

Die-in sparks lively reaction

By CLARENCE MOORE
and DAVID NUDO
Jambar Staff Writers

A crowd started to fill the Kilcawley Program Lounge to watch the Die-In shortly after 11 a.m. last Friday.

"I'm just curious," said John Psaras, freshman, Business. "I heard people are going to die and I want to watch and see what it's all about."

The Die-In, which was coordinated by St. Joseph Newman Center and Cooperative Campus Ministry, was to dramatize the loss of life that would result from a nuclear war. It was also supposed to focus attention on the ABC television program, "The Day After."

At 11:15, the Die-In began with Fr. Ray Thomas of the Newman Center reading aloud what would be the events of a typical day in certain people's lives within the Youngstown community.

"This is very interesting, and exciting too," said Katie Finnerty, freshman, CAST. "I want to see the reaction of everyone else, which will show people's attitudes toward the possibility of a real crisis."

Tamara Psinka, senior, A&S, who was standing on a table to get a better look, said, "I'm happy to see the large turnout. After all, we're the future leaders and decision-

makers. Even if we don't agree, we must be willing to understand all sides of such a critical topic."

The fictional situation that Thomas was reciting has now taken a desperate turn. An international conflict was escalating into nuclear war on this same "ordinary" day.

Suddenly, with a bang of a drum and a crash of a cymbal, which represented the dropping of the bomb, about a dozen people fell to the floor as if dead. Murmurs and laughing among the crowd mixed with the screams and sobs coming from the "expired" participants.

Bob Campbell, junior, A&S, who just happened to be walking through the lounge at the time, said, "This was a great idea. It's about time students look around and get involved in something besides fads and fashion. The fact that all of us have stopped and watched this shows that we're not close-minded to what lies beyond campus life."

For two minutes the tragedy of nuclear war was demonstrated. Some of the students watching were making jokes about it, some were whispering comments to friends and some were standing by, staring silently.

"It's shocking to think this could really happen," said Kae Pope, freshman,

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"Death" lurks at Friday's die-in in the Kilcawley Program Lounge

Die-In

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Engineering. "I'm very concerned and it's good that this is being shown. Too bad this is not taken more seriously by some of these students."

After the two minutes, the "victims" rose from the floor and recited and sang pleas for peace and prevention of nuclear war. The crowd began to exit. As the Die-In came to a close, the lounge started to get back to normal.

Those students who were sitting in the lounge before the program were still occupying the couches after all the others had gone. One of those students, Jon Shaffer, sophomore, A&S, noted, "All I can say is if this was Russia, a protest as such would never be allowed. It's good that people can hold and express their views in a free country like the USA."

Another student, Susan Merolla, freshman, CAST, said, "I think the whole thing was dumb. They have guts, but it was so overly dramatic. Besides, no one will pay attention to their cause."

At another couch, which was closest to the majority of "victims," Tom Morrell, junior, CAST, said, "Where was the other side? There are two sides to this and we've been exposed to just one. I think a pro-nuclear representative should have been incorporated into a program like this."

"As far as I'm concerned, they are trying to use scare tactics," added Heather Klug, sophomore, A&S, "and I don't like that. We've got to make up our own mind on such a sensitive issue."



The Jambar/Joni Griffith

Die-in participants join hands to sing "Give Peace a Chance."

After the Die-In, several of the participants stood around in the program lounge, talking with and hugging each other, still visibly shaken by the event they had just taken part in. Several of the participants agreed to talk about their two minutes of "death" and what they feel they accomplished.

Reverend Jim Ray, Cooperative Campus Ministry, described his experience as "very heavy."

"I felt myself listening to the scenario and my heart was pounding heavily inside my chest," he said. "I knew that there were people all around me and that, if this were the real thing, we'd all be gone."

He continued, "As I was lying on the floor, I had a feeling of concern for all of us. It was a disturbing kind of thing to participate in."

Tom Murphy, another Die-In participant, echoed Ray's sentiments.

"This could very well have been the actual thing and we all would have been obliterated," Murphy said. "I thought the reaction of the students was good. I expected worse, but it turned out good. I think we got our point across."

"I'm still shaking from the experience," said Bonnie Cole, a member of the Youngstown Peace Council. She noted that these Die-Ins are going on all over the

country.

Cole said she thought some of the laughter she heard from spectators was "nervous laughter," and she said she believes that, although some people laughed, "They'll think about what they saw here."

"We had to laugh about it ourselves, because if you think too serious about the threat of a nuclear war — you'll go nuts," she said.

Ellen Robinson, another member of the Youngstown Peace Council, said that she was surprised by the number of spectators present in the program lounge.

"I was shocked that there was an audience and maybe that does indicate that they were out looking for a good time," Robinson said. "But on the other hand, they wouldn't have come if they didn't have some feelings about this thing."

Robinson said she was taken aback by the audience and thought about holding back on her planned performance, but she said she decided to go through with her routine.

She also felt the group had reached the students, she said, and that the Die-In had gotten the reactions the participants expected.

As she was down on the floor, screaming and writhing in mock agony, she said, she reached out for help from some of the shocked spectators gathered around her and, to her surprise, she saw that they weren't laughing.

Most of the Die-In participants said they hoped students would become involved in the various protests against nuclear arms.