

SIX STATEMENTS
FOR
PEACE IN AMERICA

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RESIST CONSCRIPTION
REFUSE CLASSIFICATION

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The Means to Real Peace -- Friedrich Nietzsche.

..... And perhaps the great day will come when a people, distinguished by wars and victories and by the highest development of a military order and intelligence and accustomed to make the heaviest sacrifices for these things, will exclaim of its own free will, "We break the sword," and will smash its entire-military establishment down to its lowest foundations. Rendering oneself unarmed wehn one had been the best armed, out of a height of feeling -- that is the means to real peace, which must always rest on a peace of mind; whereas the so-called armed peace, as it now exists in all countries, is the absence of peace of mind. One trusts neither oneself nor one's neighbor and, half from hatred, half from fear, does not lay down arms. Rather perish than hate and fear, and twice rather perish than make oneself hated and feared -- this must someday become the highest maxim for every single commonwealth too.

I choose the position of nonco-operation for the sake of the peace and honesty I feel must compose my relationship with the people and institutions around me. It is everywhere apparent that the military combine of this nation exists to impose death and slavery on the world in the name of a fraudulent way of life. To that condition I must speak with my whole being as a primary step towards a new community in America.

I understand my action as a response to a society whose understanding of itself and of humanity has been lost or, perhaps, never been found. This response is one I attempt to make in an attitude of truth. War exists because of people's willingness despite all else to endorse, with the contexts of their lives, the mechanisms that feed and produce war. There will be dissent, there will be opposition; but as long as those who seek to build a new way of life in America give substance with their submission to the forms of corruption they seek to eliminate, those forms will remain intact. As long as American youth consent to be owned and directed by American militarism, America will wage war.

In America, the word peace has come to have no more meaning than politician's rhetoric. The people of this country consider peace a function of governments over which they maintain no control, and fail to understand that peace exists when we live it. To stand for peace in a nation at war is not easy, but it must be done. If the young people of America continue to march row by row to Asia in the cause of senseless death, we can expect senseless death to reign supreme over a prostrate humanity.

It is in the hands of the young people to say "no more war" to the American nation. We must say that when America practices slavery abroad, it must practice slavery at home. That if it would police the world, then it first must imprison its youth. So long as we fail to make that statement, there will be no peace.

David Harris

Our lives and our politics, and the two are really inseparable, will lead only to the despair, fear and impotence we see in the American mind unless we can develop a resistance which takes into account the deep roots of authoritarianism and militarism in the institutions surrounding us. We face not only the destruction of Vietnam and the murder of its people but also an American society which spawns a military machine that can coolly calculate a fifty year future to these wars of "limited" mass murder.

I choose to refuse to co-operate with Selective Service because it is the only honest, whole and human response I can make to the military institution which demands the allegiance of my life. The acceptance of registration, classification, and deferment from Selective Service is the only pledge of support the war machine expects of most of us. I will no longer make that pledge nor give Selective Service legitimacy in my life by carrying its card.

The price America exacts for refusing to co-operate is a maximum of five years in Federal prison. But the price America exacts this instant in Vietnam for a nonco-operating peasant is life itself. My sacrifice is very small in comparison.

Dennis Sweeney

May 13, 1967

When I first became involved in the peace movement two years ago I took it for granted that I would apply for conscientious objector status. I was sure that was the course I would follow come my 18th birthday. It was simple, clear and it made sense. What other positive, logical alternative was there to military service? I was distantly aware of those non-cooperators going to jail but I couldn't understand where they were at. "probably they're sick or masochistic, or maybe even insane."

But two years have passed and "all things they are a changing." As my thinking progressed I became more unsure that this was right for me. A little doubt, when left to wander, increases until it finds some other answer. Then, what is the right answer for me, Chris Jones? Many guys have become CO's and they're happy. They live fine lives helping people. But isn't cooperating with Selective Service to become a legal CO advocating conscription?

The first glancing thoughts of prison scared the hell out of me. God, I've taken my freedom for granted for so long. Do we ever comprehend that other side when we're swept up, right in the middle of living? For me, that's what a great deal of life was all about. To be "alive" meant to be independent and able to choose. Well then, what about the American boys who have a rifle shoved into their hands and are told to kill or be killed? What about the Vietnamese people who are still fighting for their first taste of independence?

Thieves, sex perverts, murderers, kidnapers, union presidents; those people that are sent to federal penitentiaries recrossed my mind. People more alien to me than the silver grey-haired lady in the American Opinion Bookstore. Makes a healthy community to grow up in or exist in. And sex; it's not that there won't be any. I've heard stories. And remember you're just eighteen and small for your age at that. Sounds like a high price to pay. But don't cop out. If these freedoms are that worthwhile do they not deserve any sacrifice necessary, consistent with yourself, to further and preserve them?

Last Autumn I went to the Friends' "Alternatives to Military Service" weekend in Westminster Woods to again encounter the full spectrum of alternatives and stories and compromises. I became wary of that word compromise. It meant the success of the power trusts, the survival of Selective Service, and the continuation of war and killing and misery. When I left the woods I knew what I must do.

In January, a week before my eighteenth birthday, I sent the draft board a letter stating my refusal to register and reasons for non-cooperation including why I could not conscientiously become a CO. Since January I have found an increasing sense of peace within myself. I did what was right for me. Yesterday the FBI arrested me. I was released on my own recognizance until June 1. So the wheels of justice are turning and today the unprojected war budget in Vietnam has risen five billion dollars for "inflation of war," as many poverty projects are forsaken.

Each day that we are aware of what is happening and are concerned and shocked but procrastinate in making our cries at these horrors heard, more innocent people die or are tortured and the snowballing power of destruction grows. Join me if you can. I am neither sick, nor masochistic, nor insane. Well, rather insanely in love with life, with now blooming spring, with laughing eyes and little children; all those things which unite us all together in brotherhood. Come. It is by far the finest thing we can do with our lives.

Chris Jones, 501 Bevenue, Los Altos

Two years ago it was enough for me to know, as far as my relationship to the Selective Service System went, that whatever happened, I would not enter the military. I thought in terms of IIS, IVF, IY, or IO supposing that the problem would never be too taxing. In other words I thought that I could "get out" of the draft. Within a year after that, however, the pattern of U.S. escalation and the impotence of media oriented and liberal politics in general was rather clearly established. I became more profoundly aware of what it would take to make America safe for the world. Thoreau once said something roughly like this: "If you would convince a man that he does wrong, do right." By refusing to go into the military I could avoid doing wrong, but it wasn't doing right in co-operating in any manner with the system that allows others to fight in my name and which forms a key mechanism in enabling American aggression in the underdeveloped world. It is now clear to me that if humanity is to prevail against the military-industrial Leviathan which leads us into these wars, individuals must clearly and honestly define their relationships to the ubiquitous institutions of militarism surrounding their everyday lives. War will cease when men free themselves from the fraudulent platitudes of compromise. For me and others this will mean going to prison for some time. We do not see this as the end of our action, it is only the beginning affirmation of a way of life in which men live by their own lights, act according to belief and discover the liberating power of moral commitment and personal conviction.

Stuart McRae

Local Board 30
1322 Nevin Ave.
Richmond, Calif.

William Roy Shurtleff
2269 Cooley Ave.
East Palo Alto, Calif.
May 6, 1967

Dear friends;

It is no longer possible for me to co-operate with the Selective Service System. The values by which I try to live are incompatible with those practiced by the system which employs you and by the military which that system nourishes. My Being cannot continue to contain this conflict without all loss of self respect and submission to an existence of hypocrisy. The three year struggle within myself which has led to the decision to say "no" is an affirmation of a way of life for which I will continue to work. My belief in non-violence as a ground of my existence is incompatible with the persistent use of violence by the military. Gentleness contends with arrogant power. Understanding contends with compulsory conscription and unquestioned obedience. Personal encounter contends with bureaucratic impersonality.

Your methods are necessary to guarantee the successful operation of the military. In creating the concept of an enemy the military must deny the bonds which bind and unite men and make them as brothers. In demanding compulsory conscription the military must frequently require involuntary servitude. In using means which are coercive, impersonal, and violent, the military furthers in the creation of a world in which these means of interrelationship among men will continue to rule as they have through man's tortured history of sanctioned, collective, organized murder euphemistically known as service to one's country. True service to one's country can only be measured in terms of one's service to mankind as a whole.

Peace will become a possibility only when men use peaceful means to its realization. Wars will be stopped when the people of the world refuse to fight them.

Your system of compulsory conscription grew out of the recognition that the citizens of this country would not volunteer to fight the country's wars. The responsibility for the individual to engage in organized murder (at the time and place, and against the people designated by the nation-state) was taken from the individual and given to an impersonal bureaucracy. I now choose to return that responsibility to myself. This is possible only by stopping all further co-operation with the Selective Service System. If I were to choose the available Alternative Service (C.O.) position, I could only do so in the name of a system and with the sanction of a system which opposes all the values out of which my service would grow. The incompatible association and connection would render my service ineffective and hypocritical.

The present war in Vietnam puts into sharp focus the horror and atrocity and meaninglessness of all war. I am embarrassed and revolted by our activities there: the brutal aggression, the mass murder of civilians, the indiscriminate blanket use of napalm and anti-personnel bombs on human beings, the imperialistic, counter-revolutionary nature of our involvement, the paranoid fear and fantasy of the monolithic evil of communism, the racism implied in our manipulation of "natives", the support of conservative elites of power, the past violation of the Geneva Accords, and,

above all, the proud rape of a small, agricultural country and its unbelievably brave peasant population, who desire no more than the right to live their own lives free from undesired external intervention and imperialistic domination whether French or American. Mankind knows and history has demonstrated that they will achieve this end.

The following is taken from the Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany, 1945. It represents a view of personal responsibility to which I wholeheartedly subscribe:

"... such violations shall include murder, ill treatment or deportation of civilian population ... murder or ill treatment of prisoners of war ... wanton destruction of cities, towns, or villages ... the fact that a person acted pursuant to orders of his government or of a superior DOES NOT FREE HIM OF RESPONSIBILITY under international law ..."

I respectfully return to you my Selective Service System Registration Certificate and my Selective Service System Notice of Classification. I wholly recognize the illegality of this act of open civil disobedience and, believing in the need for a society based upon just laws, recognize your obligation to bring charges against me.

Yours in peace,

Bill Shurtleff

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Over the rolling shoulders of our world,
Giant arms of Peace reach into the sea.
West reaches East toward the light.
High above in the arms of the mountains,
Peace: The waters flow into the sea.
There are fires burning in the valleys below --
Small men waging wars against the sky,
Fear is in every hand.
There is a mighty fire in our valley,
Perhaps it will not find the children. May 15, 1967

Jeffrey Shurtleff