



THE AXON

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SPECIAL EDITION

From its very beginning the Stanford Medical Community for Peace has devoted much of its efforts to reaching out into the community with programs designed to change the opinions of the voters. In keeping with this idea representatives from the SMCFP met with about twenty civic, religious, and industrial groups during the past weeks to discuss the war in Southeast Asia and how it relates specifically to health care needs in this country. These representatives have had many opportunities to survey the opinions of the citizenry and how they react to our efforts. In this special edition of THE AXON they report what they have found.

What do people say about continuing the war?

RANDY CHASE (Year II medical student): "Few people are actually for continuation of the war. In disengaging, they are worried about a blood bath, loss of prestige, and the domino theory."

JUDY STERN (Postdoctoral fellow in psychiatry): "The majority of the people are against continuation of the war and want a quick peace. Some are willing to accept Nixon's peace plan. They often argue that 'the President knows best' and believe that the only difference between Nixon's plan and McGovern-Hatfield is a few months in the timing of things. I had hoped that by raising issues we could provoke them to take a stand, but that didn't work. They feel that it is inappropriate for local members of a national organization to take a political stand."

IFV WEISSMAN (Assistant professor of pathology): "These people just don't read their newspapers. They are usually shocked by the facts. If we could just get them to pick up the morning newspaper! Their attitude is 'Alright, we both want out of Vietnam, and Nixon is getting us out. Right?'"

JERRY ARNOLD (Vietnam veteran and graduate student in engineering): "Most people believe the war is wrong - either because it is bad for their business, or it is morally wrong, or something else. They usually want to argue tactics. In discussions we cause people to express their prejudices and beliefs. These often elicit arguments from their fellow businessmen and club members. This is very effective. They ask 'What can I do to get rid of the stereotype which we have? What can we do?' Sometimes they want to find out about what I saw in Vietnam as compared to what they have heard."

LARRY CRAPO (Year III medical student): "Most people support phased withdrawal. They are very nationalistic. Traditional Americanism--nonviolent dissent, free enterprise, democracy--are things they will pick up a gun and fight for."

What do they say about medical care?

CHASE: "Many were very concerned about the cost of medical care. They were as interested in talking about it as about the war. They feel it is extremely high priced; they are dismayed, but they don't know what to do about it."

CRAPO: "Doctors to whom I have talked reflect typical American philosophy. They are strongly against socialized medicine and want no government interference."

Campus violence - what is the reaction?

CRAPO: "People are very upset about campus violence. You hear about it over and over again. The professed goals of the radical students infuriate the people. The alumni I have talked to condemned the violence and rock throwing; some are withdrawing financial support from the university. I doubt that campus violence has done the good that some insist that it has."

SCOTT SATTLER (Year III medical student): "Most of the people are completely taken in by attempts to equate students with violence with drugs with communism. They are so

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(Continued from page 1) conditioned to believe that all student unrest is communist inspired. They can't get it through their heads that violence is a symptom of a disease, not the disease itself. The disease is the whole screwed-up priority system. Most people have no concept of the fact that the vast majority of the students uphold the constitution. I believe that students have to be the watchdogs of the society. They are the only ones who have the time to study the issues and situations. If people are conditioned to ignore students the society will be crippled to change."

CHASE: "many were interested in what students were doing to control campus unrest. Some felt that students have a responsibility and are perhaps the best equipped to control their peers."

ARNOLD: "These people want guarantees - about our non-violence, our goals, etc. It is ironic that they do not demand such guarantees from their political candidates and government, but rather accept them at face value."

How do you think the people viewed you?

CRAPO: "I think some see me as a radical; most see me as a liberal; probably none see me as I see myself - a moderate. They think we are idealistic and sincere but naive and ignorant of the dangers of communism and the 'sweeping forces which are trying to take over the world'. None of them viewed me as dangerous or a threat."

STERN: "I usually felt well received. They enjoyed meeting and talking with a person from Stanford. I think there weren't as intimidated by me because I am a woman."

CHASE: "Before I opened my mouth, many were suspicious and afraid I would scorn their beliefs. I believe that this is based on some of their previous experience with student speakers. After speaking, I think a lot of their views changed, even about long hair."

WEISSMAN: "Once they verify that we are people from about the same life-style as them, they will listen. I was surprised at their tremendous desire to meet with us and talk."

ARNOLD: "They see me as sincere but miss directed: someone who is not giving the system a chance. They fear we could upset the order of the system. American people value order! These people want to check us out, to see why non-extreme people still take such a strong stand. It is a rare opportunity for them to see campus people in a non-put-on situation - not like alumni day, open house."

Have you learned anything or changed your mind about anything as a result of this experience?

CHASE: "You can't stereotype people: they are all different - from left wing to right wing. Just because a person is a businessman does not mean he has a certain world view. I changed my mind about the police completely. One officer told me about the generation gap on his force. I saw for the first time their opposition to right wing groups who want them to 'kick the hell out of student demonstrators'. Communication is a very good thing! It's a way to avoid polarization. You don't throw a rock at a guy you know, and that works both ways."

STERN: "You have to be willing to listen to people and be flexible in the kinds of replies you give. The people in these organizations are not the typical 'silent majority'. We are still not getting to the people who don't join organizations."

CRAPO: "I'm hopeful because I have perceived in people an interest in confronting some of the problems. People are coming out of their niches and coming to life."

ARNOLD: "I can see that people who are married to their job as well as to their wife are probably doing as much as they can. Their morals become a distant third. I am more and more aware that there are people who want to end the war and get back to the problems here at home. You must mold public opinion, and to do so you have to go out to where the opinions are!"

WEISSMAN: "The guy you're arguing with, of course, will never back down. But later you find that the people listening are being affected. We have had tremendous impact on them, but I don't know what to do the second time around. How do you get them to go out and do something?"