

Student Statement: "We Won't Go"

On April 22, 1969, the student leaders of major universities throughout the country issued a declaration to President Nixon saying that they would go to prison to evade the draft as long as the United States continued fighting in South Vietnam. They issued the statement at a news conference in the House Agriculture Committee Room. Saying they represented the majority of opinion in their campuses, the leaders denounced the Vietnam war as immoral and unjust:

Students have, for a long time, made known their desire for a peaceful settlement. The present negotiations, however, are not an end in themselves, but rather, the means to a complete cease-fire and American extrication. And until that cease-fire is reached, or until the Selective Service System is constructively altered, young men who oppose this war will continue to face the momentous decision of how to respond to the draft.

In December of 1966, our predecessors as student body presidents and editors, in a letter to President Johnson, warned that "a great many of those faced with the prospect of military duty find it hard to square performance of the duty with concepts of personal integrity and conscience."

Many of draft age have raised this issue. In the spring of 1967, over 1000 seminarians wrote to Secretary of Defense McNamara suggesting the recognition of conscientious objection to particular wars as a way of "easing the coming confrontation between the demands of law and those whose conscience will not permit them to fight in Vietnam." In June of 1967, our predecessors submitted, along with a second letter to the President, a petition signed by over 10,000 draft eligible students from nine campuses, calling for alternative service for those who cannot fight in Vietnam. There have been many other similar attempts to influence Congress and the Administration. Nonetheless, despite all our efforts, the Selective Service System has remained impervious to constructive change. Presently, thousands of fellow students face the probability of immediate induction into the armed forces.

Most of us have worked in electoral politics and through other channels to change the course of America's foreign policy and to remove the inequities of the draft system. We will continue to work in these ways, but the possible results of these efforts will come too late for those whose deferments will soon expire. We must make an agonizing choice: to accept induction into the armed forces, which we feel would be irresponsible to ourselves, our country, and our fellow man; or to refuse induction, which is contrary to our respect for law and involves injury to our personal lives and careers.

Left without a third alternative, we will act according to our conscience. Along with thousands of our fellow students, we campus leaders cannot participate in a war which we believe to be immoral and unjust. Although this, for each of us, is—an intensely personal decision, we publicly and collectively express our intention to refuse induction and to aid and support those who decide to refuse. We will not serve in the military as long as the war in Vietnam continues.

You
Have Not
Converted
A Man
Because
You Have
Silenced
Him

—John Viscount Morley
"On Compromise"

Hatfield Gives View On War And Draft

(Ed. Note: The following is a statement by Senator Max Baucus of Montana.)

It is now clear that attempts to reform, modify or liberalize our Vietnam war policy and the draft structure are self-deceiving and bound to fail. Such efforts misstate the issues involved. The war in Vietnam must be halted, not merely modified. What must be recognized is that military presence on the Asian mainland is contrary to our interest. The issue to be decided at Paris is the method and implementation of the withdrawal of American troops. Nor can the draft be merely reformed. The present draft system is a drastic invasion of individual liberty. Conscripted service is involuntary servitude, pure and simple. As the *Washington Street Journal* stated editorially, it is "about the most odious form of Government control we have yet accepted. The draft must be abolished."

I think it is imperative that we seek to understand the terrible dilemma which these young men face. Many of our nation's most idealistic young men are torn between the recognition of their duty to serve their country and their duty to apply an individual moral standard to the actions they perform. Though I must disavow their potential contravention of the law, I would hope that we will not ignore the integrity of their decision or the agony of their action.

I cannot help contrasting the bitterness of today's young men drafted to fight in Vietnam with the call my generation felt to serve in the Second World War. I was proud to serve in the Navy in the South Pacific at Iwo Jima, Okinawa and Indochina because the purpose and necessity of our struggle was clear. Today I question the avowed purpose of the war in Vietnam, and I question a system of conscription which forces young men to contradict their own moral commitments.

Moreover, the employment of conscription to provide men for Vietnam further denigrates the quality of our national life. The widespread acceptance and utilization of techniques to evade present obligations undermines our youth's respect for law and authority. This situation must be deplored. The words of the student leaders' statement on the war and the draft echo the feelings of so many young men who are deeply tormented by the sacrifice of values which is demanded by participation in a war which they believe is immoral. As long as this continues, or, even worse, as young men leave the country or violate the law, the spiritual wounds of personal, family and national disunity cannot begin to heal.

This is a time when many students are questioning whether there is either reason or wisdom in adhering to our democratic processes, not because they fail to believe in democracy, but because they do believe and have seen it failing to function adequately. The efforts of these student leaders here today, while remaining uncompromising about their convictions and ideals, are, by attempting to discuss their concerns with those in positions of power and influence, exploring the viability of the democratic process. The war and draft are two pressing and relevant issues that, hopefully, can be influenced by student conviction and action. For the government to ignore their kind of efforts is to risk further alienating large segments of our young people.

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"... AND HERE'S A TROOP REDUCTION AND HERE'S NO DRAFT CALL FOR OCTOBER AND HERE'S ..."



"The Vietnam Moratorium is the most significant demonstration of opposition to the war in Vietnam since the primary results of 1968. It is the only way that the people of the country can demonstrate a second judgment on the war in Vietnam to those who hold political power."

—Senator Eugene J. McCarthy

"I would hope that the Moratorium observance will make clear to the Administration that in the continuance of this senseless bloodshed lies the seed of national tragedy. It is an effort which merits the responsible participation of all Americans who are anxious to reverse a policy of military attrition and moral disaster."

—Senator George S. McGovern

"Everyone who has been lecturing students on the wickedness of violence should welcome this opportunity to reassert peacefully their opposition to the continued pressure from the military leadership."

—John Kenneth Gailbraith

"Let us all support the students who are trying to stop, by their Moratorium, this disastrous, costly and pointless war."

—Reinhold Niebuhr

"Only public pressure for immediate withdrawal will persuade Nixon to end the war. The Vietnam Moratorium will help build that pressure."

—Benjamin Spock, M. D.

"By the awful grace of God, we are the survivors. Others have given their lives for us in Vietnam and here in America. On October 15, we begin to pay our debts."

—Adam Walinsky