

FRONT THE WARMAKERS



NATIONAL MOBILIZATION COMMITTEE TO END THE WAR IN VIETNAM

5 Beekman Street, New York, N.Y. 10038
(212) 964 - 6436

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INAUGURATION, CHICAGO INDICTMENTS, ANTI-WAR DIRECTIONS: A MOBILIZATION REPORT

Since the "counter-inauguration" there has been a flutter of activity interfering with the completion of this report. There have been numerous meetings to evaluate the Washington action, and to consider next steps for the anti-war movement. Dave and Rennie recently travelled to Paris with Cora Weiss (of Women's Strike for Peace) and Dick Barnett (co-director of the Institute for Foreign Policy Studies, Wash., DC) for discussions with the American and Vietnamese representatives to the "talks". All of us have been absorbed in planning for the indictments that are now expected against demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention. In New York, there has been little rest since the Inaugural Demonstration.

We begin this report by saying that the Mobilization went to Nixon's Inauguration because we thought the political situation demanded it. At a time when the two party system was setting aside its ritual differences to celebrate the continuity of America's political purpose, at a time when the government was making a cynical attempt to obscure the full blown crisis of our culture with a politics of "marching forward together", at a time when the war was continuing with unabated fury despite the aura of disengagement and conclusion that filled the daily papers, we felt compelled to say no, once again, to that war and to that lie which Richard Nixon wanted to perpetrate in the name of stability, order and continuity.

On the face of it, many of the objectives for the counter-inauguration were accomplished. We predicted that we would bring between 10 and 15,000 people to Washington. Our most careful estimate indicates there were 13,000 participants in the Sunday march to the Capital. We predicted that we would make a strong anti-war presence felt throughout the Inaugural weekend. Virtually all the political commentary on the Inauguration was forced to deal with the war, despite an agreement among television networks to black out demonstrations on Monday. Nixon's attempt to make a theme of unity and consensus was echoed by virtually no one; the Inauguration failed to put a gloss on anything. Finally, we predicted that the Counter-Inauguration would be used to bring home to many people a renewed sense of urgency and purpose about the war, and in fact, wherever work on the action was done, this seems to be true.

But, it is also a simple fact of this mobilization that it took place in a highly developed factional cross-fire that soaked up substantial organizational and personal energy that might otherwise have gone to building and planning it. There was an atmosphere of distrust, leading up to and during the event. Speakers at the Sunday rally in Washington, including GI's, were heckled by small, organized groups and individuals. One organization, Coalition for an Anti-Imperialist Movement (Co-AIM), physically tried to take over the Mobe office for awhile in the name of the "street people". Rumors circulated as truths, festering bad feeling among some people and organizations which have traditionally worked together. For example, when two people wanted to make announcements over the microphone before the rally, they were told they could not use the mike without authorization from Dave or Rennie. The incident led to the widespread rumor that the Mobe categorically refused militants access to the microphones. Mobe leadership did not know that the incident had happened. Similarly, it was widely rumored that there was no bail money or legal protection available for "street people". People in the Mobe office were urged to impress upon people the paucity of Mobe bail funds, a policy that applied to everyone who inquired. But nearly 100 people were bailed out of jail by the Mobe, most of them in a matter of a few hours, all of them supported regardless of the activity in which they were involved. However, even against this performance, many people who were in Washington continue to argue that the Mobe policy was to "let street people rot in jail".

Our intention here is not to refute point by point rumors that circulated in Washington and were later printed in some movement papers. A longer report is available (in the Feb. issue of LIBERATION, 75¢, 5 Beekman St., NYC 10038) that details many of the specific problems. Our concern is with a general environment building within the movement and the Mobilization that is heavily predisposed toward a situation where people will believe the worst on both sides, an environment that calls into question the very basis of any coalition.

In the coming months, the Mobilization staff will encourage as much as possible careful consideration of these and related issues, in an effort to search for appropriate strategies and forums through which to express anti-war sentiment. This is not to say that nothing can be done with the environment that now exists in the movement or that this fact of life relieves us of the obligation to continue opposition to the war. We recognize that the political situation within the country and our own movement is changing constantly. Many questions that seem difficult now will be resolved by events in the next few months. Issues which seem irrelevant today will seem central in the future. The people who are politically alive to those changes will be the people who are willing to take the heat now. It is part of the price we pay for the attempt to remain relevant at a time when so much is angrily obscure.

But we wish to open the question as to what kind of an anti-war coalition can be the most relevant and viable in the present period. While exploring this question in the coming months, there are several distinct directions in which we believe the Mobilization should work:

AMERICAN-VIETNAMESE DISCUSSIONS: Even within the anti-war movement, there is confusion and uncertainty about the impact of saturation bombing, "accelerated pacification", operation Phoenix and other U.S. strategies in Vietnam and there is only the vaguest sort of recognition of the fraudulence of the Paris conference on Vietnam. We suggest, as one project, that the Mobe assist in the organization of various delegations to travel to Paris for meetings with representatives of the DRV and NLF from which up-to-date perspectives of the "other side" could be brought back to American audiences. Preliminary arrangements with the Vietnamese were made by Dave and Rennie on their recent trip to Paris.

CHICAGO CONVENTION CONSPIRACY: Official leaks from the Grand Jury investigating events around the Chicago Democratic Convention point towards the indictment of Mobilization and Yippie leaders in the next week. Movement people are being regularly subpoenaed by the Grand Jury and we are told that the Grand Jury will continue to sit and "investigate" after the first round of indictments. Lawyers close to these proceedings believe that many indictments may be forthcoming, although it is expected that 6 demonstrators and 6 policemen will be the first victims. Lawyers strongly urge no one to testify because isolated fragments of innocent testimony can be combined, out of context, to build a conspiracy case. Anyone receiving a subpoena should contact the Convention Litigation Project, 6 South Clark Street, Chicago, Illinois (phone 236-5564) for information and assistance. Several Mobe staff people are moving to Chicago to supplement the beginning efforts to create a broad, political defense.

SPRING ANTI-WAR MOBILIZATIONS: Several regional and national organizations are considering or planning demonstrations in the spring. SCLC, SDS and several regional anti-war groupings (Atlanta, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles) are discussing plans for activities in April. The steering committee of the Mobilization is enclosing a ballot for organizations to indicate what role, if any, the National Mobilization should play in calling or coordinating anti-war activities in April. The steering committee unanimously supported decentralized actions in the Spring rather than a single, national action in April, organized by the Mobilization.

EVALUATION OF ANTI-WAR DIRECTION AND ORGANIZATION: During the Spring months, the Mobe staff will encourage wide ranging discussion of the strategies for the anti-war movement and urge consideration of ways to rebuild a more effective coalition. Individuals or organizations wishing to have discussion papers circulated should forward them to the National Mobilization office.

Mass actions for peace set in April

By MICHAEL JAY

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 — Six U. S. cities will be the sites of massive peace mobilizations April 4-6, when the anti-war movement will stage its first nationwide action since the inauguration of President Nixon.

"The fact that 10,000 GIs and many more Vietnamese have died since the Paris talks began speaks for itself," said Leon Craig, of the Fifth Ave. Vietnam Peace Parade Committee, co-ordinators of the April 5 action in New York. "To say that the war is over is a callous understatement."

A visit to the Parade Committee's office at 17 E. 17th St. saw Craig and other staffers at work preparing for the New York action. The Parade Committee is a coalition of 150 groups in the New York area.

In addition to New York, mass action is slated in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Seattle, Austin, Chicago and Atlanta.

GI resistance to the war in Vietnam and the draft will be

the dominant theme of the New York action, Craig said. Also prominent will be opposition to the ABM (anti-ballistic missile) program. Emphasis will also be placed on racism and on the spending of huge sums of money to finance the war while neglecting the poor at home.

Route of march

The April 5 New York action will begin with a march from 42nd Street up 6th Avenue to the Central Park Mall, and will conclude with a rally in the park.

While no speakers have yet been announced, Craig said that "there will definitely be a GI speaker, a speaker from the black liberation movement, and a speaker giving political analysis."

Asked his opinion of why the peace movement has been relatively inactive in recent months, Eric Weinberger, a Parade Committee staffer, declared, "The McCarthy movement took a lot of people. Since his defeat they have been inactive. But the death toll in Vietnam shows the need for demonstrative action again."

Craig said he hoped the April 5 action would bring "tens of thousands" out to demonstrate and provide the movement with the revitalization it needs.