

"BUT I WOULDN'T BE EFFECTIVE IN PRISON"

First keep in mind that many of you will get the 1-O classification if you apply for it—and prison is *not* the fate that awaits you. But it is a risk you take. When men of draft age argue they can do more out of jail than inside we agree. But you don't always have a choice. Are you more effective opposing the war if you are in the army instead of jail? Can you be effective in preaching a swinging anti-war message to slum kids if they know you have a 2-S deferment? How effective would anti-war leaders be with the general public if they had faked a 4-F? And how effective do you think you can be in changing U.S. policy in Vietnam if you are sitting in a coffee shop in Toronto?

And sometimes prison is more "effective" than anyone would guess. Did Rosa Parks sit down in the white section of a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955 because a central committee or a session of participatory democracy had worked it out that the decisive moment had arrived and her single action would spark a revolution? Or did she sit down because she was tired and angry and tired of being angry and didn't care if she did go to jail just because she was human, and taking that risk was part of being human? How effective did Jesus feel at Calvary? Or Marx in the British Museum? No one knows when the "effective" instant comes, or which act will change history. All we can know for sure is that if you are jailed, at least your family and friends must face that fact. Sometimes history is changed in great sweeps but more often it is changed by the sum total of apparently ineffectual and almost meaningless existential actions out of which a new culture is built and from which new values arise.

The issue we pose isn't whether confronting the draft is effective but whether it is *right*. That is an old-fashioned concept. An ancient concept. And it is why you have bothered to read this far. Because you are already unhappy with a society that is more concerned with what is effective than with what is right. You are sick of a society that kills people because that is the most effective way to protect its property. You are angry with the lies of the government. You want decency in high places. But always and everywhere decency in high places starts with decency in low places. Integrity and truth don't filter down from above—they percolate up from below. You want a society that is loving, decent, and has integrity? Then pay the dues.

"I AM NOT CLEAR ENOUGH ABOUT MY OWN MOTIVES TO MAKE SO MAJOR A DECISION"

That's the trouble with life. We are always being forced into decisions without ever *really being sure* of our motives. Did you join the local chapter of SDS (or SNCC or SPU or CORE or the DuBois Clubs or whatever) because you were a dedicated New Leftist or because you liked one of the girls who already belonged? Did you major in English because you knew you'd flunk in Physics? Did you major in Physics because of a love of abstract science or because you thought you'd earn more than an English professor? If you apply for a C.O. classification you will wonder if it wasn't partly because you were afraid of being killed in Vietnam. (Yes, and if you accept service you will wonder if it might be because you wanted to prove to yourself you are not a coward, and not because you really backed Johnson's policy.) Being honest means being honest with yourself. And that means the courage and common sense to know that all actions are always taken from mixed motives. Life forces us to make decisions before we are ready. All we can do is to remain honest enough to change our minds if we become convinced we were wrong in our decisions.

"I DON'T KNOW ENOUGH ABOUT THIS WAR TO BUCK THE GOVERNMENT"

"I mean, taking part in a Teach-in is okay but to refuse to serve in the army is serious stuff—I just don't know enough of the facts to hit the government head on like that." Wouldn't it make more sense to say you didn't know enough about this war to *support* the government? Because what is involved in Vietnam is the killing of a great many people. Have you spent a year or two in full time study of the Vietnamese, their language and history? Have you really studied the origins of this war and the way it is being fought? Until you have done these things do you have the right to serve in Vietnam? In law the prosecutor must establish beyond *any reasonable doubt* that the man accused of a crime is, in fact, guilty. No man can be executed for murder under our laws unless his crime has been that clearly established. Do you believe Johnson has proved his case "beyond reasonable doubt"? If not, do you have the right to act as an agent of execution for the government by bombing, burning, and gassing Vietnamese? When you face something as serious as war you *have no moral right* to let the State do your thinking for you. We submit that unless you are at least reasonably certain this war is right you are under a moral obligation to face prison, if necessary, rather than to participate in it.

IN SHORT, WE THINK YOU MAY BE A C.O. ...EVEN IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN GOD ...EVEN IF YOU AREN'T A PACIFIST

If you oppose the war in Vietnam on political, moral, or religious grounds, then you are a conscientious objector to that war and should apply for a C.O. classification. You may not get that classification. The government may rule your motives are not those which justify such a classification. You may finally have to serve time in prison. But let the government make that decision. Do not yield up your rights without a struggle.

The atheist is no less conscientious than the man who believes in God. The political objector no less sincere than the religious objector. The "this-war-only" objector no less entitled to C.O. classification than the absolute pacifist. The only war objector who should not ask for a C.O. classification is the man who is deeply convinced that the whole structure of conscription is immoral. Some W.R.L. members take that absolute position and some do not. Some of us went to prison because we refused to register at all, some of us went to prison because we were refused a C.O. classification, and most of us did not go to prison because we asked for and were given a C.O. classification. All of us will support you in your decision whether it is total non-cooperation or a request for a C.O. classification.

YOU MAY EVEN BE A PACIFIST

Pacifists do not spring "full blown from the mind of God" (or man). Pacifists are people who began by opposing a particular violence because it was unjust and came to feel violence itself was unjust and impractical. As you look upon the war in Vietnam you may come to feel that not only is the American role there so criminal that you cannot support it, but that the National Liberation Front, no matter how much you respect its courage and goal of national independence, might find some better way of struggle than a method which kills at least twice as many civilians as NLF combatants. Violence often sounds romantic at a distance. But every war produces a new crop of soldiers who, having seen the face of war, having looked upon the bodies of their own and the enemy dead and the weary confusion of the conquered, have felt they could not again take part in such violence, no matter how "justified." In a violent struggle too many innocent people die. The pacifist is not afraid of con-