

In Our Opinion...

NSA Congress Drafts Sane Letter About War

Much has been said by college students in the past year or two concerning the selective service system and U. S. position in Viet Nam. Unfortunately, to the way of thinking of many of us, student comments have been, for the most part, too radically stated — either in the form of burning draft cards, staging "Get Out of Viet Nam" marches, or circulating absolute victory in Viet Nam petitions.

Therefore, we were pleased to see a well-thought-out, non-emotional letter, which originated at the National Student Association Congress this summer, drawn up to express to President Johnson some of the serious questions that are in the minds of many U. S. college students.

The letter, bearing signatures of students from all over the country, was presented to the president Friday.

Here is that letter:

Dear Mr. President:

In your discussion of the draft with the summer interns several weeks ago, you recognized many of the questions that have been troubling members of our generation. We were pleased and encouraged by your expression of concern—pleased enough so we are responding to your invitation to give voice to our thoughts.

We set out to formulate our views on selective service — the specific subject of your speech—but we soon realized what you yourself must know; that the question of the draft cannot be discussed fully in isolation from the situation that has made it so pressing a problem—the war in Viet Nam. In this letter then, we have sought to articulate some of the questions that our Vietnamese policy has raised in the minds of many of our contemporaries.

The basic and difficult truth is that an increasingly large number of American students are finding it increasingly difficult to understand our position in Viet Nam. Although Ambassador Goldberg's speech clarified to some extent our position on negotiations, it did not answer many questions and raised some new ones concerning our objectives and interest in Viet Nam.

This confusion and dissatisfaction has led, in some cases, to outspoken dissent. But more significant, we believe, is the fact that for every militant dissenter there are scores who find themselves deeply troubled about a proper response to the demands of their country. These are people devoted to the Constitution. They are strongly committed to the democratic process and to law and order. They are people whose fathers and brothers served willingly in two World Wars and in Korea. And they are people whose loyalty and courage are the equal of those who have preceded them.

Yet many of these same people, faced like their fathers with the duty of bearing their country's arms, find it difficult to square performance of that duty with a nearly universal conviction that the present Selective Service Law operates unfairly. Some find it difficult to reconcile their deep sense of loyalty to America with demands of personal integrity and common humanity. But more, perhaps, are torn by reluctance to participate in a war whose toll in property and human lives keeps escalating but whose goals remain unclear.

Unless these deeply felt conflicts can be resolved, the nation may find itself faced with a situation unparalleled in its history; a situation in which some of the most

talented and dedicated young men and women will refuse to meet their legal obligations, while countless others will tolerate and even encourage ruses and devices to evade these obligations.

There is doubt that America's vested interests are sufficiently threatened in Viet Nam to necessitate the growing commitment there.

There is, in fact, doubt that these vital interests are best protected by this growing commitment.

There is also some feeling that a war which may devastate much of the countryside cannot lead to the secure and prosperous Viet Nam we once hoped our presence would help produce.

There is widening concern about apparent contradictions which seem to recur in official American pronouncements:

— While we continue to insist that we will negotiate "unconditionally," we seem unwilling to accept full participation by the Viet Cong as an independent party to negotiations.

— While we continue to reiterate our commitment to self-determination for South Viet Nam, we do little to dispel confusion about our willingness to accept a coalition (or pro-communist) government should the people of South Viet Nam eventually select such a government in elections held under adequate international supervision.

Finally, Mr. President, there is a growing conviction that unless our goal is victory rather than a negotiated settlement, failure of the other side to negotiate has not justified—and does not justify—continued escalation.

This conviction leads to concern about the nature and attainability of our basic goals in Viet Nam, and to a deeply-felt fear that the course now being pursued may lead us irrevocably into a major land war in Asia—a war which many feel could not be won without recourse to nuclear weapons, if then.

We are grateful for your interest and look forward to hearing your thoughts on these matters.

The Daily Tar Heel

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"Oh, nothing much. Just cleaning up from last night."



John Greenbacker

Bitter Spanish Dept. Letters Should Stop

On the editorial page of yesterday's Tar Heel there appeared a most interesting letter to the editor.

Mrs. Kessell Schwartz, wife of one of the professors that recently announced his decision to resign from the Spanish Department, explained at some length her personal reasons why she couldn't stand Chapel Hill.

Mrs. Schwartz ended the letter with some rather amazing suggestions as to why she felt the people here were not overly friendly to her. The charges of petty gossip and anti-Semitism, under any other circumstances, might be considered paranoid on their face.

The letter's emotion can be understood, however, in the entire context of

the situation. Mrs. Schwartz's letter came after a long series of others had been printed.

Every graduate student and professor that wrote the paper attempted to explain the situation vaguely or else attacked the DTH for bringing the troubles of the Department of Romance Languages to light. The emotion in print may have been high, but it's a sure bet it doesn't measure up to the emotions of the individuals that boil under the surface.

Mrs. Schwartz has given some indication of the passions involved in her words to the public. It would be a shame if this prompted others to do likewise.

Though the students that run this newspaper have the greatest respect for its power to inform the public, they know full well that responsible journalism is that which operates for the public good.

Clearly no good can be served by this continuous process of washing a fine academic department's dirty linen in public.

The members of the Spanish Department, the French Department and the Department of Romance Languages as a whole would be wise to refrain from indulging in the vituperative childishness of name-calling in the newspaper.

In this way only can they save what is left of our conscience, their good relations and the integrity of one of the best departments in the University.

* * *

The pure nausea of any television program Jack Paar has been associated with is too familiar a subject to be exhumed at length today, but last Wednesday's airing of the Paar production, "The Kennedy wit," cannot go by unnoticed.

Such a program, as an idea, is truly unparalleled. The late president was capable of producing some wild humor and a well-edited, tasteful documentary on the subject would have been a classic in its own time.

Why did they give this marvelous idea over to Paar for slaughter?

The shots of Kennedy were good, but they were sandwiched in between Paar's disgusting monologue. He never waxes nostalgic without getting maudlin, and his bleary-eyed reminiscences vaguely suggest the hard-luck stories of a Bowery rummy.

Half a minute of Paar on Kennedy is enough to make anyone scream, "Oh, God!" in disgust and swear off television forever.

One of the high points of the desecration was when Paar so profoundly pinpointed the driving force behind John Kennedy's humor: "He did everything with such class."

For that phrase alone Paar would have done better to appear on television in a dirty T-shirt with a beer can in his hand.

The lack of taste was even more apparent in his derisive remarks about President Johnson. Paar had the affrontry to compare the president's speaking style to that of a folksinger's with aching feet.

Johnson may sound like the original Uncle Cornpone, but he is the President of the United States. It's also just a little unfair to set the president up against a dead man, especially one that has been beatified by the masses.

The big question is, why did the Kennedy family submit themselves to this sort of thing. They allowed a memory that was truly beautiful become irreparably soiled.

It will be difficult, now, to erase the greasy smudges of Paar's touch from an old portrait of fire and presidential brilliance that is fast being dulled by the ages.