

MISS NON-VIOLENT SIT-IN AT THE PRIME MINISTER'S
LODGE, CANBERRA, A.C.T.

At present, there are two Conscientious Objectors imprisoned in Holsworthy Military Prison. The first, Dennis O'Donnell, went into the army on 1/2/67. While serving in the army, he gradually became more aware and concerned about the Vietnam war; finally, after reading the Ramparts publication "Children Of Vietnam", he decided he could no longer be a party to Australia's war effort. Denis' first appeal for conscientious objection was dismissed by Mr R.K. Hudspeth, S.M., at Melbourne on 7/9/67. He then appealed to the County Court. Here Judge Norris made a rather paradoxical judgement (22/11/67); he said, "His statement that he would regard himself as supporting war by merely wearing a uniform as we would have regarded himself as supporting the Nazi Party's behaviour in Germany by wearing a swastika in 1938 ultimately convinced me that this was a conscientious belief held which did not allow him to serve in any capacity at this time." Yet, at the same time, Judge Norris ruled that Denis must remain in the army and serve his two years. Denis then felt he had no choice but to refuse to cooperate.

He therefore did not return to the army and was subsequently arrested and court-martialled at Watsonia on 4/4/68. He was sentenced to 48 days in Holsworthy military prison. Dennis O'Donnell does not claim to be a pacifist, but rather to conscientiously believe that the war in Vietnam is wrong in the same way that Hitler's war was wrong. A person with these beliefs should be admired, not imprisoned.

The second conscientious objector imprisoned in Holsworthy is Desmond Phillipson. Desmond was also inducted into the army before he applied for conscientious objection. His pacifist beliefs did not allow him to cooperate with the army in any way, and he therefore refused to obey army orders. He was sent to Holsworthy as a result, and is at present still there, awaiting his court case. According to one of his few visitors, he has been badly beaten, and was put almost immediately into solitary confinement.

From both of these examples, it becomes evident that there is a rather large travesty of Human Rights implied by the National Service Act. A person who conscientiously believes, as did Dennis O'Donnell, that the war in Vietnam is morally wrong is still forced to be a part of the war machine. He will not be granted exemption from service even though the judge might admit that he "could not serve in any capacity" (Judge Norris, 22/11/67). When he tries to live up to his moral beliefs, he will be thrown into prison. Anyone familiar with the U.N. Charter, which Australia signed, will be aware of the disparity between its idea of Human Rights and that proposed by such an act as the Australian National Service Act.

Dennis O'Donnell and Desmond Phillipson are, and many others following in the near future will be, victims of immoral legislation, and it is the duty of all citizens who purport to have a conscience to do all they can in securing the release, not only from prison but also from the army, of these people.

But now there is even more disturbing legislation coming before parliament. The government has introduced amendments to the National Service Act which will virtually turn Australia into a police state. Under this new legislation a person who feels strongly enough about the immorality of conscription to not even register is immediately liable for two years imprisonment and a \$200 penalty. So once again a person cannot act according to his beliefs without severe penalties being imposed upon him by a supposedly democratic government.

Just as serious is the fact that the government will have the right to search the records and files of any organization of which eligible youths are likely to be clients or members. This would include Churches, Trade Unions, Universities, employers, and anything else that could be associated with 20 year old males. These organizations will have their membership lists virtually open to public scrutiny - but not only their membership, also their future plans, minutes of meetings, confidential information about members, and other things often needing secrecy to allow organizat-

ions to function. This legislation stamps on Human Rights and can really have no other purpose than preventing Australian citizens from effectively showing their opposition to government policy. This is the sort of legislation that marks the beginning of a police state and it is to be hoped that all organizations and individuals concerned with Morality and Civil Liberties will come to the fore and proclaim their opposition. After the small but highly successful sit-in at Holsworthy on April 20th, a National Mobilization was planned for May 19th, when it was expected to have at least 1000 people demonstrating outside Holsworthy Military Prison. It was intended to demand the repeal of the National Service Act and the release of Denis O'Donnell and Desmond Phillipson.

Until the government we would force it to arrest and imprison us. Whilst Denis and Desmond are technically in prison because of disobeying army orders their reason for disobeying them is their belief - hence they are actually in prison because of their beliefs. We share their beliefs and hence it is just that we too should be in prison.

It was expected that this strong confrontation of the government would show that we are no longer content to just sit down and talk, and would gain support from many people. However we have since discovered that the government has suddenly decided to remove Denis and Desmond from Holsworthy before May 19th. Therefore the demonstration would lose most of its impact.

This fact, together with the new amendments introduced by the government, has led to a change in plans. To effectively demonstrate against the government's National Service Act and the proposed amendments the National Mobilization will be centred in Canberra on May 18th, rather than Holsworthy on May 19th. The aims will be to force the government to:

- (a) release all conscientious objectors and refrain from imprisoning future conscientious objectors and draft resisters,
- (b) reject the proposed amendments to the National Service Act,
- (c) repeal the National Service Act.

We agree with Thoreau when he says "under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also in prison". Therefore we will force the government to arrest and imprison us rather than remain subservient to legislation more appropriate to a police state than a democracy.

To make this demonstration a success we need about 500 people from all states who are prepared to go to Canberra and allow themselves to be arrested. The "Freedom Ride" will be organized for all the states to arrive at Canberra by 10am Sun. 19th May. It is necessary that the government be shown that we will not tolerate being told to kill someone, having our confidential files and possessions searched, or being forced to inform on our sons if they refuse to obey the government's repressive legislation. It is time we showed the government that there ARE people who care about Human Rights. It may mean the slight sacrifice of spending several weeks in prison but this is nothing compared with say the sacrifice facing draft resisters or the anguish of Vietnamese mothers seeing their children napalmed by U.S. bombs.

If you feel strongly enough about this to be prepared to go to prison in a non-violent, but effective confrontation with the government, then join the National Mobilization to Canberra. Make sure you obtain all your information soon, either from your local Peace or Anti-Conscription movement or by contacting 734 Lygon St. Carlton or 533449.

SPONSORS:

Draft Resistance Movement
Pacifist Societies, Melb. & Monash Universities
Labor Clubs, " " " "
Student Christian Movement " " "
Save Our Sons Movement
20 others

Amnesty International sent a letter to Australia stating that they considered Denis O'Donnell a "Prisoner of Conscience". This means that we will soon see international action on this situation.
The United Nations Committee for Human Rights has also shown interest.

D.R.M & M.U.P.S.
734 Lygon St. Carlton.

FOR ALL DEMONSTRATORS

Saturday night, May 18: overnight accommodation: where possible, make your own arrangements and use initiative; avoid sleeping in public places; otherwise contact co-ordinators.

Sunday, May 19:

- 9.30 a.m.: PRE-MEETING FOR CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE PARTICIPANTS: Civil disobedience procedure; legal problems; names of those going to prison, wanting bail, etc.; last-minute queries.
- 10.15 a.m. PRE-MEETING OF ALL DEMONSTRATORS: General procedure; arrangement for speakers from the various states; timetable and directions.
- 11 a.m. : Drivers and coach to take everyone to the point of assembly near Parliament House (see map). Participants should be assembled by 11.45 since speeches will commence at 12 noon sharp. Speakers will include M.P.s, academics, C.O.s liable to arrest and spokesmen for the various states.
- 1.15 p.m.: Start forming into procession to march past Parliament House to Prime Minister's Lodge. Drivers should take their cars in the march so as to allow the public to distinguish the various states and groups taking part in the mobilization. Those intending civil disobedience should walk near the head of the march.
- 1.30 p.m.: March starts towards the Prime Minister's Lodge.
- 2.00 p.m.: Assemble in the space adjoining the Prime Minister's Lodge and opposite the Lodge (see shaded areas on the map). There will be a speech describing the aims of the civil disobedience about to take place. At the conclusion of the speech those participating in civil disobedience will walk towards the Adelaide Ave. gates of the P.M.'s Lodge. Speeches from various State groups and representatives will continue as the sit-in proceeds. The main body of the demonstrators will disperse at 4.30 to return to their home states or the Conference in Sydney.

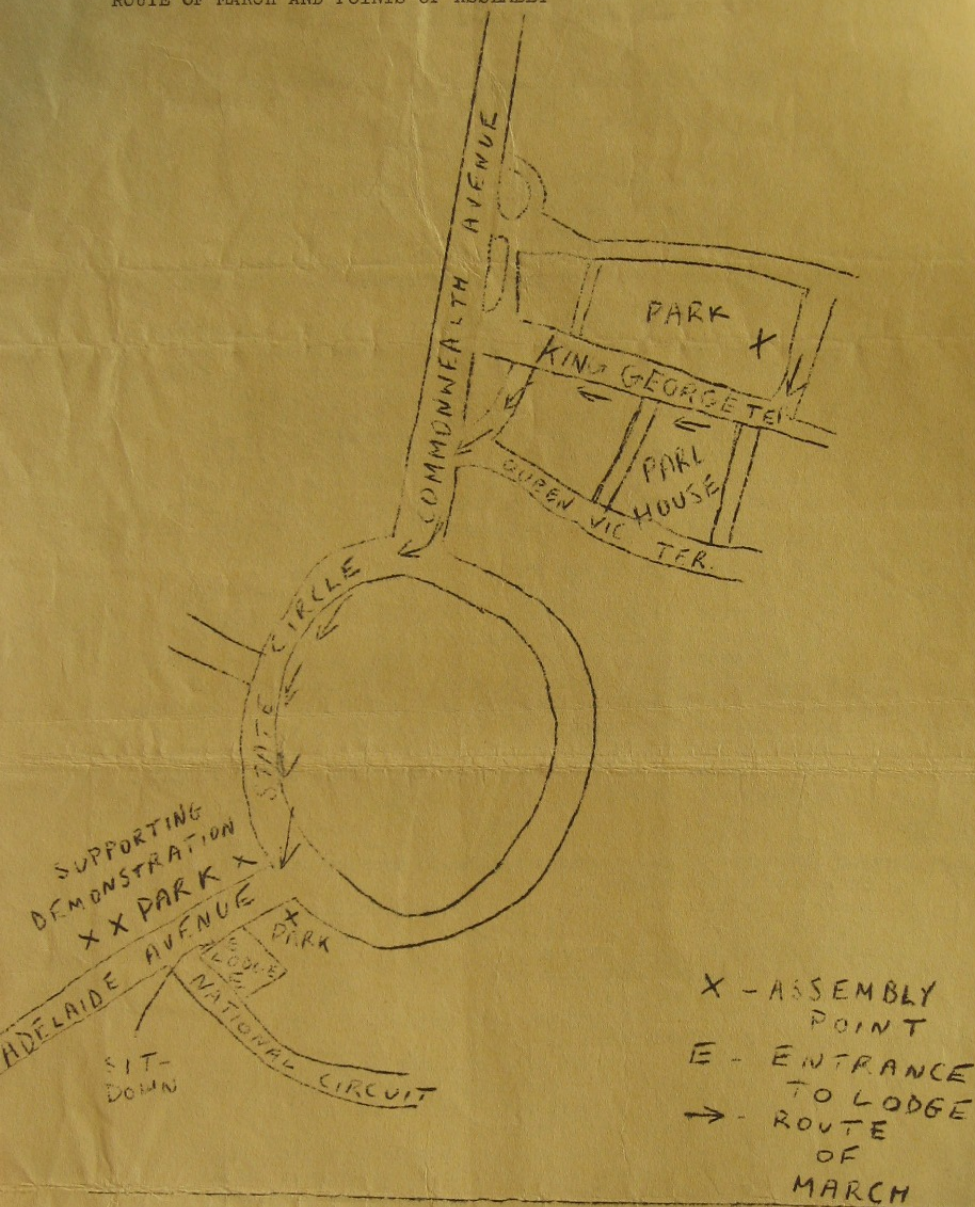
NOTES:

1. A major objective of the opponent may be to provoke us into
 - (a) intemperate statements;
 - (b) accusations that are overstated or imprecise, and cannot be proved;
 - (c) name-calling in retaliation;
 - (d) excited or undignified behaviour;
 - (e) confusion and disorder;
 - (f) mutual recrimination among the leaders;
 - (g) violence or violent incidents.
2. If incidents do develop refrain from shouting or screaming at opponents and police and allow marshalls to handle the situation. There are not sufficient resources to pay the fines of those who provoke police or return provocations.
3. Do not attempt ^{to} break through cordons set up by police.
4. When the sit-in takes place, sing with those sitting-in rather than shout at the police. Our protest is at conscription, not the Police Force.
5. On no account lose your temper or resort to violence in any form; do not provoke or let yourself be provoked. Act not react.

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Overall Co-ordinator: Colin Benjamin
Civil Disobedience Co-ordinator: Michael Hamel-Green

ROUTE OF MARCH AND POINTS OF ASSEMBLY



The following leaflets and pamphlets are available from the "Mobile H.Q." of the National Mobilization, or the organizers personally:

- "SIMON TOWNSEND" (leaflet) - free
- "CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTION TO MILITARY SERVICE", Report of a Special Committee of the Australian Council of Churches, 1968 - 60 c
- "POLICE POWERS AND CITIZENS' RIGHTS", John Bennett 1968 - 20 c
- "DENIS O'DONNELL" (leaflet) - free
- "NATIONAL MOBILIZATION, CANBERRA" - press release

FOR ALL CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE PARTICIPANTS

All civil disobedience participants should have considered the consequences to their careers and job prospects. All should have sent letters to the Government explaining why they feel it necessary to go to this length, and requesting, ^{for example,} that the Government show how its conscription legislation and practice is reconcilable with the principles of freedom of conscience and civil liberty.

While all participants in civil disobedience will take part as individuals, the following common procedure could be agreed upon: 2.00 p.m.: assemble in the space adjoining the P.M.'s Lodge on the side nearest to the Lodge. At the conclusion of the speech explain in the aims and method of the civil disobedience, individuals should walk slowly and calmly to the gates of the P.M.'s Lodge. It is your right to walk as individuals (not en masse) to the gates, but as soon as you sit down you will be warned that you are causing an obstruction. If you do not leave you will be arrested.

NOTES:

1. Sit in front of the gates, making sure you are outside the actual grounds of the P.M.'s Lodge but not spreading out onto Adelaide Ave. in such a way as to impede the mainstream of traffic (we are defending freedom of conscience, not limiting freedom to drive).
2. If others have sat down ahead of you and your sitting down will interfere with the mainstream of traffic, wait until others have been arrested before sitting down. If no arrests have been made after half an hour, begin walking to the other entrance to the P.M.'s Lodge and sit down there.
3. When you sit down begin singing and display placards.
4. If it rains do not be moved; if it grows cold do not be moved; keep on singing.
5. If, after half an hour, the police have not started arresting you, invite others to sit down with you.
6. If the Prime Minister comes out to speak to you, take turns in asking him the questions you put in your letters.
7. When the police take hold of you to arrest you, consider carefully the following alternatives: (a) allowing the police to lift you up, but then walking on your own feet to the police van; (b) remaining limp all the way. Police have warned that the latter may risk the additional charge of resisting arrest.
8. Once inside the van, continue singing. Talk quietly and reassuringly to any who have become emotional or distressed in the course of being arrested.
9. At the police station you are required to give no other information than your name and address. - See civil liberties pamphlet 'Police Powers and Citizens' Rights' for your rights during and after arrest. The police have the right to fingerprint you, but if acquitted, you can request that these records be destroyed.
10. Remain calm with the police. Show you have a regard for them as human beings rather than perceiving them in terms of the usual stereotype (as misguided in its way as any racialist stereotype). This applies all the more if you yourself are stereotyped by the police.
11. Options: (a) accept bail - this will be arranged as soon as possible if you want it; (b) refuse bail but accept fine - the more people who stay in the lookout even for one night, the more the serious intent of the civil disobe once will be evident to the public; (c) refuse bail and refuse fine - this will probably lead to imprisonment for several days or weeks depending on the exact charge; those who are acutely distressed by prison conditions can have their fines paid and be immediately released; (d) accept bail but refuse fine - this is still a significant gesture in that it continues the time period in which demonstrators are held in prison.

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12. Prison conditions: those who consider remaining in prison should take into account the following:
- (a) possible psychological distress;
 - (b) lack of privacy;
 - (c) physical privation etc.
13. While in prison, it is recommended that you note carefully conditions of prison life and write letters or reports afterwards.
14. Other information you will need:
Legal Assistance (fill in names, phone numbers, addresses here):-