division of SANE and the decisions of individual labor leaders, like Cesar Chavez of the United Farm Workers, who decided to prioritize their conscience over inter-union politics.<sup>194</sup>

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<sup>194</sup> Albert Vetere Lannon and Marvin Rogoff, "We Shall Not Remain Silent: Building the Anti-Vietnam War Movement in the House of Labor," *Science and Society* 66, no. 4 (Winter /2003 2002): 536.

Unfortunately, the formation of LLAP did not accomplish anything notable in pursuit of their goal to end the war. Following the tactics of earlier moderate peace groups, they established a magazine and circulated petitions, while also sponsoring the now commonplace antiwar demonstrations in major cities. On November 11 and 12, LLAP held a convention in Chicago, IL, wherein labor leaders like Walter Reuther of the UAW and civil rights leaders like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. of SCLC gave speeches condemning the war and its continued atrocities. Many delegates to the Chicago convention struggled to get the support of the executive committees of their unions, since leadership was by and large still supportive of the AFL-CIO executive council's hardline hawkish stance. Some local offshoots of the LLAP emerged, but their existence was short lived, further demonstrating the disconnect between rank-and-file and union leadership.<sup>195</sup> LLAP was significant however, even if its significance was a flash in the pan.

First, the LLAP marked a shift in the balance of power among unions as well as a shift in the structure of American unions in general. In his article tracking the development of peace sentiment in American organized labor, John Bennet Sears argued that LLAP represented a shift away from the red baiting of some unions, an expression of easing tensions between the left and liberal wings of organized labor. Echoing an editorial in *The Nation*, Sears asserts that the collaboration between previously expelled unions and AFL-CIO affiliates exemplified this change.<sup>196</sup> Critically for this analysis, the speeches delivered at the convention, particularly the one given by Dr. King, exemplified the shared intellectual background of the antiwar movement and its predominant focus on domestic

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<sup>195</sup> Lannon and Rogoff, "We Shall Not Remain Silent," 537.

<sup>196</sup> John Bennett Sears, "Peace Work: The Antiwar Tradition in American Labor from the Cold War to the Iraq War: Peace Work," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 4 (August 2, 2010): 710, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.2010.00883.x>.

consequences of American foreign policy, an ever-present feature of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement that only grew in conspicuity from 1967 onward.

Dr. King's speech was reiterated the themes in many of the other addresses he gave regarding the war, especially in structure. After giving a synopsis of the war and the movement against it, Dr. King triumphantly declared that the LLAP was a "united expression of varied branches of labor—[reaffirming] that the trade union movement is a part of forward-looking America; that no matter what the formal resolutions of higher bodies may state, the troubled conscious of the working people cannot be stilled."<sup>197</sup> The official declarations of LLAP urged bringing the war to an end so that the US government could focus its energy and its resources on the real evils that persisted in American life, supporting the struggles against poverty, disease, hunger, and bigotry. Inflated military spending only served to harm the working class of the war by undermining anti-poverty initiatives.<sup>198</sup>

In the wake of the 1968 Tet Offensive, labor unions took yet again larger strides for visibility within the growing antiwar constituency. These unions built upon the work of the LLAP, adopting the LLAP policy statement against the war in their resolutions that inaugurated their dissent from the US government. UAW Local 600, home to 45,000 members, adopted the policy statement of the LLAP in January 1968. Included among this was a new resolution entitled "Peace—The Only Alternative to Total Self-Destruction." Local 600 was not alone. Through 1968 and 1969, public sector unions began to reorganize themselves along their shared opposition to the war, culminating in a swath of American

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<sup>197</sup> Martin Luther King, "The Domestic Impact of the War in America" (Speech, National Labor Leadership Assembly for Peace, Chicago, IL, November 11, 1967), <https://www.afsc.org/document/kings-1967-domestic-impact-war-speech>.

<sup>198</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 54.

Federation of Government Employee (AFGE) locals reaffiliating themselves with the antiwar sympathizing American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME).<sup>199</sup> George Meany and the rest of the AFL-CIO executive council reacted to this in predictable fashion, again issuing series of statements castigating the antiwar segments of labor, and the schism within the labor movement continually grew prior to massive reorganizations that happened from 1969-1972. Even the once rock-solid solidarity of the American labor movement could not shield itself from factionalism in the wake of America's war in Vietnam.

The period of 1966-1968 saw the once iron-clad unity of the AFL-CIO affiliated unions begin to shatter in the face of the war. As this went on, other communities divided themselves as well, particularly religious ones. Though American Christians have never displayed the unity of the labor movement, within individual denominations, especially Catholicism, dissent was uncommon, especially dissent over political issues. At the direction of Popes John XXIII and later Paul VI, the Catholic hierarchy in Rome initiated a series of doctrinal debates as part of an attempt to rejuvenate and revitalize Catholicism. Referred to by several names (Second Vatican Council, Vatican II, Second Ecumenical Council), the council ushered in changes to the Church that had reverberations within theological, denominational, and social realms. The most critical results of the Vatican II reforms were the endorsement of ecumenism within Church clergy and laity, as well as the articulation that lay Catholics have social duties to fulfill in accord with Christian principles

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<sup>199</sup> Lannon and Rogoff, "We Shall Not Remain Silent," 537-39.

to reassert the Church's relevance to modern human life.<sup>200</sup> In practice, this meant that Catholics now had a religious obligation to "aim at true Christian perfection."<sup>201</sup>

In the US, most members of the Catholic clergy were reluctant to fully embrace this newfound call to action. They had, after all, been subject to plenty of nativist attacks over the history of the country, imbibing Church hierarchy with a self-supporting nationalist chauvinism, lest they reignite fears of disloyalty among the non-Catholic majority. At the apex of conservative Catholicism was Cardinal Francis J. Spellman, the Archbishop of New York, who enthusiastically endorsed Senator Joseph McCarthy's anticommunist crusade in 1953.<sup>202</sup> Early in the Vietnam conflict, Spellman spoke out in favor of the American war on the virtue of it being a just (and religiously legitimate) battle against international communism. He likewise established a personal relationship with South Vietnamese President Ngo Dinh Diem, a devout member of Vietnam's Catholic minority.

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Spellman's staunch support for the American war effort made him a target of America's newly politicized Catholic minority, both among the clergy and the laity. The bulk of the criticism came after Spellman had made a Christmas visit to American troops in 1966, where he referred to the conflict as a "war of civilization" and expressed hope for a total

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<sup>200</sup> Donald Brophy, "Bishop's Involvement Has Highlighted Ecumenism in US," *National Catholic Welfare Conference News Service*, January 7, 1966; Robert E. Cushman, "Some Social Implications of the Vatican Council," *The High School Journal*, Social Studies Conference Papers on "The New Europe," 39, no. 3 (December 1965): 132-38.

<sup>201</sup> Francis X. Weiser, "Ecumenism Imposes Duties on Catholics," *The Catholic Transcript* (Hartford CT), October 22, 1965. See also: Penelope Adams Moon, "'Peace on Earth: Peace in Vietnam': The Catholic Peace Fellowship and Antiwar Witness, 1964-1976," *Journal of Social History* 36, no. 4 (Summer 2003): 1037.

<sup>202</sup> "Sen. McCarthy Given Praise by Cardinal," *The Knoxville Journal* (Knoxville, TN), August 5, 1953.

<sup>203</sup> Moon, "'Peace on Earth: Peace in Vietnam,'" 1042; Truong Nhu Tang, *A Viet Cong Memoir: An Inside Account of the Vietnam War and Its Aftermath* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1985), 35.

victory.<sup>204</sup> In contrast, Pope Paul VI became an outspoken proponent of a negotiated settlement in Vietnam by 1966. Previously, on October 4, 1965, Paul VI had addressed the UN to implore all nations to reject war and promote peace. In a statement which echoed the many pacifists before him, both religious and secular, Paul VI argued that people cannot love one another with offensive weapons in their hands. Armament warped the outlook of nations, threatening world peace with the nightmare of ever-imminent war. Though he did not mention Vietnam by name, it can be reasonably assumed that his call for a “pause, a moment of recollection, reflection,” and prayer was intended to address the war.<sup>205</sup> On February 23, Pope Paul VI gave a radio address to Catholic school children in the US, urging them to pray in the Lenten season for the children of Vietnam, children whose “little bodies [were] racked by disease and wasted by hunger.”<sup>206</sup> By Christmas, Paul VI had urged an extended truce in Vietnam and pushed for a negotiated settlement to follow. To be clear, Spellman was not hawkish to the point of wishing ill on the innocents of Vietnam; Spellman was simply unwilling to renounce his support for the American alliance with the South Vietnamese, as in his eyes, they were fighting a legitimate war for self-defense, a war which the US had a duty to assist in.<sup>207</sup>

At the polar opposite end of the spectrum was Fr. Daniel Berrigan, a Jesuit priest and supporter of the Catholic Worker Movement who used his priesthood to advocate for social

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<sup>204</sup> Thomas J. Shelley, “Slouching Toward the Center: Cardinal Francis Spellman, Archbishop Paul J. Hallinan and American Catholicism in the 1960s,” *US Catholic Historian* 17, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 41.

<sup>205</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Address of the Holy Father Paul VI to the United Nations Organization” (Speech, Visit of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the United Nations, United Nations, New York City, October 4, 1965), [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19651004\\_united-nations.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1965/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19651004_united-nations.html).

<sup>206</sup> Pope Paul VI, “Address of His Holiness Pope Paul VI to the School Children of the United States of America,” [https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1966/documents/hf\\_p-vi\\_spe\\_19660223\\_scuole-cattoliche-usa.html](https://www.vatican.va/content/paul-vi/en/speeches/1966/documents/hf_p-vi_spe_19660223_scuole-cattoliche-usa.html).

<sup>207</sup> Shelley, “Slouching Toward the Center,” 41–42.

justice and against the war. In October 1965, Berrigan had been one of the founders of Clergy Concerned About Vietnam, the predecessor organization to CALCAV. Ecumenical in nature, Clergy Concerned brought together religious figures from a variety of Christian denominations in order to study the conflict and promote peaceful resolutions in the same fashion as groups like SANE and CPF. Spellman, as the archbishop presiding over Berrigan, reassigned Berrigan to South America in response to his antiwar connections, sparking inter-denominational condemnation.<sup>208</sup>

Unlike Spellman, Berrigan was a great proponent of the outcome of Vatican II, particularly the newfound invigoration of socially active priests. Describing most Churches as spiritual deserts, Berrigan argued that clergy who did not speak out for housing, sit-ins, labor unions, freedom, and justice were living in inner peace while their congregations suffered. The few Churches who joined into the call for social justice were oases in the desert, exceptions to the rule of the modern Church. Echoing the arguments of the liturgical committees and ecumenical councils of Rome, Berrigan believed earnestly that for the Church to both maintain relevance as well as a connection to Christianity as an ideal, it must be populated by clergy who act “when action is possible.”<sup>209</sup>

From this position of religiously motivated social activism, Berrigan supported the efforts of civil rights organizers, labor leaders, and beginning earnestly in 1966, the antiwar movement. Daniel’s brother, Fr. Philip Berrigan, had already joined the movement, operating as a co-chair in the Catholic Peace Fellowship (CPF). While working with CPF, Daniel Berrigan’s writing on the peace movement became much less diffuse and much

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<sup>208</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 144–45.

<sup>209</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “The World Showed Me Its Heart” (National Sodality Service Center, 1966), 21–27, retrieved from Daniel: writings, 1960s, Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.



more confrontational. Those who choose to endorse total war, argued Berrigan in an article in *Catholic Worker*, were sacrificing their humanity. Those who waged war in Vietnam stood “outside the blessing of God. [They stood], in fact, under His curse.” As argued by the secular pacifists in the WRL, Berrigan admonished those who believed in making peace through war, in bringing order through bombings, and in bringing submission through torture. Like SNCC, Berrigan believed that the making of peace was only possible through a newfound commitment to love, a commitment which both the US government and the majority of the Catholic Church had renounced in their addiction to war.<sup>210</sup>

From 1966-1968, Daniel Berrigan rapidly formed connections throughout the peace movement, working alongside many of the aforementioned peace leaders to agitate against the war. Religious figures were naturally predominant, with Berrigan appearing alongside A.J. Muste, Dorothy Day, and eventually Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He likewise cultivated important relationships with secular peace figures like David Dellinger, a figure who was eager in his positions in groups like MOBE to make the antiwar movement a multi-issue, multi-perspective phenomenon. Berrigan likewise supported the efforts of WSP, signing a voter pledge in 1966 with the organization to affirm his support for antiwar measures in the political arena.<sup>211</sup> As members of the CPF, both Berrigan brothers had been instrumental in cultivating religious support for draft resistance. Beginning in late 1965, both the *Catholic Worker* movement and the CPF sponsored public draft card burnings, burnings that were specifically planned to protest not only the draft itself, but also the laws

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<sup>210</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “In Peaceable Conflict” (*Catholic Worker*, ca. 1966), retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>211</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “Voter’s Peace Pledge Signup,” n.d., retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

made that criminalized the practice. By taking steps to not only speak out against the war but to actively obstruct it, CPF took cues from the Civil Rights Movement; non-violent demonstrations could only go so far, and the time had come in 1966 to make a tactical shift towards non-violent resistance.<sup>212</sup> The Berrigan brothers took the call for resistance seriously and grew increasingly committed to committing acts of civil disobedience from 1966-1968.

Daniel Berrigan was one of many activists arrested after the October 1967 protest at the Pentagon. For Berrigan, the bedlam at the Pentagon was the “collision of two absurdities,” yet it was acutely necessary. For, in his eyes, American policy, foreign and domestic, was finally in unison, a projection of American power which was “the active virulent enemy of human hope.”<sup>213</sup> Berrigan had, like so many activists, become attuned to hopelessness in the political arena, content with deeper radicalism and disobedience to shake the institutions of the US, both governmental and religious, into a properly formulated morality. On reflection, Berrigan expressed dismay over the activists who resorted to violence, but like Dr. King saw these actions as the natural consequence of societal ignorance in the face of injustice. Imprisonment, particularly in the especially violent condition spitefully constructed for the antiwar prisoners, allowed Berrigan to commit himself deeper to his ideal of radical love, galvanizing his belief that he and other resisters were on the right side of a widening moral chasm in the Western world.

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<sup>212</sup> Moon, “‘Peace on Earth: Peace in Vietnam’: The Catholic Peace Fellowship and Antiwar Witness, 1964-1976,” 1042–45.

<sup>213</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “Go From Here: A Prison Diary,” 1968, retrieved from Daniel: writings, 1960s, Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

While Daniel Berrigan was busy being imprisoned for his protest at the Pentagon, Philip was in Baltimore, Maryland, preparing to commit an act of civil disobedience smaller in scale but greater in intensity. On October 27, 1967, Philip Berrigan and three other pacifists broke into the Baltimore draft board and poured a combination of their own and animal blood overtop of draft files before accepting arrest.<sup>214</sup> Prior to engaging in the action, the Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission, as the pacifists called themselves, released a statement to the press articulating the terms and motivations behind their action. They did not wish for notoriety or martyrdom – their act was meant to be an act of solidarity with soldiers who had been drafted and shed their own blood for an illegal war. The legitimacy of their act was rooted in the maxim that “war proves nothing except man’s refusal to be man and to live with men.” Echoing the statements of socialist authors, the statement asserted a condemnation of the “idolatry of property,” referring specifically to the property of the draft board that they intended to destroy.<sup>215</sup>

As a signifier of the intensification of protest in 1967 and 1968, the Interfaith Peace Mission explicitly called upon their comrades in the antiwar movement to “continue moving with [them] from dissent to resistance.” To that end, their decision to organize within the inner-city of Baltimore was meant to address the twin evils of warfare and racism, rooted in their contention that “America would rather protect its empire of overseas profits than welcome its Black people, rebuild its slums, and cleanse its air and water.” Steeped in the civil disobedient radicalism of Debs, Henry David Thoreau, and Dr. King, the “Baltimore Four”—Rev. James Mengel, David Eberhardt, Thomas Lewis, and Fr.

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<sup>214</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 199.

<sup>215</sup> Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission, “Press Statement,” October 1967, retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

Philip Berrigan—took what they believed to be the essential next step in the fight to extinguish injustice in America.<sup>216</sup>

In 1968, following the shock of the Tet Offensive, the US military savagely intensified its bombing of North Vietnam, an action which enraged the antiwar activists who had been so galvanized by the turn in public opinion prompted by Tet. Few antiwarriors experienced the personal degree of indignation felt by Daniel Berrigan, however. In February 1968, Daniel Berrigan and Howard Zinn – a historian who, like Staughton Lynd, had been an active participant in the antiwar movement – traveled to Hanoi in a meeting facilitated by David Dellinger. Their purpose was to retrieve three American POWs from North Vietnam in a unilateral prisoner transfer initiated by the DRV. While there, however, Berrigan and Zinn spent time in a bomb shelter “under the rain of fire,” as Berrigan recounted the American bombardment. Having read reports of the bombings in the relative safety of the US, Berrigan had already established his strong opposition to American bombardment, opposition that direct exposure intensified greatly. Berrigan was acutely aware of the destructive impact of bombings on the population of Vietnamese children, and it is this specific population to whom he dedicated his later antiwar activism.<sup>217</sup>

Incandescent with moral rage, the Berrigan brothers planned their next phase of civil disobedience, a raid on the Catonsville, Maryland, draft board. On Friday, May 17, nine pacifists entered the Catonsville Selective Service Local Board 33 and announced

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<sup>216</sup> Baltimore Interfaith Peace Mission, "Press Statement".

<sup>217</sup> James Carroll, “Daniel Berrigan, My Dangerous Friend,” *The New Yorker*, May 2, 2016, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/daniel-berrigan-my-dangerous-friend>; Howard Zinn, “Summary of 1968 Trip to Hanoi,” 1968, retrieved from “Michael Koncewicz: Howard Zinn’s Notebooks from North Vietnam, 1968-1972,” *The Back Table*, <https://wp.nyu.edu/specialcollections/2022/05/31/documenting-the-antiwar-movements-radical-diplomacy-howard-zinns-notebooks-from-north-vietnam-1968-1972/>; Michael Koncewicz, “Howard Zinn Carried Out an Act of Radical Diplomacy in the Middle of the Vietnam War,” *Jacobin*, August 24, 2022, <https://jacobin.com/2022/08/zinn-vietnam-war-antiwar-prisoners-trip>.

themselves as a coalition of Catholic clergy and laymen in opposition to the US' imperialistic policies in the Vietnam War. Daniel Berrigan and George Mische then proceeded to remove files from the cabinets and place them loosely into wire wastebins. The workers of the draft board did what they could to stop the seizure of documents, partially fearing a violent reprisal, though Philip Berrigan repeatedly assured the occupants that the group did not wish to harm anyone, only the files. Over a five-minute span, the nine activists seized nearly four hundred draft files, took them into back parking lot of the Knights of Columbus Hall, and doused the wastebaskets in homemade napalm before setting them afire. Daniel Berrigan then led the group in prayer, underscoring their intention not only to obstruct the draft, but also to engage in an act of religious sacrament, canonizing their act of nonviolence as an action of dual significance, political and spiritual.<sup>218</sup> The Berrigan brothers maintained their ferocity over the war for the rest of its existence, though the coming year of governmental repression would force Daniel to modulate the mode of his disobedient expression.

Radical draft resistance, whether taken to extreme as in the case of the Berrigan brothers, or just practiced as a personal act of resistance, did not occur in a vacuum. Within WSP, two camps split among the decentralized organization, with some chapters focusing primarily on the political arena, and others in the sphere of direct action. There, WSP chapters in cities like Oakland, CA became instrumental for their support to the men who resisted the draft. Unlike figures like David Dellinger, whom resisters relied on for political wisdom, the women of WSP utilized their identity as mothers to cultivate a more personal

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<sup>218</sup> Shawn Francis Peters, ““My God, They’re Burning Our Records!,”” in *The Catonsville Nine: An American Story*, ed. Shawn Francis Peters (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2012), n.p., <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199827855.003.0008>.

and familial relationship of support for draft resisters. They likewise engaged in picketing and sit-ins at draft boards, where their voice concentrated on the virtues of motherhood – these women would not stand idle while the state sent their children to kill the children of Vietnam.<sup>219</sup>

### **C. Institutional Backlash to the New Left and the Radicalization of Antiwar Activism**

By 1968, WSP was engaged in increasingly visible and confrontational forms of activism. On the political front, the organization had gone through pains to support antiwar candidates and cultivate the women's "peace vote," an effort that had begun in 1965. Centering their position in society as mothers, in May 1967, WSP encouraged their membership to picket the arrival of the First Lady in New York City to accept an award from the Citizen's Committee on Children. In the mailer advertising this action, WSP asked women to "protest [the] offensive award" on "behalf of the dead and suffering children of Vietnam," and the "under-privileged children of America who are being short-changed by the Vietnam War."<sup>220</sup> On January 15, 1968, WSP sponsored a march on Washington led by the Jeanette Rankin Brigade, an ad hoc women's antiwar protest group. The march was obstructed by police and prompted within many WSPers a desire to embrace bolder civil disobedience, a desire which was tempered by WSP leadership in order to maintain better solidarity with the moderate factions of supporters.

The attempted WSP march was one of many that occurred in late 1967 and early 1968, the most notable of which had been the Pentagon siege in October 1967. In comparison to

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<sup>219</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 159–62.

<sup>220</sup> Women Strike for Peace, "Citizen's Committee for Children Protest Mailer," May 1967, retrieved from Riverdale Women Strike for Peace, 1966-1967, Box: DG 222: 1. Cora Weiss Papers, SCPC-DG-222. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

the militant actions of SDS and some affiliates of MOBE, people within the national WSP (independent chapters, such as Riverdale, were permitted via the loose organizational structure to adopt greater confrontationality) and SANE continued to promote a relatively moderate course of action. The US government, however, intensified their repression of activists, moderate or not, in response to the urging of President Johnson. Johnson directed aides within the White House to investigate state and federal statutory law that could be used against antiwar demonstrators, eager to snuff out any more actions of dissent. Their main target was draft resistance, and to that end, on January 5 five antiwarriors were indicted for violation of federal anti-draft resistance statutes: Dr. Benjamin Spock, William Sloane Coffin, Mitchell Goodman, Marcus Raskin, and Michael Ferber.<sup>221</sup> WSP had long felt that the draft was a weak-point in the state's ability to pursue an interventionist posture, and the intense attention paid to antidraft activists by the government helped to prove their contention.<sup>222</sup>

In a certain sense, the continued oppression of even moderate activism helped motivate the nascent radical sentiment of bolder antiwar activists, much to the chagrin of David Dellinger, who deemed the radical embrace to be a distraction from the successes of coalition building. In any case, the new crop of SDS, led by individuals like Mike Klonsky and Carl Davidson, had diverged from the liberalism of Carl Oglesby, and instead chose to go the direction of Stokely Carmichael (of SNCC) and Bobby Seale (of the Black Panther Party), believing that the American empire was teetering, and revolution was imminent. To this end, student activists outside SDS had embraced deeper radicalism as well, with SNCC

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<sup>221</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 195–231.

<sup>222</sup> Swerdlow, *Women Strike for Peace*, 160.

merging with the Black Panthers in February of 1968, officially endorsing the policy of arming Black communities for mutual defense against police violence.<sup>223</sup>

As before, the US government had in 1968 identified the campus as the nexus of antiwar sentiment. The New Left, which by FBI standards was primarily SDS, became an increasingly valuable target to attack. The fact that the antiwar movement was growing precipitously at this time pushed the intelligence agency to mirror the growth through wider and wider application of illegal suppression. Much of the backlash from government was along the same lines as the previous years, with public denunciations from Congressmembers and the Johnson administration making regular headlines. Behind the scenes, though, the FBI intensified their clandestine intelligence gathering. Hoover's FBI became bent on destroying the anti-war movement, and it did so via its counter-intelligence program, known as COINTELPRO.

Prior to 1968, COINTELPRO was mainly used against the Socialist Workers Party and the Ku Klux Klan. With the huge growth of activist mobilization that happened in 1967 and 1968, the FBI rapidly expanded their surveillance efforts to include "Black radicals", a label applied to Black nationalist organizations like the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP) and more moderate civil rights organizations, as well as the New Left.<sup>224</sup> The use of COINTELPRO against the New Left was officially authorized on May 10, 1968. In a memorandum from FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to the Albany, New York field office, he wrote that the goal of the program was to "expose, disrupt, or otherwise neutralize

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<sup>223</sup> "Panthers, S.N.C.C. Merge," *New Left Notes* (Chicago, IL) February 26, 1968.

<sup>224</sup> The use of COINTEL-PRO against the Black Panthers is especially heinous, as the FBI willingly stoked violence for the purpose of neutralizing the movement. See: "COINTEL-PRO: Black Extremist," FBI Records: The Vault, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/cointel-pro-black-extremists>, [accessed April 26, 2021]; Dia Kayyali, "The History of Surveillance and the Black Community," Electronic Frontier Foundation, February 13, 2014, <https://www.eff.org/deeplinks/2014/02/history-surveillance-and-black-community> [accessed April 26, 2021].



the activation of the various New Left organizations, their leadership, and adherents.”<sup>225</sup> From that point on until the discontinuation of the program in 1973, the FBI embarked on a number of schemes designed to frustrate and deter the anti-war movement and the New Left broadly.

Hoover’s decision to disrupt the New Left was multifaceted. For one part, he was personally offended by the indignation of campus organizers, deeming them a threat to the conservative social order that he had grown up in. He decried the “outbreak of violence on college campuses” as a direct challenge to law and order.<sup>226</sup> In addition to personal bias, Hoover was stirred to action by the White House. William C. Brennan, an FBI official who helped establish COINTELPRO, testified to the Senate Intelligence Committee that the FBI was “getting a tremendous amount of pressure from the White House” to do something about campus radicals.<sup>227</sup> Alongside Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon, Hoover saw campus demonstrations as offensive to common decency. McCarthyistic anti-communism and sanctimonious moralism drove the three men towards increasingly desperate attempts to stymie the growth of student dissent.

Once the Bureau officially initiated the COINTELPRO – New Left program, the FBI acted quickly to take the wind out of the sails of radical young activists. The Bureau did so in myriad ways. By leveraging its connections to the media, for instance, the FBI painted peace activists as violent and dangerous to the liberal democratic order of the

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<sup>225</sup> “COINTEL-PRO: New Left,” FBI Records: The Vault, <https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left> [accessed October 13, 2022].

<sup>226</sup> Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York, NY: Free Press, 1987), 431.

<sup>227</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III: Supplementary Detailed Staff Reports on Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1976), 524, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>.

U.S.<sup>228</sup> These attacks were often based in stretched truth, but they were nevertheless effective. Additionally, the FBI was aware of the growing sectarianism of New Left groups, especially that of SDS. Through internal disinformation campaigns led by paid informants, the Bureau capitalized on these schisms and widened the dissent among factions of the antiwar activists.<sup>229</sup> Finally, the Bureau worked alongside local police forces to dig up student activists' criminal records, furnishing this information to potential employers, school administrators, and the students' parents.<sup>230</sup> All of this was explicitly intended to marginalize and minimize the activism of these students.

Disruption was only one function of the COINTELPRO. At its core, the counter-intelligence operations of the FBI were still designed to collect information through whatever means necessary. This information was not always used in a disruptive capacity; in many instances, the FBI collected information on non-criminal acts just in case Congress decided to change laws in the future and make those acts illegal.<sup>231</sup> This gathering of so-called "pure intelligence" was typically conducted by the Bureau at will without any government oversight, and the methods used were often illegal.<sup>232</sup>

These tactics were ostensibly designed to undermine the whole of the New Left movement. In practice, the FBI targeted the SDS especially strongly, due in part because of their visibility as the largest New Left affiliated movement, and partly because the FBI

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<sup>228</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to Albany SAC, Letter, May 23, 1968, retrieved from "COINTEL-PRO: New Left," FBI Records: The Vault <<https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left>> [accessed October 13, 2022].

<sup>229</sup> C. D. Brennan to W. C. Sullivan, Memorandum, July 3, 1968, retrieved from "COINTEL-PRO: New Left," FBI Records: The Vault <<https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left>> [accessed October 13, 2022]; J. Edgar Hoover to Albany SAC, Letter, July 5, 1968, retrieved from "COINTEL-PRO: New Left," FBI Records: The Vault <<https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left>> [accessed October 13, 2022].

<sup>230</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to Albany SAC, Letter, July 5, 1968.

<sup>231</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III*, 525.

<sup>232</sup> This indiscriminate and illegal collection of intelligence was the basis of the Senate Select Committee's investigation into the FBI and CIA.

identified student dissidents as a relatively potent threat to the status quo. In fact, in book three of the Senate Select Committee report (most often remembered as the Church Committee Report), the Senators argued that COINTELPRO – New Left came into being as a direct response to SDS-sponsored student demonstrations in New York City in 1968.<sup>233</sup> Just months into the existence of COINTELPRO – New Left, letters sent from Director Hoover to field offices detailed the Bureau’s plans to delegitimize the SDS. Hoover instructed field agents to send anonymous letters from “concerned citizens” or “concerned taxpayers.” The contents of these letters, Hoover hoped, would inspire parents to act against their children that were active in the New Left, and would inspire universities to take action against faculty who supported student demonstrators.<sup>234</sup> Additionally, Hoover encouraged the use of cartoons, comics, and other material that might embarrass student demonstrators by way of ridicule.

In 1968, the Bureau’s infatuation with the SDS was motivated in part by the belief that SDS was bent on fomenting a socialist revolution in the United States. In 1965, this fear would have been completely unfounded; SDS at that point was radical, but not revolutionary. By 1968, however, sentiment among SDS members had changed and became increasingly ideological. David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, and other influential leaders connected to SDS traveled to Cuba in January 1968 to meet with leftists there. Though incredibly surface level, rudimentary contact was instigated between SDS members and members of various international leftist organizations. These contacts were little more than the acknowledgement that international socialist groups existed, but that

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<sup>233</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III*, 23.

<sup>234</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to Albany SAC, Letter, July 7, 1968.

alone was enough to raise eyebrows in the American government.<sup>235</sup> Latin American connections were especially troublesome for the FBI. A November 5, 1968, memorandum warned agents of the possibility that SDS would infiltrate and overtake universities and utilize them as a power base for revolution, a model employed by Latin American revolutionary movements.<sup>236</sup>

The fear that SDS would be the vanguard of a leftist revolution appears misguided in hindsight, particularly with the knowledge of how autonomous most chapters were from the national leadership as well as the general apathy of the rank-and-file constituency. Nevertheless, the writings of SDS leaders in 1967 and 1968 do indeed show the desire for the organization to initiate revolution in the US. In 1967, Bob Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney, and David Gilbert articulated their belief that the ever-growing student population would soon constitute a “new” working class, a working class better educated and more professionalized than ever before. Students were thus “becoming the most structurally relevant and necessary components of the productive processes of modern American capitalism,” echoing the 1962 proclamation of the “Port Huron Statement.” Unlike Hayden, however, Gottlieb, Tenney, and Gilbert argued that the experiences and failures of civil rights and antiwar protesting imbued the embryonic new working class with a novel leftist praxis that made possible the development of a genuine revolutionary movement. Only by avoiding the liberal tendency towards reformism could this new working class

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<sup>235</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 404–6.

<sup>236</sup> C. D. Brennan to R. L. Shackelford, Memorandum, November 5, 1968, retrieved from “COINTEL-PRO: New Left,” FBI Records: The Vault <<https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left>> [accessed October 13, 2022].

germinate the seeds of revolutionary praxis, a warning which influenced SDS writing and activism for the rest of its existence.<sup>237</sup>

Carl Davidson, SDS vice president, viewed the role of students in society in similar terms. His contribution to the evolution of student dissent was related explicitly to SDS's growth in the antiwar movement, specifically in their tactics of organizing against the relationships between universities and defense contracting. Davidson urged SDS organizers to stoke the student-led resistance to defense contracting on political, not moral grounds, a sharp turn away from the issue-based activism of SDS's earlier formations. Davidson thus embraced Marxist materialism fully, a step which previous incarnations of SDS were unwilling to take. Rather than stressing the moral degeneracy of napalm, activists should stoke a class-conscious opposition to Dow Chemical recruiters on campus because of their relationship to American capitalism and worker's repression. Antiwar demonstration should emphasize imperialism and capitalism as the root causes of Vietnam, and students must pursue the creation of revolutionary socialism alongside reform initiatives, lest they find their movements coopted by the CIA, a signal both that SDS had abandoned elements of Hayden-style idealism in favor of a Marxist oriented materialism, and that SDS was cognizant to government repression of New Leftist movements.<sup>238</sup>

It is important to note that although the SDS was becoming more politically aware and ideologically socialist in 1968, the average rank-and-file member had not come to embrace violence as a tactic. In a May 8, 1968, letter to the editors of *New Left Notes*, Joe

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<sup>237</sup> Bob Gottlieb, Gerry Tenney, and Dave Gilbert, "Praxis and the New Left: From Student Radicalization to Class Consciousness," in *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the Port Authority Statement, the RYM Documents and Other Lost Writings of SDS*, ed. Carl Davidson (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011), 1–10.

<sup>238</sup> Carl Davidson, "The Multiversity: Crucible of the New Working Class," in *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the Port Authority Statement, the RYM Documents and Other Lost Writings of SDS*, ed. Carl Davidson (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011), 21–51.

Brute of Lewis College urged his SDS comrades to maintain their commitment to non-violent civil disobedience. He recognized that any attempted revolution against the US government, especially a violent one, would be completely fruitless.<sup>239</sup> Brute's position was not uncommon. In general, the activity of SDS from its inception until 1970 was nonviolent, with violence tending to occur only when police actively repressed demonstrations, as in the 1967 student strike in Berkeley.<sup>240</sup> Even among the most radical crop of SDS hierarchy, it was commonly acknowledged that any revolution would happen in an organic, non-violent fashion, and any affection for violent revolt was mainly based in aesthetics, save a few fringe hardliners who in 1968 held little influence.

The Bureau, interested in stopping the growth of the antiwar movement by any means necessary, made clear to field agents that they were to inflate claims of violence to friendly media contacts whenever possible. Additionally, the Bureau engaged in a particularly pernicious policy of meddling, wherein field agents were instructed to interfere in the interactions between various New Left groups and stoke violence to legitimize police repression.<sup>241</sup> Paid FBI informants often engaged in acts of violence during their placement. In a 1975 testimony to the Church Committee, an informant explained that he taught demonstrators of an anti-draft group all of the illegal techniques they used. Breaking and entering, glass cutting, and general destruction of draft boards was made possible because of FBI training and FBI equipment.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, as informants within the SDS

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<sup>239</sup> Joe Brute, "Failure of Success," *New Left Notes*, May 13, 1968.

<sup>240</sup> Chatfield, "At the Hands of Historians," 510.

<sup>241</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book II: Intelligence Activities and the Rights of Americans* (Washington, D.C.: US Government Printing Office, 1976), 217–18, <https://www.intelligence.senate.gov/resources/intelligence-related-commissions>.

<sup>242</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book II*, 196.

and other groups furnished information to the FBI regarding sectarian division, the Bureau instructed agents to do whatever possible to widen those divisions.<sup>243</sup>

Perhaps more damaging to the overall organizational goals of SDS and its affiliates, the FBI employed COINTELPRO with the purposes of “chilling” free expression and free speech. Disinformation was used to confuse and obstruct the organization of demonstrations on both a national and local level. Additionally, the Bureau engaged in tactics designed to delegitimize or prevent the spread of information. Nearly forty percent of the COINTELPRO – New Left actions were explicit attempts to prevent targeted groups from speaking, teaching, writing, or publishing.<sup>244</sup> In doing so, the Bureau attempted to prevent the New Left groups, like SDS, from gaining any more popularity than they had already gotten in the previous five years of activism.

Agents likewise manipulated the legal process against activists of all types for the purposes of neutralization and disruption. The Bureau, operating outside its normal scope of operation, instructed field agents to diligently monitor the activities of all its targets, and find any reasons to refer their activity to local authorities. The Bureau targeted a Communist Party member, for instance, by planning to have them arrested for alleged homosexuality.<sup>245</sup> Bureau agents were instructed to keep a close eye on student cannabis usage, in order to both embarrass demonstrators and sanction them. Similarly, agents were

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<sup>243</sup> J. Edgar Hoover to SAC Albany; Baltimore; Boston; Charlotte; Chicago; Cleveland; Denver; Detroit; Los Angeles; Milwaukee; Newark; New Haven; New York; San Francisco; Seattle; Portland, Airtel, retrieved from “COINTEL-PRO: New Left,” *FBI Records: The Vault* <<https://vault.fbi.gov/cointel-pro/new-left>> [accessed October 13, 2022].

<sup>244</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book II*, 215.

<sup>245</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III*, 58.

tasked to monitor any antiwar demonstrations, with hopes of noticing any action that could be prosecuted under anti-riot statutes.

In their report, the Senate Select Committee questioned the overall effectiveness of COINTELPRO – New Left, claiming it had little consequence beyond the abuses of civil rights. In retrospect, however, the evidence supports the contention that institutional meddling contributed, at least in part, to the downfall of SDS in 1969 and 1970. Thanks to its intelligence gathering efforts, the FBI was well aware of the emergent sectarianism in SDS at the end of 1968. As the national office got closer and closer to the ideological line of the Trotskyist Young Socialist Alliance (YSA) and Maoist Progressive Labor (PL) factions, local SDS affiliates as well as their allies became alienated. The FBI attempted to widen this alienation to accelerate the downfall of the SDS, and their attempt was relatively successful.

In a December 1968 issue of *New Left Notes*, national secretary Mike Klonsky argued that the SDS ought to embrace revolutionary socialism. Echoing and quoting the sentiments of Chinese revolutionary Mao Zedong, Klonsky urged the SDS to embark on a program to “build class consciousness in the student movement in the development towards a revolutionary youth movement.” He continued, writing that the goal of this revolutionary youth movement was to move off of college campuses and integrate deeper with working class communities and other revolutionary movements.<sup>246</sup>

An embrace of revolutionary Marxist-Leninist-Maoism was a far departure from the initial ideological beginnings articulated in Tom Hayden’s “Port Huron Statement.”

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<sup>246</sup> Mike Klonsky, “Toward a Revolutionary Youth Movement,” in Van Gosse, ed., *The Movements of the New Left 1950-1975: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin Books, 2005), 129–31.



Indeed, the final years of the SDS were marred with debate and derision between the “old-guard”—Hayden, Paul Potter, and others who organized the initial iterations of the student New Left—and the new factions dominated by PL.<sup>247</sup> The old guard was still favoring and organizing mass marches, the new crop of SDSers were instead committed to stoking revolutionary fervor. The active prevention of mass mobilization by the FBI, coupled with attempts to stop the distribution of literature and recruiting material, likely helped accelerate the transformation of the SDS into an underground group with revolutionary intent. Further accelerating the revolutionary turn of the SDS were the frequent acts of violent police repression in 1968, a tactic that if not actively sponsored by the FBI was at least tacitly endorsed.<sup>248</sup>

Concurrent to the FBI’s COINTELPRO, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operated a domestic intelligence gathering program to investigate American dissidents. Operation CHAOS—formed in response to repeated urgings of the Johnson White House—was established in late 1967. The clandestine program operated beyond the scope of the CIA’s statutory authority, collecting intelligence on American citizens via mail opening, paid infiltrators, and an information sharing agreement with the FBI.<sup>249</sup>

Like COINTELPRO – New Left, operation CHAOS was implemented in direct response to anti-war demonstrations. The April 1967 demonstrations in New York and San Francisco mentioned above marked the beginning of President Johnson’s push for enhanced surveillance activity. In contrast to COINTELPRO, operation CHAOS was far less intended to actively disrupt the antiwar movement. Operating until 1974, CHAOS was

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<sup>247</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 473.

<sup>248</sup> Sale, *SDS*, 475.

<sup>249</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III*, 688–91.

designed to furnish as much information on American dissidents as possible.<sup>250</sup> Convinced that SDS, SNCC, MOBE, and other organizations were puppets of foreign adversaries, both Johnson and Nixon (following his 1969 inauguration) repeatedly urged the CIA to furnish proof of foreign funding.<sup>251</sup> The CIA repeatedly proved that this was not the case, expanding operations only under executive pressure. The domestic intelligence gathering implemented under operation CHAOS, while illegal, did not directly prevent antiwar activists from demonstrating, but the information sharing function furnished the FBI with intelligence that they would in turn use to further undermine domestic peace activists and leftist organizations.

In practice, the growing desperation generated among SDS in the face of continued repression pushed the organization to embrace more radical means. Additionally, national leadership began to abandon the high-minded idealism of Tom Hayden, and instead attempted to embrace the materialist analysis of the Maoist oriented BPP. This schism came to shape SDS's final year of existence and led them to fall out of visibility within the antiwar movement. Of course, the actual student base of support for SDS continued to support the antiwar movement, but they merely engaged with antiwar activism from outside the bounds of SDS, moving into the myriad ad hoc groups like New MOBE.

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<sup>250</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, 688–711.

<sup>251</sup> Oudes, *From: The President*, 106; Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book III*, 688–711.

## **V. Desperation and Disintegration, 1969-1971**

### **A. Disintegration of the Student Movement(s)**

In 1968, the United States was home to unprecedented levels of student activism. From the student strikes of April, led by SMC and SDS, to the innumerable individual campus protests, students in the US reacted to the American continuation of the war in an explosive, confrontational fashion. The actual movements, however, began to fall apart to factionalism, repression, and lack of direction. From 1969, these organizations increasingly fell out of relevance in the antiwar movement, paralyzed by their own internal division, but students remained active participants in the movements to end the war, making up a core constituency of the variety of ad hoc groups.

The disintegration of student protest groups began in 1968 with the SMC. Following the April strikes and their participation in the summer's protests, the Committee was torn apart by racial and ideological disputes alongside personal acrimonies. Outside of the radical fringe of activists, SMC was ostracized due to their connection to the Trotskyist SWP, an ideological legacy that alienated them both from liberals and anti-revisionist radicals alike.<sup>252</sup> Elements of the SMC continued to exist, but the coordination and respect the organization once commanded was waning. Through these ebbs, the Young Socialist Alliance, the youth arm of the SWP, essentially kept them alive, though SMC would not reemerge until late 1969.<sup>253</sup> The slow dissolution of SDS was more dramatic and more consequential to their relevance. To some extent, this factionalism was natural, a consequence of the growing feeling of desperation within all segments of the antiwar movement. The counterculture movements introduced the new generation of students to

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<sup>252</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 222; Wells, *The War Within*, 292.

<sup>253</sup> Fred Halstead, *Out Now!*, 528.

the aesthetics of revolutionary politics, and leadership within SDS began to assert their affinities for ideologies that the organization once considered outmoded and ill-conceived. Coupled with these changes was the meddling of the FBI, as it was constructed in a fashion designed to take advantage of this emergent sectarianism and widen it however possible.

SDS maintained a close working relationship with civil rights groups, but the years of antiwar activism brought a degree of separation between them. This was of course complicated by the death of Dr. King, the absorption of SNCC into the Panthers, and the hostility of the NAACP to student radicalism. When the leadership of SDS began to openly adopt a revolutionary socialist perspective, a faction led by Mike Klonsky sought to join forces with radical civil rights groups, particularly the Black Panther Party for Self Defense (BPP). This stemmed first from SDS's growing adoption of Marxism, particularly influenced by the group's reading and retelling of W.E.B. DuBois.<sup>254</sup> From the merger of the May 2<sup>nd</sup> Movement into SDS in 1966, a growing number of SDSers were exposed and converted to a Third-Worldist, Maoist political line, first leading to debates in 1967 and then prompting bitter factional disputes within the organization in 1969.

Black Panthers worked alongside local chapters of the SDS in various moments, primarily by supporting antiwar demonstrations. For members of Klonsky's Revolutionary Youth Movement faction, the BPP was at the center of the struggle against white supremacy, which was itself an obstacle to total worker's liberation. In a letter to the Progressive Labor faction, republished within *New Left Notes*, Noel Ignatiev asserted that

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<sup>254</sup> Noel Ignatiev, "Letter to Progressive Labor," in *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the RYM Documents, and Other Lost Writings of SDS*, ed. Carl Davidson (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011), 148–63. See also: Ted Allen, "A Letter of Support," in *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the Port Authority Statement, the RYM Documents and Other Lost Writings of SDS*, ed. Carl Davidson (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011), 163–67.

the fight against white supremacy was the central immediate task of the entire working class. His analysis went further, contending that America's role in Vietnam was made possible only via the continued oppression of Black people in the US. As such, the principal role for SDS, both to oppose the war and to bring about a socialist revolution, was to first liberate the African American population of the US. Ignatiev's writing on the subject shows important ideological growth for SDS, in the sense that the organization departed fully from its goals to organize within the Democratic Party and instead resolved to spark a revolution in the US.<sup>255</sup>

Other members of SDS took a similar approach to Ignatiev. In an essay published by SDS's Radical Education Project, Ted Allen connected the failures of the American organized labor movement to its inability to shed white supremacy. Allen described white privilege as the Achilles heel of the American working class. In short, the system of oppression described by Allen harmed all workers, Black and White alike. White supremacy, however, enabled this system to persist, because it prevented any real sort of proletarian unity. Within this essay are explicit rejections of any organizing initiatives that do not first contend with the issue of white supremacy within the working class. These essays and articles share a common theme that is distinct from SDS's ideological origins. No longer were SDS leaders writing idealistic proclamations of reforming the liberal system; instead, the system was now identified as the problem which enabled the evils of imperialism and racism to persist.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Noel Ignatiev, "Letter to Progressive Labor," 148-163.

<sup>256</sup> Ted Allen, "Can White Workers Radicals Be Radicalized?," in *Revolutionary Youth and the New Working Class: The Praxis Papers, the Port Authority Statement, the RYM Documents and Other Lost Writings of SDS*, ed. Carl Davidson (Pittsburgh PA: Changemaker Publications, 2011), 167-81.

This analysis was shared by the BPP, who in their correspondence with SDS explained that they repeatedly supported SDS's antiwar initiatives, and thus expected equivalent support in return. This dynamic proved problematic among the fractured leadership of SDS. The PL faction, arguing that the BPP were revisionist, refused to pledge additional support. For instance, PL refused to endorse the BPP's demands for egalitarian admission to universities, believing that the university itself destroyed revolutionary ambitions. In the analysis of PL, the university was antithetical to the development of genuine class consciousness, an organizational dead end that was not worth reforming, which is a belief wholly antithetical to the initial creation of SDS. The RYM faction, led by Klonsky, urged SDS members to continue their activism in support of the BPP and to continue to fight against white chauvinism in the working class. This battle played out verbally, at national council meetings, and within the newsletters of the respective organizations.

The antiwar movement played a decisively minor role in the split between the RYM and PL factions. Both segments of the divided SDS were in general agreement that their enemy was American imperialism, and as such, rejected the war. RYM had argued that the student radicals must support the DRV and the NLF in their battle against the American military, a position that PL took issue with. PL, true to their Maoist dogmatism, had designated the USSR to be a revisionist entity. The DRV and NLF, who took aid from the Soviets, were tainted by that association and thus were revisionist themselves, precluding any PL support.<sup>257</sup> By their analysis, both the Vietnamese Communist movement as well as the US were enemies to the cause of a global worker's revolution.

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<sup>257</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 464.

As these divisions played out, the repression of the New Left continued at the hands of the FBI. The antiwar movement had largely left SDS behind, their factionalism a distraction from the immediate goal at hand of stopping the American war in Vietnam, which begs the question of what precisely motivated the FBI to continue their COINTELPRO actions.<sup>258</sup> The “old guard” moved into other organizations, and mass demonstrations remained a popular and common form of activism against the war, much to the chagrin of people like Mike Klonsky. Nevertheless, the American government viewed SDS as a major threat to the liberal order all the way through their disintegration in 1970. Considering that in 1969 an SDS offshoot *did* up the ante to revolutionary violence, continued governmental attention was expected.

Like the Johnson administration before it, the Nixon administration was remarkably active in its dictates towards the intelligence community, and the primary motivation to continue the investigation into students originated at the highest levels of government. An August 12, 1969, memorandum to White House Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman explained the fears of administrative officials. White House aide Tom Charles Huston raised the alarm of student demonstrations that coming fall; he feared that the “competing factions of SDS” would try and prove to one another that they were “more “revolutionary” than the other,” while “antiwar protest organizations” would “escalate the fervor of opposition.”<sup>259</sup>

Haldeman’s memo missed an important fact. In June of 1969, the SDS functionally ceased to exist. The sectarian differences between various factions, heavily exploited by the FBI, caused the uneasy coalition of 1968 to unravel and give way to new constituencies.

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<sup>258</sup> Allen Smith, “Present at the Creation... and Other Myths: The Port Huron Statement and the Origins of the New Left,” *Peace & Change* 25, no. 3 (July 2000): 353–54.

<sup>259</sup> Oudes, *From: The President*, 38–39.

BPP members attacked those SDSers who were a part of the PL faction, but also attacked the nascent women's liberation movement, in turn alienating nearly all SDS members. Following the June 1969 national convention, the RYM faction, led by Klonsky, crowned itself as the "true" SDS, and held their own convention the following month. There, they once again split in two, this time into RYM II and the Weatherman, led by Bernardine Dohrn, Mark Rudd, Bill Ayers, and Jeff Jones. By this time, the PL faction had also declared itself the "true" SDS. By the end of summer, SDS as it had previously existed was completely broken, torn apart by this factionalism.<sup>260</sup> Ideologically, the Weatherman (alternatively known as the Weather Underground) emerged from the background of the defunct May Second Movement, the short lived Third-Worldist internationalist group which briefly captured the attention of some SDS members in the mid-sixties.<sup>261</sup> In contrast with earlier manifestations of the SDS, the Weatherman were fiercely ideological, a paradoxical fusion of revolutionary Marxism and anarchism that confounded the actual rank-and-file constituency of SDS. The SDS of Tom Hayden's day had been categorized by mass coalition building; in 1969, these remnants of SDS were transformed to a Maoist-adjacent group which employed acts of revolutionary violence as part of a grander mission against American imperialism in Asia. The Weatherman faction were only able to seize control of SDS after the schism between SDS and the Black Panther Party was inflamed.<sup>262</sup> The fact that this split was widened considerably by subversive FBI action supports the notion that COINTELPRO was directly responsible for the collapse of the SDS, in contrast to the findings of the Senate Select Committee.

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<sup>260</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 250; Halstead, *Out Now!*, 464–67.

<sup>261</sup> Harold Jacobs, ed., *Weatherman* (California: Ramparts Press, 1970), 5.

<sup>262</sup> Jacobs, *Weatherman*, 5–10.



In any case, the ineffectual violence employed by the Weatherman was influential in inspiring stronger state repression of the entire antiwar movement. In President Richard Nixon's memoirs, he noted the "terrorist tendencies" of the Weatherman, referencing the violence and property damage caused as justification for the controversial Huston Plan, an offshoot of Operation CHAOS. Created by and named after Tom Huston, the Huston Plan was an expansion of CIA intelligence gathering against student demonstrators and antiwar activists. Like his predecessors, Nixon also argued that the student organizations, The Weatherman, and the Black Panther Party were all in some form controlled by communists in Cuba and North Vietnam.<sup>263</sup> For Nixon, the Huston Plan was a necessary executive action to address the concerns of a terrified public. Like COINTELPRO before it, the Bureau and the CIA used the Huston Plan to circumvent legal protections and investigate both violent subversives as well as non-violent demonstrators. It had been designed to address revolutionary movements like the Weatherman, but ultimately, it chilled and censored the activism of non-violent antiwar demonstrators as well. Similarly, intelligence agencies never demonstrated the link to foreign subversives that Nixon claimed. The CIA reported on three occasions, in 1967, 1968, and 1971, that student protest was homegrown without any foreign impetus.<sup>264</sup>

The relevance of the Weatherman with relation to the peace movement is minimal after 1970. Certainly, the Weatherman faction of SDS was fervently opposed to American military action in Vietnam, but their opposition was formed on anti-imperialist grounds as part of a broader ideological opposition to the American government. In contrast to earlier

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<sup>263</sup> Richard Milhouse Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 469–71.

<sup>264</sup> Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, *Book II*, 180–81.

movements, the Weatherman were not as focused on antiwar agitation, and their underground nature meant that they were not at any point influential drivers of the mass mobilization against the war. In every substantive measure, the Weatherman movement was an aberration in the lengthy history of American social movements, and shares little of the collective history enjoyed by the other groups mentioned here.

A critical fact amidst this chaos is the decentralization of the student left. Throughout the existence of SDS, the group never maintained a central hierarchy. The National Office was the public voice of the organization through their publication of *New Left Notes*, and they set the tone for the proselytization of SDS' politics, but they did not actually control the activities of their members. This had two important consequences. On the one hand, decentralization had contributed to the ideological diversity that enabled the factionalism of 1969 to fester, as the character of SDS chapters in places like Berkeley and New York was far different from that in Ann Arbor or Milwaukee. On the other hand, the decentralization meant that despite SDS' disintegration, students maintained a vital role in the continuation of the antiwar, civil rights, and women's movements, as they simply retained the same connections to one another while moving into other, more intellectually stable organizations. Students remained a critical piece for both the National Moratorium as well as New Mobilization committee in the wave of ad hoc organizing of 1969-1970.

### **B. Activism on Trial – The Catonsville 9 and the Chicago 8**

Following their action in Catonsville, MD, police arrested the Catonsville 9, who then stood trial. Philip Berrigan had already been sentenced for his role in the destruction of draft files in Baltimore, receiving a sentence of six years.<sup>265</sup> In October of 1968, the

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<sup>265</sup> DeBenedetti's history claims that Philip Berrigan received eighteen years, but court documents as well as Wells's narrative state a sentence of six years. See: United States of America, Appellee, v. Philip

Catonsville 9 stood trial, where they admitted freely what they had done, but did not admit guilt. For Daniel Berrigan, the action was justified in its intention; Berrigan burned the draft files because he “did not want the children or the grandchildren of the jury, or of the judge, to be burned with napalm.” Later in his statements, he contrasted the illegality of the action with the legality of warfare, characterizing the distinction as an extreme perversion of moral principle. Choosing to utilize the court room as a forum for further antiwar agitation, Berrigan argued that “the time is past when good men may be silent, when obedience can segregate men from public risk, when the poor can die without defense. How many indeed must die before our voices are heard?”<sup>266</sup>

The jury found the Catonsville 9 guilty. On account of their clerical status, the Court released on the dissidents on bond, and asked them to return for their sentences on April 9, 1969. Both Philip and Daniel Berrigan, as well as Mary Moylan and George Mische, ignored the date, instead choosing to go underground and continue their antiwar activism as fugitives. Philip was caught relatively quickly by the FBI, on April 23, but Daniel remained at large.<sup>267</sup> In the first of several “Letters from the Underground,” Daniel Berrigan argued, in Tolstoyan fashion, that the framework of civil disobedience that required dissenters to acquiesce to the court system was a schema that served the interests of those in power, not those who sought to redistribute that power. To place one’s conscience “under control of unchangeable, presumably beneficent, public authority” was a failure of logic, as in this scenario, “ethical men may, in such a way, even become a

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Berrigan, Appellant, 437 F.2d 750 (4th Cir. 1971; Wells, *The War Within*, 213; DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 219.

<sup>266</sup> Daniel Berrigan, *The Trial of the Catonsville Nine* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1970), 81–95.

<sup>267</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “Letter from the Underground,” 1969, retrieved from Daniel: writings, 1960s, Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

powerful support to an evil regime.” Berrigan asserted that for America to change its course, it must consciously confront its evils and gain compassion. Only by remaining underground could he, and other resisters like him, continue to agitate towards that end.<sup>268</sup>

While “underground,” Berrigan did not hide reclusively from the public eye. Indeed, he continued to meet with other resisters and antiwarriors, making sporadic public appearances at demonstrations and Masses. Over the weekend of April 17-19, 1969, he appeared at an event at Cornell University, where he spoke to 7,000 students. Knowing that there were FBI agents in the crowd, Berrigan slipped out of a back door, wearing a costume used at a previous festival, and escaped to a cabin.<sup>269</sup> On Memorial Day, 1970, Daniel Berrigan delivered a celebratory address in response to yet another draft raid. In this speech, Berrigan was inflammatory as ever. He issued a warning to “those in power,” that “for every border violated, for every lie spoken, for every infant burned, for every mother violated, for every family pushed into exile, for every hostage tortured, for every house trashed, every prisoner murdered – for every one of these you will pay ... for the land is not yours, but it is ours, just as the war is not ours, it is yours.” Specifically addressing the Nixon administration and the Hoover-led FBI, he warned that without the people, they will “perish from the earth.”<sup>270</sup>

Following Berrigan’s address, activists under the title of We, the People, delivered their own distillation of Berrigan’s political philosophies. A critical tenet of the theory of

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<sup>268</sup> Berrigan, "Letter from the Underground".

<sup>269</sup> Bob Fitch, “Berrigan Dons Burlap, Eludes FBI,” *The National Catholic Reporter*, ca. 1969, retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>270</sup> Daniel Berrigan, “We the People Celebrate May 19 Draft File Destruction in Philadelphia and Lansdowne,” 1970, retrieved from Daniel: writings, 1970s, Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

civil disobedience, that unjust laws do not require adherence, was elucidated in the language of a corrupt political system. “When law means repression of the people,” they argued, “it becomes a law against humanity.” This doctrine could apply beyond the trial of the Catonsville 9 as well, as the activists alluded to the deaths of student activists in Jackson, Mississippi; Augusta, Georgia; and Kent, Ohio, as well as to the victims of the My Lai Massacre, an atrocity disclosed to the American public shortly before the meeting.<sup>271</sup> Like Berrigan before them, the activists responsible for the destruction of draft files in Philadelphia and Lansdowne earnestly believed that they had a spiritual, moral, and political duty to resist the war and any institution which stood for it, even in the face of governmental repression.

On August 11, 1970, Berrigan was finally captured by the FBI. He had become a polarizing figure within Catholicism, even among those who agreed with his antiwar stance, though this fact obviously did not deter his resolve.<sup>272</sup> Agents posed as birdwatchers waited outside the home of William Stringfellow, a lawyer and Episcopalian lay theologian who had offered Berrigan sanctuary. Berrigan’s ability to avoid apprehension was made possible through the nurturing of connections like that with Stringfellow, and his efforts to organize as a community dedicated first to morality and then legality had lent him an air of great credibility. As Stringfellow recalled to reporters after the FBI apprehended Berrigan, Berrigan was “a priest of uncommon conscience ... a citizen of urgent moral

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<sup>271</sup> Berrigan, "We the People Celebrate May 19 Draft File Destruction".

<sup>272</sup> Love Miller Jr., “Dan Berrigan: Son Who Was ‘Different,’” *Chicago Tribune*, September 20, 1971, retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

purpose, and a human being of exemplary courage.”<sup>273</sup> Though neither Berrigan brother was able to continue their activism once behind bars, a number of draft raids continued on in their image after their imprisonments, signifying the power of their initial actions.

In late September 1969, the organizers of the Chicago DNC demonstration were arrested and indicted for conspiring to incite riots. The US government indicted eight activists for the previous year’s disruption: Bobby Seale, of the BPP; Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin of YIP; David Dellinger and Rennie Davis, leaders of MOBE; Tom Hayden, former SDS president; and Lee Weiner and John Froines, two professors.<sup>274</sup> On September 26, 1969, the Chicago Conspiracy Trial began, known officially as *United States vs. Dellinger et al.* Richard Shultz, one of the prosecuting attorneys, explained in his opening statement his intent to prove that the eight demonstrators had “assumed specific roles” and “conspired together to encourage people to riot during the Convention.” Shultz argued that the Vietnam War was merely a pretext, a legitimate excuse to mobilize thousands of people into Chicago, where they would then be directed and goaded into riotous, violent behavior by the organizers. In contrast, William Kunstler<sup>275</sup>, one of the defending attorneys, connected the protest in Chicago to the lengthy American tradition of protest and civil disobedience. Moreover, Kunstler asserted that the real initiation of violence and riotous behavior occurred at the hand of the police, not the accused. Kunstler contended that the actual conspiracy on hand was a “conspiracy to curtail and prevent the demonstrations against the war in Vietnam and related issues that [the] defendants...were determined to

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<sup>273</sup> “Fugitive Priest Is Seized by F.B.I.,” *United Press International*, August 11, 1970, retrieved from Daniel: about (includes media coverage and involvements), Box: 1. Daniel Berrigan and Philip Berrigan Collected Papers, SCPC-CDG-A-Berrigan, Daniel and Philip. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>274</sup> “Marchers Arrested in Start of Chicago 8 Trial,” *United Press International*, September 25, 1969, <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1969/09/25/Marchers-arrested-in-start-of-Chicago-8-trial/6241569177562/>.

<sup>275</sup> Kunstler had also defended the Catonsville 9 in their trial.

present to the delegates of a political party.” For Kunstler, the right to dissent, protected by the first amendment, died in Chicago at the hand of police violence, and the results of the trial would determine if it died indefinitely.<sup>276</sup>

Kunstler and his defendants were not the first individuals to pit blame on the Chicago Police Department and Mayor Richard Daley for the DNC riots. In a November 1968 report by Daniel Walker, director of the Chicago Study Team of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence, Walker argued that “fundamental police training was ignored,” and that the city of Chicago ignored the police violence.<sup>277</sup> Walker rightfully condemned those demonstrators who made use of violence, but in his analysis of the statements and firsthand events of the DNC confrontation, he argued that it could only be called a “police riot,” in effect placing the blame not onto the demonstrators who were making use of their democratic right to dissent, but on the security forces who are ostensibly empowered to maintain order.<sup>278</sup> In contrast to the allegations of the US attorneys, violence may have been anticipated by some demonstrators, and even endorsed by a slim minority, but there was little commitment, and those who indeed sought violence were “unable to combine a broadly based following nor a well-organized plan.” As the violence erupted over the week, both initiated by police and demonstrators, organizers like Dellinger attempted futilely to retain order, further contradicting the claims made by the prosecution that the organizers inflamed the violence once it began.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> Mark L. Levine, George C. McNamee, and Daniel L. Greenberg, eds., *The Trial of the Chicago 7: The Official Transcript*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2020), 3–8.

<sup>277</sup> Daniel Walker, *Rights in Conflict: The Violent Confrontation of Demonstrators and Police in the Parks and Streets of Chicago During the Week of the Democratic National Convention of 1969* (New York, New York: Signet Books, 1968), xix-xxi.

<sup>278</sup> Walker, *Rights in Conflict*, xxii.

<sup>279</sup> Walker *Rights in Conflict*, 4-6, 207–21.

The first days of the Chicago Conspiracy trial were non-substantive, marred by confusion over what counsel were legitimately representing the defense, as well as by several acrimonious interactions between the Court and the defense team. This culminated in the removal of Bobby Seale from the trial grouping on November 6, and his case was heard separately, turning the “Chicago 8” into the “Chicago 7.” Prior to his removal, on account of Seale’s repeated pleas for self-representation, the Court had him bound to a metal chair with leather straps, his mouth gagged with fabric tied around his head.<sup>280</sup> The trial had, by this point, unraveled to a total spectacle, far from anything resembling a legitimate judicial inquiry. To that end, the defendants utilized the proceedings in an attempt to continue advocating for their causes. Seale argued at length for his rights as an American and as a Black man to address the court and defend himself per the sixth amendment to the Constitution; Hayden, Davis, and Dellinger attempted to continue to observe the antiwar movement by wearing armbands and delivering the names of the Vietnam dead in accordance with the Vietnam Moratorium movement; and Hoffman and Rubin continued to promote utter absurdity and general chaos in order to prove the illegitimacy of the trial and the government itself.<sup>281</sup>

Ultimately, the delivery of arguments for the prosecution and defense took twenty weeks. During the summation proceedings, the attorney for the Chicago 7 argued primarily that the very fact that Rennie Davis, David Dellinger, and Tom Hayden had tried months in advance to get the proper permits and follow established legal proceedings was proof enough of their innocence. Revealingly, the defense attorneys invoked the government’s repeated reference to “outside agitators” in their favor, alluding to the Civil rights Acts of

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<sup>280</sup> Levine, McNamee, and Greenberg, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, 3–80.

<sup>281</sup> Levine, McNamee, and Greenberg, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, 35–58.



1964, 1966, and 1968. The case was larger than the seven defendants, argued William Kunstler. In fact, the case was a case on the entire American tradition of civil disobedience. Continuing the theme of historical dissidents, Kunstler invoked the names of Jesus Christ, Dr. King, Eugene Debs, Mohandas Gandhi, Harriet Tubman, and Susan B. Anthony as “outside agitators” who were acting in the interest of beneficial social change.<sup>282</sup>

The Court, as well as the jury, were not moved by these statements, with Judge Hoffman compelling Kunstler to cease “lecturing” and argue the facts. Prior to receiving the jury’s verdict, Hoffman held the seven defendants guilty of contempt for their conduct throughout the trial (Seale had already been held contemptuous and penalized with a four-year jail sentence.) On February 18, 1970, following five days of deliberation, the jury held all seven defendants innocent of the conspiracy charges. Rennie Davis, David Dellinger, Tom Hayden, Abbie Hoffman, and Jerry Rubin were, however, found guilty of travelling across state lines to incite a riot.<sup>283</sup> These convictions were later overturned in a federal appeals court, where the three judges unanimously found that Hoffman erred in his trial conduct and displayed hostility towards the defendants, hostility which represented a “failure to fulfill the standards of [America’s] system of justice.”<sup>284</sup>

### **C. Reorganization and Realignment – The National Coalitions**

The chaos within the organized antiwar movement put the student and radical pacifists in a diminished state. Some organizers, like Dellinger and Hayden, began to believe that their movement had grown moribund, condemned to failure against the indefatigable American military industrial complex. Dissent did not die in 1969 or 1970,

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<sup>282</sup> Levine, McNamee, and Greenberg, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, 295–99.

<sup>283</sup> Levine, McNamee, and Greenberg, *The Trial of the Chicago 7*, 298–342.

<sup>284</sup> Bruce A Ragsdale, “The Chicago Seven: 1960s Radicalism in the Federal Courts” (Federal Judicial Center - Federal Judicial History Office, 2008), <https://www.fjc.gov/sites/default/files/trials/chicago7.pdf>.

however, even amongst the strongest efforts of the Nixon administration to silence it. Established peace organizations like WSP, WRL, and SANE continued to sponsor mass demonstrations and direct action against the war, and new coalitions formed ad hoc movements as well. The two most notable births of this final period were the New Mobilization Committee (New MOBE) and the Vietnam Moratorium movement.

In the first months of 1969, with the growing despondency of Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, and David Dellinger's growing suspicion that the DNC demonstration organizers were going to be indicted, MOBE functionally ceased to exist. A loosely organized group of movement leaders, from Fred Halstead of the SWP to WILPF pulled together the shreds of the national antiwar coalition at a meeting in Chicago to sponsor an Easter weekend march throughout the nation's cities. Halstead recalled these organizing efforts as uninspired and disorganized, but emphasized the fact that peace advocates were aware that opposition to Nixon's Vietnam strategy was fueling a reenergization of the movement, pushing the organizers to continue.<sup>285</sup>

The Easter action brought to public attention an important new constituency to the antiwar movement – veterans of Vietnam. Small numbers of veterans had indeed participated in the call to end the war as early as the movement began, but the extent to which they held a leading role in antiwar agitation was limited. On June 1, 1967, Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) was formed by six veterans in New York, and were featured at most mass demonstrations afterwards, with members carrying banners, often in uniform, in the parades of myriad marches. In October 1968, the GI-Civilian Alliance for Peace (GI-CAP) formed in Seattle, Washington, emerging publicly at a February 16, 1969

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<sup>285</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 446–49.

march demanding withdrawal from the war. GI-CAP, alongside the remnants of the SMC and MOBE, led marches on April 5, 1969, with turnout of 100,000 in New York City and 30,000 in Chicago. On Easter Sunday, April 6, that coalition led marches of 40,000 people in San Francisco, 4,000 in Atlanta, 6,500 in Los Angeles, and 1,200 in Austin. At all these marches, active-duty GIs gave speeches. Spring 1969 had shades of the previously successful spring actions of 1965 and 1967, bringing together the strained national coalitions and once again breathing life into the antiwar movement. Outside of a minor row between Halstead and Dellinger over the disruptive tendencies of Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin at the New York demonstration on April 5, the organizers of the national antiwar coalition were once again collaborating in a very unified fashion.<sup>286</sup>

Following the spring action, members of a menagerie of antiwar groups met over July 4-5 in Cleveland at a convention organized by the Cleveland Area Peace Action Council (CAPAC) to plan their actions for the following fall. The convention was marred with factionalism and tactical debates, with members of the SWP and various labor unions urging broadly reaching, peaceful demonstrations, and members of the old MOBE steering committee (including David Dellinger) and the remnants of SDS supporting confrontational, “Chicago-style” action. Despite the infighting, a new coalition was born – the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (New MOBE). New MOBE’s first decision was thus to support the Vietnam Moratorium, planned to begin on October 15.<sup>287</sup>

The Vietnam Moratorium was, in essence, a broad reapplication of the initial strategy employed by WSP. On Wednesday, October 15, workers across the country would

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<sup>286</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 450–53.

<sup>287</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 459–74.

cease working, walking out in a coordinated “strike” to register their dissent against the war. Each month, they would repeat the action, with each repetition adding a day to the moratorium until the US government withdrew from Vietnam or negotiated a settlement. The moratorium was initially conceived by Gerome Grossman, Sam Brown (former leader of Youth for McCarthy), and David Hawk. Brown, as an instructor at Harvard, had believed that they could agitate for the Moratorium by taking advantage of the existing student antiwar infrastructure, building support for the action over the summer. Once this crucial organizational step had been successfully completed and the Moratorium had garnered enough support, Hawk pitched the idea to New MOBE at the CAPAC conference, where they voted to endorse it.<sup>288</sup>

The October Moratorium had been a tremendous organizational success. On October 14, the day before the Moratorium was set to begin, antiwar Congressmembers began an overnight debate in solidarity with the planned national action. The plan, hatched by peace activist David Hartsough and congressional aide Cliff Hackett, was foiled by congressional Republicans after four hours, but it nevertheless represented a stark shift in the attitude of some members of the American House of Representatives. The following day was much more impactful. Over two million citizens poured into cities, wearing black armbands, and read the names of war dead. True to the intentions of the 1965 Assembly of Unrepresented People and the original National Mobilization Committee, a full cross-section of America had finally approached unity in registering their dissent against the war.<sup>289</sup>

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<sup>288</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 328–34; Halstead, *Out Now!*, 473–74.

<sup>289</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 370–72.

The Moratorium's strength was borne out of its intellectual and demographic diversity, diversity which manifested in a wide range of tactics. The organizers had envisioned the action to draw in the support of anyone opposed to the war, radical or otherwise, and they succeeded in meeting these diverse camps on their own terms. In Boston, SWP leader Peter Camejo gave a rousing speech urging the listeners not to just think about the war, but to stop it. In Washington, Coretta Scott King led a procession of marchers from the Washington Monument to the White House in a sort of candle-lit vigil. Everywhere in the country, the TV media recorded peaceful protesters passionately pleading for an end to the violence in Vietnam, casting the antiwar movement in far better light than it had in prior years. Even active-duty GIs deployed in Vietnam joined into the action, with small numbers of American servicemembers donning black armbands on patrols and at bases in support.<sup>290</sup>

In the wake of the remarkably successful October Moratorium, New MOBE proceeded in the planning phases of their own action for that fall, the Washington March Against Death. The event was meant to be a solemn affair, a 36-hour memorial service for all those who had lost their lives in the Vietnam War. Beginning November 13, delegates from each state were to march from Arlington National Cemetery, past the White House, and onto the steps of the Capitol building. The marchers, arranged in a single file procession, were to wear placards printed with the name of a dead American GI or a destroyed town or city in Vietnam. True to the coalition strategy preferred by New MOBE leadership, the event was officially sponsored by A Quaker Action Group, the AFSC, SANE, WRL, WSP, WILPF, FOR, The Resistance, Resist, CALCAV, and the newly

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<sup>290</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 372–75.

relevant GI groups. Influential leaders of the antiwar movement, like Dr. Benjamin Spock, David Dellinger, Cora Weiss, and Coretta Scott King, among others, issued their individual support as well, with some of them, like Dr. Spock, issuing letters on their own accord to advertise the march.<sup>291</sup>

Dr. Spock's letter signified the rejuvenation of the movement in fall 1969. It began by quoting a recent address from President Nixon, wherein he assured reporters that under no circumstances would he be affected by opposition to the war. As Spock reminds his audience, however, the civil rights movement was successful in 1963 in their quest to force the government to hear them, and the antiwar movement would be successful in 1969 in their attempt to repeat that success.<sup>292</sup> Unlike those of the Moratorium, the advertisements of the March Against Death were confrontational and direct. In a mailer for the last day of the event, November 15, New MOBE articulated ten precise demands of the antiwar movement. The first of these was the demand for immediate, total withdrawal from Vietnam. The issue of whether to back unilateral withdrawal or negotiated settlement had split components of the peace movement throughout the war, and with New MOBE, seemed to finally be taking a back burner. Additionally, New MOBE called for self-determination for Vietnam and Black America, an end to militarism, an end to racism and poverty, an end to the draft, and prioritization of social needs, among other proposals.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, "March Against Death - A Vietnam Memorial (Pamphlet)," 1969, retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam; Benjamin Spock and New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, "'How Many More Must Die?' - March Against Death Mailer," 1969, retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

<sup>292</sup> Spock and New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, "How Many More Must Die?"

<sup>293</sup> New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, "March on Washington November 15 to Bring All the Troops Home Now! - Flier," 1969.

This program was sweeping and broad, carrying-on the multi-issue legacy from the original formulation of MOBE.

Grossman, Brown, and Hawk designed the Moratorium to force people to confer over the war with their neighbors and peers, taking from WSP a predominant preference for local, rather than national, action. The Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC) argued, in contrast to New MOBE, that successful action against the war in Vietnam had to be nationwide and provincial, proving to policymakers at all levels of government that their constituencies had united in dissent. Regardless of these tactical differences, VMC endorsed New MOBE's fall action on October 21, bringing the support of the most successful action against the war to the March Against Death. Of critical importance to Sam Brown was that the November action remain peaceful. The March Against Death was scheduled for November 13-15, intersecting with the planned days of November's Moratorium on the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, meaning that a violent confrontation in Washington had the potential to overshadow and delegitimize the Moratorium. To that end, Brown and the VMC trained a marshal force to ensure a nonviolent, peaceful character.<sup>294</sup>

New MOBE likewise shared an interest in maintaining a non-violent, legal affair. Leadership within New MOBE, particularly Fred Halstead, did not want a repeat of the chaos at the DNC the previous year. Dellinger had trained a marshal force to ensure order at that action, but it was insufficient to stem the violence borne out of confrontation between the Chicago Police, National Guard, and the demonstrators. In the first set of documents delivered to prospective marshals, New MOBE called for 800 marshals at the March Against Death, to begin November 13, and 2000-4000 for the mass march and mass

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<sup>294</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 390.

rally scheduled for November 15. The general policy articulated in the document asserted that the demonstrations came “at a crucial point in the history of US involvement in the Vietnam war and at an extremely sensitive point for the Nixon administration ... disruption and/or violence [could] only detract from the effectiveness of [the] events.” A maintenance of peace and order, argued New MOBE, was a necessity for legitimizing the expression of the majority opinion to support the uncompromising position of immediate withdrawal.<sup>295</sup>

On November 13, the March Against Death began besides the Potomac River to the west of the Arlington Memorial Bridge, because the Justice Department rejected the proposal of New MOBE to begin at Arlington National Cemetery for fear of disrupting funerals. From there, the precession marched in front of the White House, stopping to say the name of a dead American soldier. 45,000 people, from across the country, gathered in this solemn service to memorialize the lives lost to the war. Once reaching the Capitol, they placed their placards into twelve open coffins set up at the foot of the building. As this went on, Moratorium activity proceeded throughout the country, overshadowed by the mass attendance in Washington. On the 15<sup>th</sup>, the day of the mass march (referred to in mailers as the Mass March to Bring All the Troops Home Now!), a diverse crowd of 500,000 demonstrators assembled on the National Mall, listening to speeches and musical performances in an exultant mood.<sup>296</sup> According to Halstead, the demonstration in Washington had been the largest gathering of protestors there in the nation’s history. The leadership of New MOBE believed the figure cited in newspaper accounts – 500,000 – was

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<sup>295</sup> Fred Halstead and Brad Lyttle, “Marshall Kit #1,” November 1, 1969, retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

<sup>296</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 390–97.



an understatement, that the real figure was closer to 750,000.<sup>297</sup> In any case, the protest was, ostensibly, too small to ignore.

The November mobilization had little immediate effect. The Nixon administration assured the press that everything in the White House was business as usual and continued with their perpetuation of the war. They were in the midst of Vietnamizing the conflict, and per their official communications with the country, events like the March Against Death represented a small minority of public sentiment that only harmed the US' position in negotiations. Highlighting the radical factions led by folks like David Dellinger, White House officials contended that without the efforts of police and National Guard forces, Washington would have been destroyed.<sup>298</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, of the FBI, remarked in December that the nation was “increasingly beset by the devastating forces of lawlessness and destruction.” Hoover, like most members of the antiwar movement, believed that there was fundamentally a moral degeneration in the US. Unlike the antiwar movement, he pinned this degeneration on those who chose to dissent to American policy. Bitingly, he argued that “crime and violence in the US have already reached terrifying proportions ... certainly [indicating] a moral deterioration and a pervasive contempt for properly constituted authority.” Alluding to those activists who sought an immediate reversal of American foreign policy, he castigated their “irresponsible pursuit of instant change.”<sup>299</sup> To their credit, journalists with the Washington Post rejected the claims of the Nixon administration. In a November 18 article, the editors proclaimed that the White House's

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<sup>297</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 520–21.

<sup>298</sup> Herb Klein quoted in Wells, *The War Within*, 395.

<sup>299</sup> J. Edgar Hoover, “An Open Letter to the Youth of America,” *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 39, no. 3 (December 24, 1969): 7; see also: Wells, *The War Within*, 396–97.

characterization of the fall action as small, violent, and treacherous was “demonstrably untrue.”<sup>300</sup>

Like MOBE before them, the leadership of New MOBE began to crumble under the desperation of having negligible impact on the American government. Accomplished organizers like Stewart Meacham left the organization as radical members began to assert themselves more strongly. The essential split was over the issue of civil disobedience, a tactic endorsed by the Rennie Davis and David Dellinger-led Radical Caucus and rejected by people like Fred Halstead, who instead felt that their purpose should be to promote mass demonstrations. Like clockwork, the tactical debates that had paralyzed SDS, SNCC, and MOBE had once again reared their head. New MOBE, led by an increasingly unpopular cadre of radicals who lacked the broad support of the coalition below them, began to fade from relevance, a fate reproduced in the Moratorium, who fizzled out with the decrease in media attention given to their December action. By 1970 the peace movement was in unorganized disarray once again.<sup>301</sup>

From 1965-1968, the organized labor movement was increasingly victim to factionalism, in large part because of the division between a conservative national leadership and a more progressive rank-and-file. This schism between rank-and-file and George Meany had lasting consequences on the AFL-CIO and the American labor movement more broadly. Mirroring the student movements of the first half of the decade, member unions began to demand more autonomy from the AFL-CIO, citing leadership’s reactionary politics as a driving force. In a 1969 edition of *Workers World*, an anonymous delegate of District 65, Retail Wholesale and Department Store Union, AFL-CIO detailed

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<sup>300</sup> Editors, *Washington Post*, quoted in Halstead, *Out Now!*, 521.

<sup>301</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 398–400; Halstead, *Out Now!*, 522–27.

the efforts made by their union to rebuke the foreign policy preferences of the federation.<sup>302</sup> The UAW, outraged over the actions of the executive council in the preceding decade, left the AFL-CIO altogether in 1969, choosing instead to align themselves with the Teamsters union and forming the Alliance for Labor Action (ALA). The UAW left for myriad reasons, including base differences in the organizational strategies preferred by UAW president Walter Reuther and AFL-CIO president George Meany. Reuther, for his part, envisioned a return to the social unionism of the past, believing that unions can and should take an outspoken role in the advocacy for progressive causes. The war was nevertheless a sticking point, however, evidenced further by the fact that following their resignation from the AFL-CIO, the UAW took a much stronger position against the war.<sup>303</sup> At the convention for the newly formed ALA in June of 1969, delegates from both the Teamsters and the Auto Workers gave speech after speech in opposition to the war. In his remarks, Frank Fitzsimmons, president of the Teamsters, referred to the war as the bane of both political parties in the US, something that threatened to tear American society apart at the seams.<sup>304</sup>

The alignment between the UAW and the Teamsters on the cause of peace is quite significant. First, the ideologies of these two unions differed sharply through the 1960s—the UAW firmly on the progressive side of things, the Teamsters much more moderate. Second, these two unions were two of the largest and most powerful unions in the United States at the time. Their alliance on the issue of peace, despite their differences in other areas of policy, signified a shift in organized labor that took place among New Left organizers in 1965—a total pivot towards antiwar activism at the expense of other causes.

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<sup>302</sup> “District 65 Rank and File Push Leaders Towards Break with Racist Pro-War Policy,” *Workers World*, April 3, 1969.

<sup>303</sup> Lannon and Rogoff, “We Shall Not Remain Silent,” 539.

<sup>304</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 69.

It demonstrated that peace in Vietnam had become the central issue to two of the largest unions in the country, totally undermining the strongarmed consensus reached by the AFL-CIO executive council. Rank-and-file mobilization against the AFL-CIO had begun to materialize at this point as well, with individual union locals, such as District 65, RWDSU, resigning from their respective internationals to align themselves with the ALA.<sup>305</sup>

By 1970, the peace movement was growing rapidly across the United States, both in the halls of organized labor as well as among ordinary citizens. The continued escalation of the war, the invasion of Cambodia, and the return of battered veterans all contributed to a growing public opposition to the conflict. The seeds of discontent had become firmly planted in the AFL-CIO as well, and more unions banded together to oppose the war and Meany himself. The chorus of labor discontent reached a crescendo in June 1972. Unionists, sponsored by fourteen different AFL-CIO affiliates and five independent unions convened the inaugural meeting of Labor for Peace in St. Louis. A thousand delegates attended the meeting, and Labor for Peace formed as the main peace coalition for organized labor from that point until the end of the war.<sup>306</sup>

Additionally, the splits that had formed and been exploited between labor and the New Left began to heal by 1969. Inroads between the labor camp and the student antiwar movement had been made in 1967 at the LLAP, particularly when Abe Feinglass, vice president of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters and Butcher Workers, spoke of his admiration for student dissenters at the 1965 AFL-CIO convention, demonstrators who had been kicked out by George Meany and labeled “kookies.” In Fred Halstead’s recollection of the movement to end the war, he argues that had labor took a leading role in the peace

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<sup>305</sup> Lannon and Rogoff, “We Shall Not Remain Silent,” 541.

<sup>306</sup> Lannon and Rogoff, “We Shall Not Remain Silent,” 543.

movement earlier, it could have neutralized student radicalism while also broaching greater unity between students and unionists. The wariness of people like Emil Mazey, of the UAW, prevented this unity from flourishing in 1967.<sup>307</sup> In the face of increased escalation in 1969, activists began to focus more on their unifying characteristics than their differences. This was exemplified in several arenas, notably by the ALA and its leadership. Recognizing their differences, ALA leadership still commended student demonstrators and implored unionists to find common ground with them, both in the spirit of fighting for peace but also for the sake of the continued health of the labor movement in the long-term. The New Left likewise became friendlier with the labor movement, collaborating alongside them in the continued mass demonstrations of the late 1960s and 1970s.<sup>308</sup> Of course, this was aided by the fact that the New Left no longer had any sort of central organizational structure in SDS, prompting student antiwar activists to work with whomever was on the side of peace, irrespective of any dogmatic proscriptions related to organized labor and revisionism.

Despite the gains made in the labor arena by 1970, most segments of the peace movement were aloof and despondent. New MOBE continued to exist, but its actions lacked the broad appeal of its 1969 mobilizations. Nevertheless, the remnants of the organization continued to agitate against the war, choosing to organize alongside GIs who had spoken out against it. True to the origin of most peace advocacy groups in the period, New MOBE continued to stress the economic and racial components of the Vietnam War, arguing in letters distributed to members that GIs and Vietnamese citizens paid for the war

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<sup>307</sup> Fred Halstead, *Out Now! A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War* (New York, NY: Monad Press, 1978), 360–62.

<sup>308</sup> Foner, *US Labor and the Viet-Nam War*, 68–84.

with their lives; Black and poor Americans with cuts to welfare, housing, and health facilities; and all Americans through inflation and unfair taxation. To that end, the leadership of New MOBE attempted to better integrate the antiwar movement into the organized labor movement, seeing the General Electric strike of 1969-1970 as a potential avenue for incursion. Notably, communications sent on January 26, 1970, endorsed civil disobedience as a tactic to the chagrin of New MOBEs moderate wing. Preempting the criticism this was sure to prompt, project director Trudi Young stressed that organizational differences were an inevitable part of coalition organizing, a fact that could be used to bolster the Nixon regime's power over dissenters, necessitating compromise and unity between moderates and radicals within the movement.<sup>309</sup>

Through this time, the SMC reemerged as a leading organization in the antiwar movement, successfully navigating a coalition course in spite of attempts by RYM to seize control. The SMC was arguably a front for the Trotskyist SWP, but nevertheless remained committed to building a non-exclusionist constituency that was responsive to the more aggressive radical tendencies of the anti-revisionist New Left organizations while also not falling under their control. By navigating this decisively sticky course, the SMC managed to avoid the disaster that befell SDS in summer 1969. SMC was the forefront of the new attempts by the New Left to integrate itself into the labor movement, supporting the boycott called by GE unions in a dual act of solidarity with labor and direct action against the American war machine, a machine that was dependent on contracts with GE. Hoping to replicate their 1967 and 1968 successes, SMC sponsored student strikes throughout the

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<sup>309</sup> Trudi Young, "Letter to New Mobe Members," Letter, January 26, 1970, retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam; Wells, *The War Within*, 403-5; Halstead, *Out Now!*, 522-36.

nation in April 1969 as well, strikes that primarily targeted the presence of ROTC programs at university campuses.<sup>310</sup> The scale of the strikes led SMC to believe that the time had come once again in 1970 to sponsor mass demonstrations against the war, particularly with the support of youth activists who, unlike the increasingly jaded leadership of New MOBE, maintained more of their revolutionary idealism.

Elsewhere in the coalition-centered peace movement, the attention paid to organized mass demonstrations was waning. Even with the invasion of Cambodia, announced in April 1970, the Vietnam Moratorium disbanded, promoting its liberal base to instead organize within the electoral process to promote antiwar politicians. The SMC, however, intensified their support for student peace activity, and beginning on May 1, a wave of student strikes, some independent, others sponsored by SMC, spread across the nation in protest to the invasion of Cambodia.<sup>311</sup>

Despite the collapse of SDS in 1969, students who once organized under their auspices continued to promote action on college campuses, often emerging organically and without national coordination. These independent campus demonstrations escalated in their aggression and violence, and the government response matched that escalation. On May 4, 1970, the conflict between the government and student anti-war demonstrators reached an infamous crescendo.

Prompted by President Nixon's decision to invade Cambodia and expand the war, antiwar demonstrations broke out at Kent State University in Kent, Ohio, on May 1, 1970. Initially peaceful, the demonstrations took on a raucous character by the evening, provoking a police response. Continuing into the weekend, demonstrators aimed to drive

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<sup>310</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 527–34.

<sup>311</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 536–532.

the ROTC off Kent's campus, a demand that was first articulated in 1969 by the Kent chapter of SDS prior to their disbandment that year.<sup>312</sup> Ohio Governor John Rhodes deployed the National Guard to campus the following day, and guardsmen occupied the campus over the weekend. The situation grew tense. On Saturday evening, the campus ROTC building was lit on fire, and student dissidents cheered on the burning.<sup>313</sup> Violent clashes with National Guardsmen, in which Guardsmen attacked students with tear gas and clubs, rapidly increased, a repeat of the highly publicized clashes from 1967 and 1968. University officials, attempting to end the demonstration's chaos, imposed a blanket ban on campus demonstrations effective May 4, 1970; the students ignored the ban, opting instead to continue their rally from the previous Friday.

The May 4 rally, though initially calm, swiftly deteriorated into a scene of state sanctioned violence. In response to the protesters' chants and jeers, as well as some incidents of rock throwing, the troops occupying Kent's campus began to fire tear gas canisters to disperse the students. Guardsmen and faculty reiterated threats of institutional reprisal as well, echoing the sentiment of leaflets distributed by university officials that morning which banned protest activity. Eventually, the demonstration reached a period of heightened intensity. National Guardsmen, in a moment of chaos and confusion, indiscriminately fired their M-1 rifles into a crowd of students, many of whom were simply bystanders to the rally.<sup>314</sup> Four students lost their lives. An additional nine were injured by the National Guardsmen's gunfire; one of whom was permanently paralyzed from the waist

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<sup>312</sup> "Special Report: Kent State," in *The Report of the President's Commission on Campus Unrest: Including Special Reports: The Killings at Jackson State, The Kent State Tragedy*, by The President's Commission on Campus Unrest (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1970), 236–48.

<sup>313</sup> "Special Report," 248–49.

<sup>314</sup> David Rosenberg, "Personal Remembrances of the Kent State Shootings, 43 Years Later," *Slate*, May 4, 2013, <https://slate.com/culture/2013/05/may-4-1970-the-kent-state-university-shootings-told-through-pictures-photos.html>; "Special Report," 265–75.



down. This was by far the boldest act of violence committed by authorities in response to a campus demonstration, but it was not an aberration. Over the course of the antiwar movement, state responses to campus unrest were increasingly violent. As before, violent repression strengthened the resolve of student dissidents, who went on to stage a nationwide general student strike after the Kent State killings. The drive to eliminate campus ROTC programs, first initiated by SDS and continued by SMC, continued until the end of the war, and between 1966 and 1973, student enrollment in ROTC dropped by sixty-two percent.<sup>315</sup>

In the wake of both the invasion of Cambodia and the government's repression of student dissent, New MOBE called an emergency protest on May 9 in Washington D.C. There, the festering division within the leadership, division over whether to endorse Dellinger-supported non-violent civil disobedience or Halstead-style placid demonstration came to a fever pitch. In the planning sessions that preceded the protest, held in the home of WSP activists, the New MOBE coordinating committee divided itself into two camps. Those who were a part of the "Conspiracy," as Rennie Davis and David Dellinger fashioned themselves, wanted to push past police barricades and stage mass sit-ins, unafraid of replicating the 1968 Battle of Chicago. Dellinger argued that mass demonstrations were no longer effective, that the antiwar movement needed to *stop* the war, not just protest it. Brad Lyttle and Fred Halstead were on the opposite side of things, believing earnestly that mass demonstration was the only way to continue to manage the loose coalition of support New MOBE held onto. These debates were never resolved. The protest, attended by massive numbers of young activists, was a confusing and uninspiring

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<sup>315</sup> Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the United States* (New York, NY: Harper Perennial, 2003), 490–91.

dud, with neither the staid professionalism of the March Against Death nor the angsty disobedience of the Chicago DNC demonstrations. Instead, New MOBE organizers continued their infighting throughout the event, and little in the way of action took place.<sup>316</sup> The aftermath of the eventless demonstration prompted yet more infighting between members of New MOBE, fought through articles in newspapers and magazines in which the various organizers pointed fingers at one another to place blame.<sup>317</sup> By the summer of 1970, New MOBE was effectively dead, yet another victim to organizational factionalism.<sup>318</sup>

By this point, the pattern of antiwar activism as an oscillating pendulum between civil disobedience and mass demonstration was well-established. Paralyzed by self-imposed infighting, the coalition-focused ad hoc antiwar movement reached a nadir in the summer of 1970, splintering back into a menagerie of unorganized and uncollaborative organizations. Student activists, less susceptible to the political inertia that disintegrated coalitions, continued to advance the movement nationally and give it necessary momentum into 1971. On the moral front, religious organizations like CPF, CALCAV, and FOR maintained the relevance of the small contingent of radical pacifists. Portending the social movements to come in the post-war landscape, groups like WSP continued to stress a

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<sup>316</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 447–446; Halstead, *Out Now!*, 536–62.

<sup>317</sup> David Gelber, “Weekend in Washington: Twilight of Demonstrations, Dawn of the General Strike?,” *The Village Voice*, May 14, 1970 retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam; Fred Halstead, “Reply to Voice Article on D.C. Demo: Why Marshals Balked at Entrapment Plan,” *The Militant*, June 5, 1970 retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam; Bradford Lyttle, “The New Mobe’s Uncertain Trumpet: Or, Could I Have Ended the Indo-China War with a 25 Watt Bullhorn?,” *WIN Magazine*, May 19, 1970 retrieved from Swarthmore College Peace Collection, CDG-A., New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

<sup>318</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 563.

politics based on the virtues of motherhood and femininity, maintaining their resistance against the war by sponsoring contact between American and Vietnamese women.

The attention paid by WSP to Vietnamese women began earnestly in 1969. The initial introduction between American and Vietnamese women was orchestrated by the Canadian feminist peace organization Voice of Women (VOW), a political lobbying group that worked to promote international world peace as part of a broader feminist framework. In April 1969, VOW wrote to WSP members in New York City, hoping to set up a meeting between American women who had spoke out against the war and Vietnamese women, from both the North and the South. In the letter addressed to Cora Weiss, of the Riverdale WSP chapter, VOW asked for assistance in getting the attention of the press, primarily women within the press, in order to contribute a better understanding of the issues facing Vietnamese women in a war-torn society.<sup>319</sup> The meeting took place in June of 1969, and WSPers met near the US-Canadian border to express solidarity and sisterhood with the women of Vietnam. There, WSP was invited to travel to Vietnam that fall, whereupon the organization began the next phase of their peace advocacy – a campaign to forward mail from POWs back to the United States.<sup>320</sup>

In the minds of pro-war Americans, WSP was committing an unthinkable and treasonous act by meeting with women from the Hanoi regime. Despite this, WSP was self-conceived as a very moderate organization. At the national level, they never endorsed a peace action unless there were both a commitment to non-violence and a commitment against civil disobedience. The primary actions supported by WSP were political and

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<sup>319</sup> Voice of Women to Cora Weiss, “Vietnamese Women Are Coming to Canada This Year...,” Letter, April 1969, retrieved from Voice of Women Canada, Box: DG 222: 2. Cora Weiss Papers, SCPC-DG-222. Swarthmore College Peace Collection.

<sup>320</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 338–39.

educational in nature.<sup>321</sup> Picketing, petitioning, and voter pledges, alongside support for conscientious objection, teach-ins (e.g., those initiated by Vietnam Summer), and meetings. This fact enabled WSP to survive the pernicious factionalism that the coalition groups they had supported fell victim to, even after the division of New MOBE in 1970.

From 1970 until the end of the war, WSP's primary modes of activity related to their general support for political solutions to the conflict, operating the Committee of Liaison to furnish communications between POWs and their families, and continuing to raise awareness of the nuclear issue, an issue set on the back burner for many activists in 1965. As this proceeded, the SWP, having exited the New MOBE, began to agitate on their own for peace in Vietnam. True to their Trotskyist politics, the SWP fashioned itself as the vanguard of the American peace movement and instituted a strict hierarchical control over the planning of its actions, all non-violent and non-disobedient. SWP affiliates, some of whom had worked with New MOBE, organized the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC), a non-exclusionist mass-demonstration group, in June 1970. The other faction of New MOBE, led by individuals who preferred direct action, formed their own coalition in Milwaukee, known as the National Coalition Against War, Racism, and Repression (NCAWRR). Neither group sponsored anything of note in 1970, especially when viewed in comparison to the triumphant accomplishments of the March Against Death in 1969.<sup>322</sup>

The primary differences between NPAC and NCAWRR mirrored the differences between those of the New MOBE Coordinating Committee. NPAC was explicitly formed in opposition to civil disobedience, a tactic preferred by NCAWRR members like Rennie

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<sup>321</sup> Cora Weiss, Cora Weiss Oral History Project: The Reminiscences of Cora Weiss, Session 4, interview by Ronald J Grele, June 10, 2014, <https://www.ccohr.incite.columbia.edu/cora-weiss-oral-history>.

<sup>322</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 563–81.

Davis, who believed that they could initiate a mass uprising and social revolution through their antiwar agitation. In contrast, NPAC did not seek any major changes to American society at large, they simply wanted to end the war.<sup>323</sup> This was a strong deviation from the antiwar coalitions that preceded it. As early as 1965, organizations like SDS and the Assembly for Unrepresented People had seen antiwar activism as but one piece in a greater societal puzzle, a component in the broader fight against racism and poverty. The war, in the sense that it took advantage of and exacerbated these issues, was but one target of their activism. Even among the pacifist organizations, the Vietnam War was deemed to be a symptom of a greater malaise in American culture. The narrow-mindedness of NPAC contributed to its lackluster showings through 1970, whereas the NCAWRR's inability to organize in a concrete fashion paralyzed that group to similar irrelevance. Further contributing to the ineffectuality of both organizations was the factional dispute between their leadership, disputes that now manifested in the organization of competing events, diluting the attention any participant could pay to one particular action over another. The coalition-focused organizational strategy was effectively dead.<sup>324</sup>

Following their creation in 1967, the VVAW did not take a leading role in the antiwar movement. They maintained a presence at demonstrations, but at the national level, primarily operated in a supportive role. Of course, small, localized demonstrations were led by contingents of VVAW across the country between 1967-1970, but these were of little consequence. By the late summer of 1970, with the focus on coalition building practically gone, the VVAW began to swell with support. The movement grew in great part to protest the pitiful condition of VA hospitals, prompting hate for the war and the US

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<sup>323</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 564.

<sup>324</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 461–63.

government, who had essentially discarded its soldiers after their duty, within the VVAW. Nixon's policy of Vietnamization, in its demobilization of American troops in Vietnam, helped to indirectly fuel the growth of veterans' peace advocacy groups like VVAW, as well. On the activist front, VVAW conceived of dramatic, attention-grabbing acts which were aimed at middle Americans, convinced that if the American heartland knew with greater clarity what precisely veterans of Vietnam had been tasked with doing, their support for the Nixon administration and the Vietnam War would plummet. On September 4, 1970, VVAW began Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal) in Valley Forge, PA, where they staged "seek-and-destroy" missions with plastic M-16 rifles, warning civilians that had they been Vietnamese, the GIs may have burned their houses, raped their wives, and turned over captives for torture. Operation RAW was sponsored by Senator George McGovern, Bella Abzug of WSP, Jane Fonda, and other influential members of the national cadre of antiwar activists and was largely successful at cultivating civilian revulsion towards the conduct of the American military. Their stated objective was the immediate withdrawal—not a negotiated settlement—of American forces from Southeast Asia, a demand once deemed too radical by most moderate factions of the peace movement that had by 1970 become the common rallying cry of nearly all antiwar activists.<sup>325</sup>

In 1971, the VVAW gained attention by the implementation of their "Winter Soldier" program. VVAW distributed a call to veterans to meet in Detroit on January 31-February 2, where they would then articulate war crimes committed in Indochina. Believing that the US government was a dead-end for such an inquiry, the program was

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<sup>325</sup> "Operation RAW (Rapid American Withdrawal)" (Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1970), Wisconsin Historical Society GI Press Collection, 1964-1977, <https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll8/id/80777/rec/30>; Wells, *The War Within*, 455-56.

consciously set up in the American Midwest, where the VVAW believed they could once again inspire grave disgust among the American public.<sup>326</sup> The investigation was not meant to scapegoat individual soldiers, as the VVAW argued that “responsibility for war crimes should be placed where it truly belongs – upon the US government.”<sup>327</sup>

In Detroit, veterans testified that they had been conditioned by the American military to commit war crimes through their training and by adhering to official military policy. In contrast to Operation RAW, the limited coverage afforded to VVAW was largely hostile, and outside a few sympathetic senators who read their statements into the Congressional Record and called for additional government inquiry, were ignored by the US government. Their testimony did, however, afford them greater exposure within the community of Vietnam veterans, exposure that they put to use in the planning of an April action in Washington, D.C.<sup>328</sup> Beginning on April 18, VVAW marched to Arlington National Cemetery, where officials refused to allow them to hold a wreath laying ceremony. Following this, they held three days of mock search-and-destroy missions in the same fashion as operation RAW. The culmination of these actions occurred on April 23, where hundreds of veterans marched toward the Capitol before throwing their medals over a barrier, in effect renouncing their service as an immoral action. VVAW’s April demonstrations were miniscule in scale but magnitudinous in significance. The outpouring of veteran-led dissidence was met by a similar turn in American public opinion, with 65

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<sup>326</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 461–62.

<sup>327</sup> “Call to the Winter Soldier Investigation (An Inquiry into US War Crimes in Indochina)” (Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 1971), Wisconsin Historical Society GI Press Collection, 1964-1977, <https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll8/id/80832/rec/37>.

<sup>328</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 473–74.

percent of the country supporting total American withdrawal, even at the expense of the regime in South Vietnam, in July 1971.<sup>329</sup>

While the leadership of NPAC and NCAWRR bickered in the early months of 1971 over the tactics and tenor of their planned actions, Rennie Davis, himself an influential leader in NCAWRR, planned what would come to be the last significant mass demonstration. Over the weekend of February 6, 1971, at an Ann Arbor conference commemorating the signing of the “People’s Peace Treaty” by the National Student Association and Vietnamese student groups, Davis delivered an ultimatum to the American government: ratify the “People’s Peace Treaty” by May 1, 1971, or face a shutdown of Washington, D.C. Davis then formed a new organization, known officially as the May Day Collective but colloquially as the May Day Tribe. Prior to the Ann Arbor conference, the NCAWRR dissolved and formed yet another new coalition, titled the People’s Coalition for Peace and Justice (PCPJ).<sup>330</sup>

Davis’s vague plans were deeply unpopular with the remaining ad hoc organizations, especially NPAC. His announcement of the planned May Day demonstrations was essentially a hijacking of the Ann Arbor Conference’s genuine intention, evidenced by the fact that the NSA did not endorse the ultimatum. Nevertheless, on February 8, at a press conference in Washington, D.C., David Dellinger (now a coordinator with PCPJ) endorsed the May Day Tribe’s plans. Davis, also speaking at the conference, reiterated that if President Nixon did not withdraw American forces from Vietnam by May 1, the May Day Tribe would stop the government.<sup>331</sup>

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<sup>329</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 309–11.

<sup>330</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 590–92.

<sup>331</sup> Halstead, *Out Now!*, 592.



Concurrent to the VVAW protest at the end of April, Quakers protested in Washington, D.C., as well. On April 25, 1971, Quakers staged a mass “pray-in” in front of the White House before one hundred and fifty-one of them were arrested by police. The following day, the somber attitude of VVAW and Quaker protest was replaced with audacious acts of civil disobedience. Demonstrators forced their way into buildings on Capitol Hill and acted out scenes of American GIs hunting down Vietnamese peasants. Unlike previous protests in Washington, the final week of April 1971 had little coordination. Without a proper national coalition to organize under, smaller groups, like the May Day Tribe, as well as a menagerie of religious organizations, all staged their own simultaneous protests. Washington, D.C. was thus thrust into dual chaos, both in the sense that massive disruptive protest had erupted and in the sense that the protests were themselves discombobulated.<sup>332</sup>

Beginning on April 30, the May Day Tribe’s plot to “shut down” Washington began to take proper form. Demonstrators surrounded the Justice Department, demanding to see the FBI files the Bureau may have had on them. On the morning of May 3, members of the May Day Tribe took to the streets, engaging in a variety of acts of civil disobedience, prompting police and US soldiers to attempt violently restoring order. Six Chinook helicopters landed on the grounds of the Washington Monument, carrying nearly two-hundred combat troops. As the May Day Tribe attempted to stop traffic along the Fourteenth Street Bridge, a parade of PCPJ protestors, led by Dr. Benjamin Spock, were simultaneously attempting to march toward the Pentagon for their own protest. The lack of coordination prompted utter chaos, and as the morning proceeded into rush hour, the streets

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<sup>332</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 497–99.

of Washington, D.C. were paralyzed by human traffic blockades, marchers, and police. By the afternoon, over seven thousand individuals – including many bystanders who were not a part of the disruption – were arrested. By 3:30pm, Rennie Davis declared that the May Day Tribe had failed. Sidney Peck, of PCPJ, argued differently, believing that the protest was a political victory.<sup>333</sup>

Davis's analysis was more accurate. In the days which followed, police continued to violently repress the remaining protestors and demonstrators in the Capitol, deploying more tear gas and arresting hundreds more dissidents. The Nixon administration, embarrassed by the solemnity and seriousness of the VVAW protests that preceded May Day, successfully took advantage of the bedlam in the Capitol and used it as fodder its smear campaign against antiwar activists. Public opinion polls delivered to Nixon indicated that 71 percent of the public disapproved of the May Day Tribe, and 56 percent of respondents approved of the police response.<sup>334</sup> Despite the disconnect between the May Day Tribe and the public at large, American citizens, even non-activists, were indeed growing tired of the war. The spring, 1971 protests were among the last of the notable national demonstrations, but they did not mark the conclusion of dissent over the Vietnam War.

Dissent reached its apex in July after the leak of the "Pentagon Papers," the culmination of an internal National Security Council study of the war and its origins. The leaker, Daniel Ellsberg (an attendee at the May Day protests alongside Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky), had previously been an analyst on the NSC project under the direction of Robert McNamara. Having come independently to the conclusions that the war was both

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<sup>333</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 500–506.

<sup>334</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 500–514.

immoral and unwinnable, Ellsberg became increasingly disgusted by the government's one-track-minded policy in remaining in Vietnam, a policy that had grave human consequences. The release of the papers did little to affect the war, however. Greater numbers of Americans regarded the war as a mistake, but the antiwar movement, paralyzed now by its tactical differences, could not effectively agitate this new antiwar majority. Individuals within the movement had departed over time, with Hayden effectively retreating from public life and antiwar intellectuals pivoting their attention back towards domestic issues. Worse, antiwar legislators were unable to mobilize the political processes to their favor, effectively allowing Nixon to continue the track he had already established.<sup>335</sup>

Nixon's policy of Vietnamization, now well underway despite the Saigon regime's inability to cope with their increased burden, effectively marginalized the centrality of the war among most moderate dissenters. The pacifist movement, always a minority of American life, retreated into the background, continuing their appeals for an end to violence everywhere. Groups like WSP continued in their attempts to promote a politically oriented peace by emphasizing the virtues of motherhood, but their action was primarily limited to supporting the various political antiwar coalitions within legislatures across the state and federal level. By 1972, antiwar activism did not disappear, but it did lose its novelty, and to the chagrin of radicals like Rennie Davis, it never prompted the mass social revolution that they had intended in 1965.

From 1972-1975, coordinated, coalition-based antiwar agitation largely departed from American life. His aggression in Cambodia and Laos notwithstanding, Nixon's

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<sup>335</sup> DeBenedetti and Chatfield, *An American Ordeal*, 312-23.

continual drawdown of American forces from Southeast Asia, themselves a decision made in response to antiwar agitation, was accomplishing the primary request made by most activists.<sup>336</sup> Modification and then abolition of conscription likewise decreased the impetus to protest. Of course, Nixon's policies gave little comfort to the liberal and leftist constituencies that comprised the bulk of the antiwar movement. Protests continued outside the scope of the war, directed at the pervasive societal ills of poverty, sexism, and racism. Without the war as a unifying foundation, these movements never attracted the coalitional unity or media attention that antiwar protest did, limiting their visibility, but strengthening their organizational focus. In any case, the incredible novelty of the Vietnam-era antiwar movement, with its once commanding presence in American culture, rapidly eroded after 1971, giving way to a new political and social landscape.

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<sup>336</sup> Wells, *The War Within*, 512–13.

## **VI. Conclusions**

Ultimately, the successes of the 1966-1968 coalition strategy crumbled apart in the wake of governmental repression, factionalism, and public disinterest towards the war after 1971. In the remnants of this once flourishing movement, only the preexisting peace groups, like WRL, WSP, FOR, and others, in addition to some of the religious organizations, persisted in their advocacy. Groups that had made names for themselves in the course of the movement, like SDS and SMC, as well as the myriad ad hoc coalitions like MOBE (in all its iterations), vanished from public eye just as quickly as they emerged.

Even as public opinion against the war steadily grew from 1965-1971 and increasing numbers of Americans joined the antiwar movement, at no point in its existence did the antiwar movement experience majority support. This fact reflected the fact that in general, Americans were reluctant to join social movements, even those in support of causes they endorsed. Thus, for almost every activist mentioned, the proselytization of the antiwar cause was a paramount objective. From the moderates in WSP to the radicals in the SMC, all antiwar activists attempted to formulate a program that was appealing to some facet of society that had gone unorganized.

There are two primary patterns of activism demonstrated in this thesis. The first is the fact that all antiwar groups operated as continuations of a longer-term social movement. The pacifist organizations of the Vietnam-era fused the tactics of pre-war pacifists from the first half of the twentieth century with the civil disobedience of the civil rights movements. Moderate groups attempted to replicate the petitioning of the liberal internationalists with novel organizational strategies. Political radicals attempted to merge the best elements of the old left and organized labor movements into a new, consciously

intersectional organizational base. These three camps could not have embarked on the course taken without being inspired and influenced by those who came before them, evidenced in the commonalities in rhetoric and tactics from 1900-1971. As part of this pattern, the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era experienced the same ebbs and flows of the peace movements that preceded it, falling victim to the same factionalism that broke apart the internationalist peace movement of the interwar years and the liberal and socialist alliance of the post-Second World War era.

Second, all factions of the antiwar movement in the Vietnam-era relied on the organizational groundwork built by the Civil Rights Movement. The ad hoc committees that formed from 1966-1970, particularly Vietnam Summer, were formed to replicate the successes of SCLC and SNCC and the experience of 1964's Freedom Summer. Without the experiences of the Civil Rights Movement to draw on, SDS never would have established the organizational capacity to spread throughout college campuses. Moreover, nearly every antiwar coalition that formed attempted to stress the implicit racism inherent to the American conduct of the war, from the racial bias of the Selective Service System to the damage to civil rights legislation in favor of warfare. Those antiwar organizations which were more aligned with leftist ideology likewise stressed racism as the origin of their opposition, while simultaneously connecting the war to larger, harmful systems of imperialism.

Despite these patterns, the Vietnam-era antiwar movement was unique in its history. From 1900-1963, the majority of antiwar and peace activism occurred between wars – dissent during an active conflict was limited to the political and religious margins, only present among the most resolute pacifists and socialists. In the Vietnam era, the peace

movement inverted this relationship. With every policy decision that deepened the American commitment to the war in Vietnam, the antiwar movement grew in turn, the chorus of dissent only growing louder. Further contrasting the Vietnam-era movement to those that preceded it was the fact that once the US began to withdraw under Nixon's Vietnamization scheme, the peace movement also withdrew. In the wake of the Great War, peace advocacy grew louder at the end of the conflict, vowing to never again enable a conflict like that to emerge. In the aftermath of the Second World War, liberal internationalists congratulated themselves for the triumph of liberal democracy and the establishment of supranational governance via the United Nations, steps they believed would usher the US into a new era of peacefulness. This discrepancy may be explained by the intense reactionary and institutional backlash unleashed upon the Vietnam-era antiwar movement. The election of Richard Nixon was the first in a realignment of American political ideology, preempting the grass-roots conservatism that was to follow in the late 1970s and 1980s. In any case, the antiwar movement of the Vietnam period serves as a transition point marking a radically different political and social landscape in the US.

Critical to all of this was the fact that, in all instances, the activists who hatched plans of civil disobedience, draft resistance, mass demonstration, and political action all believed in their capability to usher in necessary changes to American society. It was only the repeated failures of coalition building that brought about the despondency of 1969-1971, an aberration in an otherwise idealistic expression of democratic potential. Even amidst the in-fighting, where activists like Fred Halstead and David Dellinger accused one another of failing the movement, there was the general belief that one's chosen mode of activism mattered and was capable of reforming American society. For some, that

reformation was narrow, for others, revolutionary, but in all cases, the activists of the antiwar movement continued on in the face of repression in the earnest belief that they could achieve it.



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