

WHO OWNS THE PEACE MOVEMENT?

There has been much talk in Melbourne that the Peace Movement here is extremely broad and democratic. as a result of certain events which have taken place this week with regard to the July 4th. Mobilization we are unfortunately obliged to issue this statement.

We feel that the movement is neither broad nor democratic but in fact narrow and authoritarian. Under the pretext of maintaining "broadness", a small clique of bureaucrats are ruthlessly repressing any independent activities. In order to maintain broadness they are preventing activists from following a more militant policy. In Sydney the movement freely allows the expression of all anti-war positions from pacifists to supporters of the National Liberation Front and all kinds of activities from petition collecting to civil disobedience. This is not the case in Melbourne.

This week a group of individuals met together to organize more militant activities. We felt that many people have been drawn into the movement from a sincere desire to oppose the war but have been forced to carry out activities that cannot make this opposition effective. Despite all the petitions, poster parades, protest advertisements and peaceful demonstrations the U.S. has continued to escalate the war and obviously intends to continue doing so. By putting forward the slogan of "Stop the War, Negotiate" we have been following the same line as Johnson who also "supports negotiations". We believe it is time the movement stopped kidding itself that it can influence the government and started looking for effective means to make its opposition felt. We want to put forward a clear-cut line of opposition to U.S. imperialism and call for support for the National Liberation Front. We believe that this is, in the long run, likely to gain more support than the present policies of moderation.

We recognize that this is still a minority position and are not trying to force other sections to "toe our line". We merely want to put our policies forward within the broad movement. Because we felt that the present forms of protest are ineffective we decided to start a series of militant activities at future demonstrations (incidentally we also believe that the movement should place less emphasis on demonstrations and more on trying to break out of its isolation by encouraging personal contact between "Vietniks" and ordinary Australians). As a start to this we decided to burn a U.S. flag at the July 4th. rally. This, we thought, would be only a minor action that would be acceptable to most sections of the movement and could lead to more militant and less peaceful activities later.

However this attitude was not shared by the bureaucrats who claim to run the movement. We were promptly (very promptly!) summoned to appear before a certain individual who claims to "represent the broad movement" and were presented with the following ultimatum:-

- 1; An attempt would be made to physically prevent us burning the flag at the rally.
- 2; If there was any police violence and arrests, a list would be made of people to whom bail would not be made available.
- 3; A formal statement would be issued to the press, publicly disassociating various organizations and individuals from the protest.
- 4; The full power of the "leadership's" machine would be brought to bear to isolate and discredit us.

What really gets us is the way certain people thought in terms of "our organization", "our demonstrarion", "our movement" etc. We feel that demonstrations should be open to all sections of the movement and that opposition to the war should not be the private property of any individual bureaucrats.

We have been told that if we go ahead with the protest, the organization responsible for the July 4th. demonstration would have all support withdrawn from it by the "leaders". As we are not connected with this organization we have decided to call off the flag burning to avoid damaging innocent people.

We still believe that the time has come to look beyond the present sorts of activities in order to effectively express our opposition to the war and we will continue to call for more militancy in the future.

We apologise if this leaflet appears to have a note of self-righteous indignation but we feel self-righteously indignant. We are not trying to split the movement but to unite it and are issuing this statement so that rank and file members will know what is going on "above our heads". We have no intention of trying to set up any organisation in competition with the existing bureaucracies because we are too young and inexperienced, because we do not have the time and energy, because we do not want to create a split and above all, because we do not have the physical resources - the power, mailing lists and the funds of the existing leadership. We merely want to let people know what is going on.

We have decided not to sign this statement because our identification at this stage would only bring the full weight of the bureaucracy down on our heads. This situation can only be changed by our support.
SUPPORT MILITANCY BY BEING MILITANT.