

An Examination of the Vietnam Antiwar Movement at Wisconsin State University-La Crosse, 1965-1973

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ABSTRACT

The goal of this project was to analyze the antiwar protest movement against the Vietnam Conflict, 1961-1975 at Wisconsin State University-La Crosse. I used primary, secondary, and oral sources to identify the power and participation of WSU-L antiwar activities, how the movement organized to promote their cause, and the challenges and opposition it faced from the conservative and/or apathetic student body, administration, and pro-war proponents. My analysis also related the WSU-L antiwar movement to trends and movements that occurred on a national scale. Analysis indicated that the consistently small but dedicated group of WSU-L antiwar protestors was nonviolent, and though students did initiate some of their own antiwar activities, most of their prominent marches, rallies, and lobbying movements ran in conjunction with national events and trends.

INTRODUCTION

My motivation for examining the anti-Vietnam War movement at WSU-L was very simple: a sheer fascination with American military actions and politics, and the resistance to those actions. I took History of the Vietnam War at UW-La Crosse and the instructors did an excellent job illustrating the historic background of the Vietnamese people, from the Trung Sister's battle with the Chinese in 39 A.C.E. to the expulsion of the French after the fall of Dien Bien Phu in May 1954. Since we spent so much time addressing the precursors to American involvement in Vietnam, we did not cover some of the events I was interested in, such as the antiwar movement. I decided that I could study both the national antiwar movement and some local history by focusing on the movement at WSU-L.

Before reading this analysis, there are some terms that should be defined clearly. The terms "radical" and "leftist" are often used with each other, though their meanings are different. The term "leftist" is a specific term used to designate the identity of a person on the political spectrum, the same way the term "right wing" is used to describe someone who was right of center. A "leftist" during the antiwar movement usually called for sociopolitical change that would move the United States closer to a more egalitarian society, one less committed to foreign military intervention. Though most "leftists" proposed this shift to occur through democratic processes, there certainly were those who wanted to destroy the capitalist war machine of the United States. They aligned with, but were not restricted to, groups like Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), WEB Du Bois Clubs, Socialist Workers Party, and the Young Socialist Alliance.¹

The term "radical" is broader and more inclusive when used in the context of the anti-Vietnam War movement. A "radical" could be anyone with ideas, thoughts, or motivations

contrary to American culture or government that supported the war during that time period. By the end of the Vietnam War, the antiwar “radicals” were a conglomerate of the entire political spectrum, including Democrats, Republicans, communists, veterans, religious leaders, students, housewives, and others. The key to being “radical” in the anti-Vietnam War movement was being vocal and public about your dismay for the war. No matter where you fell on the political spectrum, the more you spoke out against the war, the more “radical” you became.

It is also important to mention the difference between The Racquet, the student newspaper at WSU-L, of the Vietnam War era and today. The newspaper today rarely has any reputable stories about the student body and how they are in relation with world affairs. The Racquet in the late-1960s and early 1970s, however, constantly tried to align the student body and the WSU-L antiwar movement with national and international news. The newspaper staff was cognizant of the atrocities in Vietnam and sought to expose them, as well as political and social events relating to the war. Though The Racquet was not an underground leftist publication, it was not a completely ignorant, homegrown paper either. The Racquet emerged as the voice of the small core of antiwar protestors but still gave lip service to conservative viewpoints for the sake of balance and argument.

With those important points in mind, my goal was to analyze the anti-Vietnam War activities at WSU-L from 1965-1973. Using primary, secondary, and oral sources, I tried to illustrate the influence of the WSU-L antiwar movement, how they organized to support their cause, and the challenges and opposition they faced from the conservative and/or apathetic student body, administration, and pro-war supporters.

METHODS

The majority of information for this analysis came from two primary sources: past issues of The Racquet, the WSU-L student newspaper, and oral interviews with former WSU-L students and faculty from 1965-1973. The stories and opinion letters in The Racquet provided an easy chronology of events concerning the Vietnam War, illustrated the pro- and antiwar sentiments of WSU-L students, and how the antiwar movement at WSU-L coincided with the larger, national picture.

Oral interviews provided clarification and filled in missing details of events and confirmed or rejected my analysis of the WSU-L antiwar movement. Steve Solberg, a WSU-L student from 1965-69 and an active antiwar protestor and editor-in-chief of The Racquet for two years, was able to provide personal anecdotes about major events and other antiwar protestors that I was not able to interview. Insight from other WSU-L males, through oral interviews or e-mail correspondence, was helpful in understanding the role the draft played in the lives of young college males. Sheldon Smith, professor of Sociology/Archaeology, provided insight from the perspective of a liberal faculty member who worked to educate and organize students against the Vietnam War.

To place the WSU-L antiwar movement in perspective with the national movement, I consulted several secondary sources. Charles DeBenedetti's An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era was the best source I consulted pertaining to national anti-Vietnam War trends and movements. George Herring's America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975 was a pithy guide to the Vietnam War and helped to place antiwar movement events in context with events of the war. Fred Halsted's Out Now: A Participant's Account of the American Movement Against the Vietnam War provided intimate

details concerning personal accounts of antiwar protest, along with Nancy and Gerald Sullivan's Who Spoke Up? American Protest Against the War in Vietnam and several other books. Kenneth Heineman's Campus Wars was helpful in connecting WSU-L to student bodies that were comparable to size and socioeconomic background.

RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

Why was America in Vietnam?" This question arose from the moment American troops were deployed to Vietnam in March 1965 and continues to be argued.² The Vietnam War pitted the determination of the United States government to institute democracy in South Vietnam against Vietnamese nationalism and self-determination in a cauldron that boiled over on the battlefield and the American home front. While American soldiers died in Vietnam, citizens of the United States also fought a war over peace. The elements of peace on the home front took very different forms: doves, radicals, humanists, labor unionists, socialists, communists, religious leaders, students, and family members. This confederacy of "peaceniks" was constantly at odds with conservative, anticommunist people still clinging onto the remnants of McCarthyism and the "Red Scare."

Though the different factions had their own agendas for achieving peace in Vietnam, college students laid the groundwork for the antiwar movement, gave it fuel and teeth, and, in the case of Kent State, gave it their own lives. "Almost every study of campus-based anti-Vietnam War protest in the 1960's and early 1970's has argued that student disaffection blossomed at elite state and private universities such as Berkeley, Chicago, Colombia, Harvard, Michigan, and Wisconsin."³ Compared to their counterparts in Madison, the antiwar movement at WSU-L was relatively mild, following the lead of the hotbeds of antiwar sentiment.

However, this does not mean that WSU-L students were not adamant against the war. A small and committed group did take an active role in protesting and creating awareness about the Vietnam War. The anti-Vietnam War movement at WSU-L was not a series of isolated rallies but a loosely organized front of information, dialogue, and protest. From 1965 to mid-1968, the students at WSU-L were engaged not in protest but a "stage of information." Active antiwar students were interested in telling "the other side of the story," or information about the Vietnam War that was not made available by the popular media or the government.⁴ These predominantly white, middle class students advocated the "stage of information" in three different ways: facts about the history of Vietnam and its importance on the current war events, the early formations of antiwar sentiments and draft resistance, and fighting the WSU-L administrative endeavor to curtail potential antiwar protests that were emerging at the aforementioned college "hotbeds" of antiwar sentiments.

The main forum for discussion of topics related to Vietnam on the WSU-L campus was The Racquet, the student newspaper. Between 1965-68, the news and editorial pages were sprinkled with intellectual viewpoints from both the pro- and antiwar sides, mixing factual information with political agenda. In October 1966, The Racquet sponsored a series of guest writers in "The Open Forum," meant to give students an academic base of information to make some decisions about the war. The first column, written by Dr. William Vettes, Department of History, covered issues like Vietnamese nationalism, the National Liberation Front (NLF), the Viet Cong, and the role the United States was playing up to that point. Dr. Vettes acknowledged some of the key controversies that would eventually fuel the antiwar movement, like the morality of United States military intervention:

“We’ve reverted to bombing with B-52’s in the South (lighter bombers are used in the North), and to the use of napalm on defenseless villages if we even entertain a suspicion the place served as a Viet Cong rest camp. How the bombs distinguish between V.C. and civilians is the subtlety the Administration hasn’t explained.”⁵

In his next column, Dr. Vettes went to great lengths to topple the “Domino Theory” used as the main justification of American involvement in Vietnam. Vettes believed that communism in North Vietnam came secondary to Vietnamese nationalism, noting that, “So long as nationalism remains a much more powerful ideology than Communism, it’s very possible that even Communist-led revolutions will create societies that are no friendlier to Russia or China than they are to [the United States].”⁶ This was a very academic and sophisticated perspective on Vietnamese motivation to win the war in 1966, since many Americans believed that North Vietnam and Ho Chi Minh were merely pawns of the communist superpowers.

Other submissions to The Racquet offered conservative views about Vietnamese communism and Ho Chi Minh, implying that their political ideology instigated American involvement. Responding to previous opinion letters, Michael Slaback, a WSU-L student, rebutted in The Racquet that the spirit of democracy had to be preserved at all costs:

“What matters a few dispossessed [Vietnamese] families, a few children, faces burned away, blindly groping for garbage to stuff in a mouth? What matters humanity when our national pride is at stake?”⁷

Comments like this motivated idealistic groups of predominantly white, middle class students at colleges and universities around the United States to begin objecting to the old notion of worldwide communist conspiracies and the *machismo* of the United States and their perceived role to defend democracy at all costs.

The Racquet was also concerned with the issue of the draft and frequently published WSU-L student opinions and state and national news about the draft, changes in Selective Service policies, and possible alternatives to being in the armed forces. The draft status of men between the ages of 18-25 was constantly subject to changes by the Selective Service. WSU-L males found that even their college education deferments could be challenged, sometimes by verbal and mental tests administered by the Selective Service or if they were not achieving passing marks.⁸ This information was important to male students with 2S deferments who were making full-time progress towards a degree. Eventually, even college students would be extremely vulnerable to the draft. Many males continued with their studies in graduate school to avoid the draft, but by March 1967 the Selective Service granted deferments to only graduate students who were in fields of “national interest,” such as the physical sciences and allied health fields.⁹ The constant threat of being conscripted into the Army was “a dark and gloomy cloud that was always hanging around” WSU-L males.¹⁰

By December 1966, draft policies became very confusing and inconsistent, and The Racquet and other students adamantly tried to keep WSU-L males informed of their options. Before WSU-L student Steve Solberg became editor of The Racquet, his focus was on informing other male students about the draft. He spent many hours informally advising others about the draft and the alternatives that male students had. His motivation was personal, since Solberg was actually drafted by the La Crosse County Draft Board. His public dismay

for the war and the draft made him, in his mind, an easy target for the draft board. "Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean they're not out to get you. I knew that [the draft board] was targeting me so they could shut me up about the war and put me in Vietnam," Solberg said.¹¹

As the war escalated and more American men were drafted, The Racquet began to print stories about the legal rights of draftees and possible alternatives to the draft. The option of military service was not always automatic if you were drafted, and students like Solberg sought to make those options available to drafted men. Some WSU-L males were unaware of their options, such as keeping their college deferments, claiming to be a conscientious objector, committing a crime and going to jail, or fleeing the United States to Canada.¹² This demonstrated that WSU-L students and The Racquet did try to at least inform all male students of their draft rights.

Though The Racquet had some stories about the draft, WSU-L males were left to fend for themselves. There was no formal draft counseling at the University and most males learned about their draft options from family, brothers, or veterans who returned from Vietnam. Student Rick Rude said that "the best counseling that existed was the returning veterans that told their friends what was really going on in Vietnam"¹³ Though people like Solberg and others would try to advise people as much as they could, WSU-L males had to inform themselves on the draft.

The most prolific memories of the Vietnam era for many WSU-L males was the draft lotteries. Mike Longfield remembered watching the draft lotteries in the basement of the dormitories with other males:

"My number was 53. The night of the first lottery picks, you either partied because you had a high number or because you had a low one and you had a reason to get drunk. The whole dorm was quiet and when a number was announced, you heard all types of sounds. We all started [then] the different ways of getting around the draft"¹⁴

The looming feeling of the draft was a motivator to maintain a 2.0 GPA in order for college males to keep their college 2S deferment. Al Graewin, a WSU-L student and freshman in the fall of 1968, was very aware of the importance of good grades. In an interview with Graewin, he bluntly remembered the consequences of not making the grade:

"You have to remember that guys [that] weren't hacking it back then with a 2.0...you next stop was Vietnam. Or drafted for sure and 80% of the guys it seemed were going to Vietnam."¹⁵

The pressure of maintaining a 2.0 affected many freshman like Graewin, whose grades were often compromised by poor study habits, indifference to general studies courses, being away from home for the first time, and the 18-year old beer halls downtown. Though Graewin was able to keep his GPA high enough to keep his 2S deferment, men at WSU-L and across the country fell victim to slipping grades and getting drafted.

Not only did the University lack draft counseling, the WSU-L administration also had a major role in adding to the growing unrest of student antiwar protestors. In the period of 1965-68, America witnessed the mobilization of different antiwar fronts, and one of the most nationally controversial groups was Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Though the

anti-Vietnam War movement was part of their agenda, SDS members “proposed to channel rising peace sentiment into a broader movement toward ‘new politics’ of fundamental change.”¹⁶

Officially established at the Port Huron, MI convention in June 1962 as a branch of the League for Industrial Democracy, the primary goal of SDS was to establish a “democracy of individual participation” in the United States government.¹⁷ In other words, SDS strived for an educated class of American citizens who could make wise decisions in their voting and civic responsibilities and “could exercise greater influence in making the decisions which affected [their lives] and the destiny of the country.”¹⁸ This broad movement for radical social change became one of the major influences on the anti-Vietnam War movement by 1968. The Port Huron Statement, according to Harold Taylor, author and former president of Sarah Lawrence College, served

“As a rallying point for a new generation of activists to work together to achieve their aims. Its radicalism lay in three points. First, it rejected the ideology of anti-communism as a false and pernicious doctrine, false to the historical situation, and pernicious in its negative effects on the ideals both of liberal democracy and of democratic socialism. Second, it linked the universities to the economic and social system as instruments of their purposes. Third, it defined a role for students in the political system as a whole, raising them to a level of equality with all other concerned citizens whose lives were affected by national and international decisions over which they had no control”¹⁹

SDS was popularly known for their liberal and sometimes physical means of confrontation, though their tactics would differ greatly between chapters. Eventually, the reputation of civil disobedience emerged as the moniker of SDS, labeled by historian Irwin Unger as “a cult of violence...that paraded under the name of action politics.”²⁰ Following SDS’s first major anti-Vietnam War rally in Washington, D.C. in the spring of 1965, they caused such a commotion for the government that J. Edgar Hoover, the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), systematically set out to “expose, disrupt, and otherwise neutralize” SDS with “a new Counter-intelligence Program (Cointelpro).”²¹ Tactics like “encouraging suspicions that some antiwar militants were FBI agents” and “setting up radicals for drug arrests” were ways the FBI tried to interrupt activities of liberal groups like SDS.²²

The La Crosse SDS chapter, compared to larger college chapters, had a very modest representation, with a maximum unofficial membership of 15-20 students.²³ Founded on February 24, 1966, a group of around 15 students elected Pat Holbrook, a political science major, as chairman.²⁴ After drafting the chapter’s statement of purpose, which mirrored the Port Huron Statement very closely, Holbrook said that though the La Crosse chapter would participate in national SDS events, “One thing you can be sure of, we’ll make our own decisions and programs. SDS chapters are really autonomous.”²⁵ On March 25, 1966, representatives from La Crosse SDS traveled to Baraboo, WI to protest the reopening of a munitions factory and also demonstrated against the Vietnam War in front of the La Crosse Post Office. The protest was held in conjunction with similar SDS rallies in 60 cities U.S. cities and 40 other countries.²⁶ The La Crosse SDS chapter issued a press release coinciding with the demonstration:

“American and Vietnamese casualties mount daily in Viet Nam; our government remains deaf to the rising wave of doubt in the minds of American people. Silence supports a policy contrary to the destruction upon the farms, villages, and people of a small, impoverished Asian nation. We have been shown no justification for the resumption of bombing in the North, the destruction of the villages, crops, and natural resources belonging to the Vietnamese people.

We urge that immediate steps be taken, through the United Nations, if necessary, to negotiate with the National Liberation Front along with the existing government in Saigon. These negotiations, we feel, would serve to establish a more representative government and end the war.

This demonstration is to express this discontent with the war. Although this demonstration is being sponsored by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in conjunction with the International Days of Protest, March 25-26, it includes members of other organizations as well as private citizens.”²⁷

This was not the first time that WSU-L students had been exposed to radical organizations or speakers. Campus groups had sponsored controversial speakers to talk about communism, the New Left movement, and the antiwar movement. Despite resistance from both students and community members, the Humanist Club sponsored Mike Eisenscher, Midwest Coordinator of the W.E.B. Du Bois Club and a member of SDS, on February 10, 1966. He openly proclaimed himself as a Marxist “dedicated to the peaceful overthrow of the present U.S. politico-economic system.” He also addressed the Vietnam War and some of the myths that communists endured, claiming that the antiwar movement was not the device of a seditious communist movement but a patriotic group that was not afraid to question their government.²⁸

A few weeks later on February 23, 1966, the Humanist Club featured another speaker to talk about socialism and the Vietnam War. James Boulton, chairman of the Socialist Workers Party in Milwaukee and opponent of Joseph McCarthy in the 1952 U.S. Senate elections, denounced the Vietnam War as nothing but an opportunity for American industry to make a profit. He also disagreed with American attempts to force democracy on the Vietnamese people, citing that “the Vietnamese had finally found a way [through communism] to release themselves from years of imperialism and degradation when the U.S. [State Department] stepped in by sending advisors to reverse this.”²⁹ The WSU-L student body had plenty of opportunities to be exposed to leftist and radical thinking, and though there was some protest from students and community members, the speeches occurred without formal obstruction.

Though the La Crosse SDS chapter existed, they sought to become a recognized student organization, which would allow them to hold SDS sponsored events on campus and have the opportunity to access possible university funding. On December 5, 1966, The Racquet reported that though a “careful study extending over a nine month period” resulted in the 5-2 approval of the SDS charter by the WSU-L Organizations Board, University President Samuel Gates used his executive power to veto the charter. Gates denied the SDS charter for two reasons in his official statement in The Racquet. His first point was that though “one of the major objectives of the University [was to] make people safe for ideas,” which insinuated that radical antiwar viewpoints of SDS were dangerous in some way. He also stated that

“It is most difficult for me to conceive of this University giving its official approval and encouragement to an organization which nationally has made a mockery of law and orderly change. We are committed to freedom with responsibility, and we are committed to freedom within the rules.”³⁰

President Gates attempted to justify the denial of the SDS chapter with anecdotes of SDS activities on other college campuses. Citing obscure and unsubstantiated FBI “documented” instances of anarchy, capriciousness, and extremism in his statement, Gates finally “concluded that Charter recognition of SDS was not in the best interests of [WSU-L].”³¹

Years later, an interview with Robert Voight, WSU-L professor of Political Science, revealed that Gates confided in him that he was being pressured by the CIA, who had targeted the La Crosse SDS, into cooperating with them by rejecting the La Crosse SDS chapter.³² Gates also based his decision on information and statements from Hoover, the American Security Council, an extreme right-wing interest group, a Time magazine article on the “mob mentality” of SDS, inquiries from the United States Department of Justice, and SDS documents, such as the Port Huron Statement and documents from the Clear Lake convention.³³ Never once was it documented that Gates made contact with La Crosse SDS members or acknowledged that SDS chapters and their activities were highly autonomous and non-violent.

The La Crosse Tribune also reflected the SDS denial in an editorial printed December 2, 1966, just three days before Gates’ decision, which demonstrated the conservativeness of the La Crosse community. Once again, no specific examples of militancy from the La Crosse SDS chapter were ever discussed:

“The local group’s (SDS) constitution has attempted to go two ways. At [the Organizations Board] subcommittee insistence, it disavowed any connection with the League for Industrial Democracy with which the national SDS still has close ties. The League is a Peking-orientated group of the “new-left.” Nationally, SDS in the spring of 1965 ran the “march on Washington” protesting U.S. policy in Viet Nam. J. Edgar Hoover has called it a “Communist front organization.” At its national convention in Clear Lake, Iowa, two months ago one of the activists was Betting Aptheker, an admitted Communist and active in the Berkeley furor. But while disavowing the league, the local SDS organizers stay with the SDS Port Huron Statement, which calls for “an alliance of students and faculty” who “must wrest control of the educational process from the administrative bureaucracy.” This means that SDS would plan trouble, demonstrations, and sand in the gears of the university administration here, as it has on other campuses. Inviting this sort of thing is, as the British say, a bit thick. SDS should not be chartered here, on the basis of its history and past performance on other campuses.”³⁴

The members of the La Crosse SDS and WSU-L student leaders immediately protested the veto by President Gates. Dennis O’Keefe, a member and oft-quoted student spokesperson of the La Crosse SDS chapter, emphasized the goals of the SDS as a means of empowerment, not anarchy:

“The aim of SDS is to make democracy a viable reality rather than an empty rhetoric to which people pay lip service to, but do not practice. SDS is opposed to administrators making decisions which are contrary to the needs and desires of the students and faculty, but which suit the administrators’ convenience. Members of the SDS believe that instead of the administrators acting as independent sovereigns and using students and faculty in only advisory positions, the administrators should act as agents of the constituents of the campus.”³⁵

Other student leaders on campus, such as Jim Smart, president of Campus Controls Council (what is now Student Association) expressed his antipathy towards President Gates’ veto. Gates cited “instances where SDS members [had] flaunted the law in their own efforts to attain their own objectives.” Smart, however, saw Gates’ view as prejudiced and unfounded and believed that, “The veto implies that we have an immature and irresponsible faction representing SDS. Their endeavor and strenuous efforts to cooperate with [the Organizations Board] refute this idea.”³⁶ Organizations Board member and student Geri Ruehl said that though “the key concern was the actions of SDS organizations, [the committee found] nothing in the [La Crosse] SDS chapter [that] could substantiate any basis to deny such recognition.”³⁷

The controversy over the SDS also sparked debate as to whether President Gates’ veto challenged fundamental issues of democracy, free speech, and rights to assemble. The Racquet Editorial Board posed this question to the WSU-L student body:

“Does a university president have the right to deny the freedom of assembly to an organization because he believes that the organization is wrong? Is the presumption that an organization might at some time in the future indulge in illegal activity sufficient legal basis to deny that organization the constitutional right to assemble?”³⁸

Though President Gates rejected the La Crosse SDS chapter as a legitimate organization, his veto certainly introduced the antiwar sentiments of the SDS and its supporters in La Crosse into the student culture of WSU-L and in the La Crosse community. Solberg thought that President Gates’ attempt to suppress SDS backfired, noting that the controversy actually increased student awareness about SDS, along with increased volatility of students towards administration and authority. The Racquet editorial board was determined to keep this issue fresh in the minds of WSU-L students:

“Many people say, ‘Why not forget it?’ This would be easy to do, and that is what many have done, in the usual COMPLACENT manner that is the earmark of this university. BUT WE WON’T FORGET. There is more at stake than the SDS, however, few people, including those who have the nerve to call themselves educators with a clear conscience, seem to realize this.”³⁹

Disenfranchised students also had the support from WSU-L faculty members, who wrote to the *Milwaukee Journal* and believed that WSU-L students had been denied the opportunity to be exposed to different ideas:

“We, the undersigned faculty members of Wisconsin State University, La Crosse, announce our disagreement with the personal evaluation upon which the president of this university has based his rejection of the application for a charter by the Students for a Democratic Society.

We think that any student group which has met the prescribed regulations for recognition set up by this university ought to be given the right to exist and function as an organization on this campus. We think that to disallow any such group before it has had the chance to function as an organization on this campus is to violate the principles of freedom of speech, assembly, and due process.

Finally, we believe that this action by the president is detrimental to that intellectual integrity which the students and faculty must have in order to become educated.”⁴⁰

Though the La Crosse SDS chapter, with the help of the Wisconsin American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), appealed the veto, both the Board of Regents of the WSU system and the Dane County Circuit Court eventually upheld the SDS chapter veto. Circuit Court Judge William Sachtjen ruled that in order for him to side with the La Crosse SDS, it “must appear that the substantial rights of the SDS had been prejudiced.”⁴¹ He also said that although official organizational status could not be rendered to the charter, they could still hold rallies, speakers, and meet in the Student Union, which was considered a free speech area for any group. Though the La Crosse SDS could not become an official student organization, they saw the Sachtjen ruling as a victory for free speech and a blow to the perceived hostility of President Gates for the group.⁴²

Though the La Crosse SDS charter was denied full campus organizational membership, it did not prevent students from introducing others to controversial issues after the veto by President Gates. Students and faculty continued to press the idea that United States occupation in Vietnam was unjust, immoral, and unpopular among the international community. Professor Merrill Barnebey, Department of Mathematics, wrote in The Racquet that communism exposed the American rhetoric of war, claiming, “our only allies in Viet-Nam [were] a few small nations heavily dependent on our favor.”⁴³ As more articles and opinion letters poured into The Racquet and dialogue about the war became more common in classes and casual conversation, an increasing group of educated and socially aware students were effectively repudiating pro-war claims of conservatives and veterans. The Racquet Editorial Board boldly stated that “Vietnam is a hopeless situation and peace is the only likely way we can ever get out. Even a full-scale war could not beat the idea of communism. It is in the world to stay—at least for a while—and we must learn to put up with it.”⁴⁴

The “stage of information” that ran concurrent with small political, university, and journalistic squabbles from 1965 to late-1967 took a sudden turn into student resistance with the WSU-L student reaction to the October 18, 1967 riot on the campus of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The antiwar sentiment at Madison, like other campuses, had begun to abandon its nonviolent protests with physical confrontation. As 300 students barricaded the door to the room where Dow Chemical recruiters were conducting interviews, they were “met with violence from the [City of] Madison, not the university, police.” Dressed in riot gear, the police charged and cleared the building in a matter of minutes. “Horrified to see their battered, bloodied fellows that emerged from the building, the crowd became angry [and] began to throw rocks and bricks.” In the aftermath, 3 policemen and 65 students were injured.⁴⁵

Though The Racquet staff condemned the police actions as “morally unjust” and “inhuman,” most WSU-L students actually sided with the police and condemned the Madison students for resisting against them. Some of these students wrote to The Racquet to express their dismay:

"I don't think that is the student's place to go against the police. They should have realized the police's position and what they were doing. The students could have been cooperative and they would have given the police so much reason to act the way they did." —Betty Hiser⁴⁶

"First of all, I feel that the protests against Dow Chemical Company which supplies napalm for Viet Nam was a poor justification for what appeared to be a student rebellion against the Viet Nam War. I also feel that if this was to be a part of the peaceful and non-violent dissent against the war, the aforementioned goal was obviously not attained. I personally believe that that type of dissention will not cause any immediate recession of government policy regarding the war. Instead, I think that certain students have been harmed instead of enlightened."—Gary Lange⁴⁷

"If I can generalize, policeman isn't a violent or barbaric person. Therefore he is in the job, he is trained, he is human, and under violent situations one can't judge his actions unless [the critic] has already experienced the same circumstances." — Carol Lenze⁴⁸

"University of Wisconsin [-Madison] Chancellor Sewell said, "Before we requested the police to clear the building, we declared the blockade an unlawful assembly and warned prosecutors to leave or face arrest. In all, we allowed the protestors two hours to comply with our warning." Police brutality seems to be the growing cry of a nation confused in strife. People yell it freely without knowing what they say, most of the time because someone else yelled it. How often do we hear the good deeds of the police?" —John Lindquist⁴⁹

One student even went so far as to suggest the coverage of the UW-Madison riots and growing criticisms of the Vietnam War in The Racquet be stopped altogether. In light of her close friend dying in Vietnam, Karen Voss wrote to The Racquet, asking them to, "please try and think of us and also those who have friends over there now and give them a little hope and encouragement instead of [Lyndon] Johnson put-downs and war [protests]."⁵⁰ Though Solberg expressed understanding of "the pain and heartbreak that people [were] enduring as a result of the war," he compassionately explained, "If we seek a peaceful settlement in Vietnam we won't lose any friends."⁵¹ With the 450,000 American troops in Vietnam by late-1967 making little progress against the North Vietnamese, the country saw no end of the war in sight.

In response to increased protests and resistance to the war in Vietnam at Wisconsin State University schools, using Madison as an example, the Board of Regents of the WSU system adopted a "Student Conduct Code" in December 1967 as a guideline for future student protest gatherings. The Code attempted to cut down on disruptions of university classes and events, and to force antiwar protestors "to cope with problems with intelligence, reasonableness, and consideration of the rights of others." The Code specifically prohibited:

- a. Interference with accepted functions or activities of the university or with its educational or service programs, either by breach of peace, physical obstruction or coercion, or by noise, tumult or other disturbance

- b. Unauthorized occupancy of university facilities or blocking access to or from such areas
- c. Inference with approved university traffic (pedestrian or motor vehicle)
- d. Interference of the rights of students, faculty, staff, and/or other authorized persons to gain access to any university facility for the purpose of attending classes, participating in interviews, university conferences and/or other university activities
- e. Picketing, or demonstrating, with the use of obscene or indecent language, or with signs or banners containing such language or of such size, material, or construction as to create a hazard to persons or property.⁵²

The Campus Controls Board (CCC) at WSU-L vehemently rejected the Code by a 17-2 vote, even though the vote had no bearing on the decision of the Regents. The CCC believed that students were bound only by local, state, and federal laws and should not have been subject to further campus sanctions.⁵³ This new Student Conduct Code was another obstacle and restriction on the antiwar movement at WSU-L and would be taken highly into consideration in the months to come.

During this period, the resilience of WSU-L antiwar student protestors persisted as The Racquet emerged as the medium of antiwar sentiment and backlashes to the opposition of the Madison riots. The Racquet Editorial Board members of 1967-68 (Solberg, Mike Sederquist, Janel Bladow, and Pete King) began to run regular opinions letters against the war and the foreign policy of President Johnson. The highly critical and condescending comments of The Racquet Editorial Board had an elitist tone that was typical of strong willed, idealistic college antiwar protestors:

“Many people in society cannot look beneath the glistening façade and see the festering perversions of American society. Many people do not see the corruption [that] allows 20 million [African] Americans to be treated as second-class citizens. Many people cannot see the perversion of a nation [that] labels humanitarians as ‘communists’ and ‘troublemakers.’ People are so overwhelmed by a red, white, and blue illusion that they are blind to the horrible reality beneath.”⁵⁴

The Racquet became more and more oriented with antiwar sentiment and the disdain of the Johnson administration. In the midst of the 1968 Presidential primaries, The Racquet Editorial Board announced their endorsement of Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-MN). The Editorial Board became increasingly “fed up with the non-sensical undeclared war in Viet Nam and with our great white-father’s (Johnson’s) attitude towards students.”⁵⁵ Solberg saw McCarthy as “the great hope” for student antiwar protestors.⁵⁶ McCarthy proposed a gradual withdrawal of troops from Vietnam, and hammered that point home in a November 1967 speech to the Labor Leadership Assembly conference in Chicago:

“[The United States is] in the wrong. We must take those steps called for in order to make things right...there is now no question that the war is totally immoral and that this matter must be brought to the people for judgment. This is more than just a question of Vietnam. It is a great reexamination by the American people of what our objectives as a nation are.”⁵⁷

The Racquet Editorial Board, in a later issue, expanded its rationale for endorsing McCarthy, citing three basic tenants his Vietnam policy:

“The bombing of North Vietnam should be immediately and unconditionally be stopped; the United States and South Vietnamese government should seek immediate negotiations with the National Liberation Front; and, finally, to encourage these negotiations, the United States should gradually withdraw its troops from certain areas of South Vietnam and...negotiate with the Viet Cong and settle the war. We believe that a solution must be reached soon. And Senator Eugene McCarthy is the only campaigning contender that has presented us with an intelligent proposal.”⁵⁸

Coverage of Senator McCarthy increased when it announced that he would visit La Crosse in late March 1968, preceded by his 18 year-old-daughter Mary. The Racquet continued to demonstrate the popularity of McCarthy among college students by showing that he felt strongly “about the increasingly dead-end nature of the Vietnam War and the deteriorating moral climate of the country.”⁵⁹

By early 1968, the WSU-L student antiwar views of America’s “unjust” involvement in Vietnam and the systematic attempts by politicians and administrators to repress student viewpoints, such as the SDS, finally brought the first demonstrations directly aimed at the Vietnam War at WSU-L. The silence about the war ended when a small group of WSU-L students unexpectedly set up a small microphone and speaker system and addressed over 150 students in the Student Union on February 21, 1968.⁶⁰ This first demonstration against the Vietnam War would start a consistent level of public resistance from a small core of WSU-L students. The feelings about the war from the overall student body, whom the majority was in opposition to, was seen as “apathetic” by radical WSU-L students because they were not vocal against the war.

The first demonstration came at a perfect time, following a February 18, 1968 La Crosse Tribune article entitled “Protesting Isn’t Fashionable at [La Crosse University].” The article focused on WSU-L student reactions to a growing number of anti-Vietnam War protests around the country and student reactions to the new Student Conduct Code. Though most students interviewed opposed the Code in some way, they also agreed that they “were not in favor of becoming a Berkeley or Madison,” or even participating in smaller demonstrations like those at other smaller WSU schools.⁶¹ Their disinterest in the antiwar movement and politics were evident when Avram Segall, president of United Council of Wisconsin, the student government body of WSU schools, was completely ignored by the student body when he spoke at the Student Union about antiwar and Conduct Code protests.⁶² This demonstrated that though many students had views about the War or the Conduct Code, they were not interested in becoming part of growing national activities.

The demonstration organizers, led by Dustin Evens, a junior majoring in Speech and Drama, introduced their grievances against the war, the draft, and the role of Dow Chemical and napalm in the war. The demonstration coincided with Dow’s recruitment trip to WSU-L campus, which occurred in the Student Union that same day. After the organizers had finished speaking, they distributed a petition for interested students to sign:

“We, the undersigned students of W.S.U. La Crosse, do hereby declare our horror at, and our opposition to, the use of napalm in Vietnam. For this reason we do now petition that: 1.) The government of the United States seek imme-

ciate peace in Vietnam and discontinue all use of napalm there and other places; 2.) That Dow Chemical Company discontinue all use of materials used in napalm bombs; 3.) That this university make known adequately and well in advance the appearance of any branch of the military or any company involved with the Vietnam conflict, for purposes of recruitment.”⁶³

After an hour of students sharing either pro- or antiwar opinions, Evens and “about 25 students marched single file to the conference room where Dow interviews were taking place and taped the petition to the door. From [there], the students marched to Main Hall where they taped a duplicate petition on President Gates’ door.”⁶⁴

During the demonstration, many viewpoints and questions were thrown out for the student body to think about and respond to. Questions like, “How can we pull out [of the war] now?” addressed the urgency to end the war, while questions of, “Should an individual voice [their] opinion on the war or should [they] accept the government’s position?” addressed a challenge to students to question the status quo.⁶⁵ A level of carefulness was taken by the protestors to not let the demonstration give the administration a reason to break it up. Even a small demonstration put the protestors on alert of the administration, in light of the previous attitudes of President Gates surrounding the free speech status of the SDS on campus and the passing of the new Student Conduct Code. Evens later stated in an interview with The Racquet News Editor Janel Bladow that though his primary motivation was “to protest the use of napalm in Vietnam,” he also wanted to test the Conduct Code to see “if it [was] possible to exercise [the student’s] right to free speech on this campus” and to possibly get some reaction from WSU-L students.⁶⁶

Though student opinions differed concerning Evens’ views on Vietnam and Dow Chemical, students who wrote to The Racquet mainly agreed that the demonstration was well needed:

“The main thing this demonstration did was show that people cared and had the courage to express their opinions. This school is known for its conservativeness and apathy.”⁶⁷ —Jim Stillman

“I thought the demonstration was a good idea because it showed the students voicing their opinions. Although I don’t agree with what they said, I believe napalm should be used, it was a good idea to have an orderly demonstration.”⁶⁸
—John Swendrowski

“Despite fears of breaking the new Conduct Code, and even worse, of suffering humiliation before the student body, these few individuals disproved that popular assumption that there is apathy on the campus of WSU-L.”⁶⁹ —Lee Harwell

Ultimately, the ad hoc demonstration of Evens and others put WSU-L students on alert that a vocal movement had opened Pandora’s box about the war.⁷⁰ Despite the role of the U.S. in Vietnam and the recent denial of SDS on campus, the small group of WSU-L antiwar protestors felt that after the Evens demonstration, they could speak their mind without fearing repercussions from the administration via the Student Conduct Code.⁷¹

In the aftermath of the demonstration, some students were concerned about having accurate information about napalm and Dow Chemical to make educated decisions. Some

students at the demonstration felt that Evens and other students were not educated enough to make informed decisions about Vietnam, Dow, or napalm.⁷² The chemical “napalm B is a petroleum jelly which burns at 1000 degrees F. and sticks to whatever it spatters on, including human flesh. Dow [was] the only company that manufactured and supplied napalm to the Defense Department; it also manufactured the plastic body bags in which corpses of Americans killed in Vietnam were shipped home.”⁷³ Dow became an issue that was debated on college campuses almost as much as the war itself. According to a National Student Association (NSA) study, “there were 27 [national] demonstrations in which the presence of a Dow recruiter was the cause” during the Fall 1967 semester, including the aforementioned riot at Madison.⁷⁴

After the Madison riot and WSU-L’s first demonstration involving Dow, The Racquet reacted quickly, interviewing the Dow recruiter that was at WSU-L at the time of the Evens demonstration and reprinting a Dow rebuttal to criticism published in the Wall Street Journal titled “Dow Chemical Explains Napalm Business.” In both the interview and the press release, Dow justified their manufacture of napalm because of the government’s “need” for the product and attempted to tug on the heartstrings of Americans with G.I. anecdotes of how napalm saved their lives. Steve Solberg interviewed Walt Bricker, a Dow recruiter who made his very first trip in his tenure with Dow to WSU-L:

Q: It says in a statement released by Dow that they have made a moral judgement on the production of napalm. Would Dow continue to produce napalm if they thought the war was immoral?

A: The [company] says that we have made a “moral judgement on the goals of our government.” As long as [Dow] feels our government is morally upstanding we will support them.

Q: What if Dow determined that the war itself was immoral despite its feeling toward the government, would it discontinue production?

A: I couldn’t answer that question.

Q: Would you work for Dow if you were not convinced that what it was doing was right? Say, if Dow made napalm for the Viet Cong?

A: I wouldn’t be working for Dow if I thought they were like the corrupt family that was working for the Nazis. I don’t think Dow is like this. I wouldn’t work for Dow if I thought they were doing something morally wrong.

In the interview, Solberg went with his hard hitting questions last. Bricker, however, remained composed and stayed consistent with Dow’s press release:

Q: Why, if other companies are probably involved in the war effort, is Dow being singled out for demonstrations?

A: I don’t know why it is Dow they demonstrate against.

Q: Could it be that napalm kills innocent women and children?

A: War as a whole kills people—if we want to discontinue this, we have to discontinue altogether. Remember, though, that war sometimes prevents innocent people from being killed. This, I think, is why we are in Vietnam.⁷⁵

Dow Chemical morally supported American military presence in Vietnam along with the production of napalm, and argued that, “as long as the United States [sent soldiers] to war, it

[was] unthinkable that we would not supply the materials they need.” Along with complying with the wishes of the government, Dow Chemical also showed its patriotic side by trying to demonstrate that napalm actually saved lives:

“A Congressional Medal of Honor winner has written, for instance, [that] ‘war and killing is not at all pleasing to anyone.’ The infantry in Vietnam fights to win and stay alive. We need and are thankful for napalm. Fourteen GI’s signed a letter including this comment: ‘the effectiveness of napalm saving U.S. lives is overwhelming.’”⁷⁶

Though napalm did indeed kill innocent women and children, Dow’s position that the product saved American lives effectively refuted antiwar protester claims that the product was immoral to use. “Despite the protests the use of napalm continued; none of the actions against it was effective, although arguably [the protestors] raised the public’s awareness of the nature of the war.”⁷⁷

A month after the Evens demonstration, a debate took place in the Student Union on March 20, 1968 “centered around U.S. policy, morality of the war, Senator Eugene McCarthy’s views, and the South Vietnamese commitment.”⁷⁸ With over 300 students present, it had a pseudo-panel discussion feel, with students with strong pro- or antiwar viewpoints fielding questions after they had stated their opinion to the crowd.⁷⁹ Solberg commented on the morality of the war. He pointed out that the “moral decay” in the United States was attributed to the foreign policy of President Johnson. “Solberg compared Johnson’s attitude [about the war] to those of Hitler, [treating American citizens] like sheep, subservient to the nation’s will.” Solberg clearly stood in opposition to Johnson, claiming his administration was imposing its will on the American people without their consent.⁸⁰ Though there was a range of pro- and antiwar viewpoints, only antiwar sentiments were included in the article about the March 20th debate, a further indicator of the liberal, antiwar slant of *The Racquet*.

In the wake of the Evens demonstration and the pseudo-panel discussion, the discussions and presentations of issues surrounding Vietnam became more formalized, though the vigor and passion surrounding the war remained just as intense. Speakers poured in almost weekly to further inform students on the war. Perhaps the most insightful speaker was Tran Van Dinh, the former South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States under South Vietnamese president Ngo Dinh Diem. A former commander of Viet Minh liberation forces against the French in the 1950’s, Dinh addressed the crowd on “A Vietnamese Perspective” of the war.⁸¹

Dinh outlined three main points about the Vietnam War that he felt should be examined. He pointed out that the United States sent in American troops to fight in Vietnam, even though “they [didn’t] really know who the enemy [was].” When it came to fighting the Viet Cong, Dinh conceded that “it is not possible to put a stop to [the North Vietnamese],” since their ideals of communism were fused with their intense feelings of nationalism and self-determination of government.⁸²

Dinh then discussed what Solberg had alluded to in his articles and debates, which were issues of morality and war and the input of American citizens concerning the war. Dinh expressed moral issues of “bombing the very people we hoped to protect. Bombing is equated with security, yet it creates the opposite reaction because it is unproductive. The legal aspect is equally important: If we bomb the people, how can we claim a government? Killing one or maybe a hundred is equally immoral, [which] depends on a definition of morality.”⁸³

Finally, Dinh pointed out a perceived apathy from the American people about the war. He believed that the "main problem in the U.S. [was] that we, the [citizens], don't care. We don't know anything about Washington affairs. We have to make efforts to become aware of the real facts and act accordingly. The role of the citizen in the United States society is crucial. All of us, we have a stake in the decisions of our government."⁸⁴ Dinh's attitude towards American individuals becoming educated in government issues closely paralleled SDS, who sought for individual participation in democracy.

Perhaps the highest profile name to come to WSU-L related to politics and Vietnam was Mary McCarthy, the daughter of presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy and a freshman at Radcliffe College. She came to La Crosse in lieu of her father, who canceled his trip due to the death of a friend.⁸⁵ Despite a very busy schedule, she found time to meet with a group of WSU-L students to discuss politics and the antiwar movement. Miss McCarthy noted in her conversations with students that "her father [was] drawing a lot student support for his campaign."⁸⁶ The Choice '68 National Collegiate Presidential Primary, conducted on campuses across the country by Time magazine, confirmed Miss McCarthy's observations. Not only did McCarthy get the highest vote total, "85% of [his] supporters voted for either a phased reduction in U.S. military activity or immediate withdrawal of U.S. forces in Vietnam."⁸⁷

Miss McCarthy had a very positive view of the world and shared many common interests with the WSU-L students that she met. She talked about the "rebirth of idealism" and faith that the American political system would eventually work to bring justice and an end to the war in Vietnam. According to Solberg, Miss McCarthy was popular among students because "she brought the McCarthy campaign to a human level" where people could connect to her father. Solberg also believed that her idealism highly influenced her father and was a motivating factor for him to appeal to college students.⁸⁸

By the end of the 1967-68 school year, a loosely organized group of antiwar protestors managed to steer the "movement" in another direction, from debate and theoretical discussion to direct action. Fluctuating between 40-50 antiwar movement students, the small group took their viewpoints to a new level by "caring enough about Vietnam to carry on public debate."⁸⁹ Though public debate created awareness about the war among the student body, Dustin Evens said during the March 20th debate that, "The government and administration thrives on debate and discussion. There is so much discussion, but I never see any action."⁹⁰

As WSU-L students went home for the summer of 1968, hope and empowerment accompanied the students of the antiwar movement. Solberg claimed that speakers, information from The Racquet, and demonstrations and forums "actually got students to say that, hey, maybe there is an alternative to war."⁹¹ The hope and momentum of antiwar students at WSU-L and across the nation, however, was severely bruised by the incidents of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. In August 1968, Hubert H. Humphrey emerged as the favorite for the Democratic nomination for President over McCarthy. Antiwar protestors and McCarthy supporters flocked to Chicago to protest Humphrey and his alignment and support for President Johnson's policies in Vietnam. The protest groups, led by SDS and Student Mobilization Committee (SMC), tried to leave rallies in Grant Park to march towards the venue where the convention was taking place. Though Chicago Mayor Richard Daley, a Humphrey supporter, rejected parade permits for the marches, the crowd tried to march anyways, attracting hoards of police officers in an attempt to beat the protestors back. While Humphrey was being nominated over McCarthy, the police laid siege on anyone associated or near the marches. In the aftermath, over 700 people were arrested, over 1000 people injured and one dead.⁹²

The aftermath of Chicago left antiwar movement students with “their ideals and beliefs viciously beaten by the political establishment.”⁹³ The Racquet, however, saw hope amid the terrible memories that Chicago left:

“America lost a lot in Chicago. It lost a great candidate in Eugene McCarthy. It lost the respect of millions of foreigners—as well as millions of Americans. But more important that all this is the fact that America may have lost their idealism and spirit of its youth. And without this ebullient spirit, America has no future. There is hope, however. There is hope that while the flames of involvement have been doused, the coals will continue to burn. There is hope that the youth of America will rise like the great bird Phoenix, and from the ashes of Chicago a new political order will be constructed based on compassion and understanding.”⁹⁴

The flames of protest and organizing at WSU-L, though quite small during the 1967-68 school year, died down during the following school year. However, they did manage to keep the antiwar coals hot by collecting anecdotes from former WSU-L students who were serving in Vietnam, pressuring and criticizing newly elected President Richard Nixon, and continuing the slant of The Racquet toward more radical viewpoints.

Students in the WSU-L antiwar movement continued to inform others and tried, sometimes through outlandish means, to spark any kind of interest in the student body. The columns and opinion letters in The Racquet became more radical and critical of Vietnam War policies, while attacking student apathy on campus. “Doc Gilligan,” a frequent columnist for The Racquet, had a negative view on the ability of the students to stand for something:

“WSU-L will never have to worry about riots, sit-ins, building takeovers, or walk outs. The students just don’t give a damn. Pride to the average WSU-L student is a twenty-dollar word attached to the car he owns, the amount of beer he drinks, or the piece of paper known as sheep’s skin. The student has forgotten that he is somebody important.”⁹⁵

There were two regularly printed insights by active American soldiers from WSU-L in The Racquet during the 1968-69 school year. Robert Poehling, a 1966 graduate of WSU-L who was active with the La Crosse yearbook and the Circle-K club, was inducted into the Army in February 1968. His letters sent to his WSU-L friends that were printed in The Racquet ran parallel to the views of Solberg, Evens and other antiwar protestors in that they were “devoted to the human relations aspect of the war,” which tried to show how unjust the Vietnam War really was. The tone of his letters were painted with hopelessness and constantly referred to the plight and struggle of the Vietnamese people:

“The tragedy of South Vietnam is that war has become so much a part of their lives that it can only lead to self-destruction and despair. In order to rule themselves, the war must somehow be eliminated from the life of the Vietnamese citizen.”⁹⁶

Though Poehling was only a maintenance clerk with his squadron, he still encountered the real and horrific experiences of war. Dustin Evens was also deeply disturbed by his experiences in the Army and Vietnam, being drafted after graduating from WSU-L. Evens, one of the most dedicated antiwar protestors at WSU-L, was known by his friends as gentle and

caring. Solberg described Evens' situation as one of bitter irony. "Think of the most peaceful, wonderful person you know and drop them in the middle of a horrible war," Solberg said to describe his friend.⁹⁷ Though the Army promised Evens a position as a medic or clerk, he ended up on the battlefields of Vietnam. Letters to his friends that were printed in The Racquet showed both the absurdity of the Army and the treachery of war:

"I talked to one guy who worked all day to build a bunker out of sandbags. That night his Sergeant got [the platoon] together and made them take it down and do it with green sandbags, instead of some gray and some green. This was necessary for our national or even public security?"⁹⁸

Though his days were sprinkled with humor from the "absurdity" of the war, Evens was mostly saddened over the atrocities he witnessed and the hopelessness of war for both the Americans and the Vietnamese:

"I've told you about [Vietnamese] kids eating out of garbage cans. They're still eating of those garbage cans. And the flares go up at night and different people [are dying] than the last time I wrote to you. And for 365 days I'll have to watch kids eat out of garbage cans, and wonder who's dying out there in [the jungle.] Why, oh God, why?"⁹⁹

With regular letters from Poehling and Evens being printed in The Racquet and speakers warning students about the treacheries of the Vietnam War, students at WSU-L were not becoming more radical but at least more informed about the war and exposed to a side that they normally would not see in the mass media. They also learned that the war was becoming more real, especially when popular friends like Poehling and Evens were right in the middle of it.¹⁰⁰

By the end of the 1968-69 school year, the elements of education, dialogue and information at WSU-L showed a minor rebound from the systematic stomping of antiwar protestors in Chicago. Though Nixon put a temporary halt on the draft in November and December 1969, students at WSU-L began to see the trend of Nixon's intermittent cooling of antiwar sentiment with temporary solutions. WSU-L antiwar students began to fight "for all those who [desired] peace to become active again and help bring pressure to bear on the [Nixon] administration."¹⁰¹ The answer to the cry for a wide sweeping peace movement came in the October 15, 1969 national war moratorium, organized nationally by the Vietnam Moratorium Committee (VMC).¹⁰²

A march was organized by the Concerned Citizens for Peace in Vietnam of La Crosse to coincide with the October 15th moratorium. Antiwar protestors began their march at the Mary E. Sawyer Auditorium in downtown La Crosse and moved east towards campus, eventually rallying at the Veterans Memorial Stadium parking lot.¹⁰³ The goal of the march, according to the Concerned Citizens group, was not only to support the end the war but also to spite Nixon, who "remarked at a press conference that he, in no way, would be affected by the [national] moratorium."¹⁰⁴ Though committee chairperson Robert Treu expected only 700 participants, over 1200 antiwar protestors from WSU-L and the community marched six abreast and stretched three blocks long. Singing and chanting accompanied the march and rally, and though some expletives were used, the march went entirely without incident. The highlight of the rally was a speech by Dr. Dick Snyder of the Department of History. He

called for immediate withdrawal of troops from Vietnam and bashed Nixon, claiming that he was “unable to grasp the central idea of protest of [the Vietnam] war.”¹⁰⁵

Nationally, the October Moratorium was a great success. The VMC recruited 7500 field organizers to rally support, which included leading intellectuals like John Kenneth Galbraith and Noam Chomsky, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and Teamsters unions, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) leadership, 24 Democratic U.S. Senators, and interdenominational religious support.¹⁰⁶ Massive demonstrations and small-town gatherings from New York City to Los Angeles brought out millions of Americans not only to protest the war, but also to show that “it was all right and even patriotic to be against the war.”¹⁰⁷

With the October Moratorium being a national and local success, the VMC organized more extensive activities, including a national march on Washington, D.C. on November 15, 1969. Like the October Moratorium, La Crosse antiwar protestors did what they could to contribute to the national effort, such as sending out mass mailings of letters to Nixon that asked for troop withdrawal, leafletting the community with antiwar propaganda, and sponsoring a teach-in and poetry reading.¹⁰⁸

Despite the momentum of the October march, attendance at the local November Moratorium events was marginal. *The Racquet* Editorial Board was furious with the lack of participation and claimed, “that [WSU-L students] really [didn’t] give a damn.”¹⁰⁹ The Vietnam Teach-In’s did attract around 125 students, presented by professors in various departments. One of the presenters was Sheldon Smith from the Department of Sociology, who “discussed the effects of the youth movement to end the war in Vietnam.”¹¹⁰ A behind-the-scenes organizer and ally for the student antiwar movement at the University of Oregon and WSU-L, Smith spoke on topics such as the environmental factors of the war and its effects on both the Vietnamese people and American soldiers. He was one of many faculty members who extended their time and talents to help students organize and speak their mind.¹¹¹

One reason for the disappointing attendance at WSU-L’s November Moratorium events, according to students, particularly those aligned with the Republican Party, was that the November Moratorium offered nothing new as opposed to the October march and rally. Members of the Young Republicans on campus were generally against moratoriums, citing that “the lack of support by the American people [for Nixon] greatly [increased] the hardships endured by our troops in Vietnam.”¹¹² David Skipton, a Young Republicans member, believed that war moratoriums were a waste of time. “The President...knew that opposition in substantial numbers existed. So why the moratorium? Outside of stimulating the candle industry, it did little to help things along.” He also mocked moratorium participants, claiming they were an “effete corps of snobs” who would “not only weaken whatever chances this country [had] of an honorable peace [settlement], but may have [had] the effect of extreme public polarization after the war.”¹¹³

The concept of an “honorable” end to the war that Nixon and WSU-L Young Republicans wanted infuriated La Crosse antiwar protestors. “What the hell is the point of boys getting killed for a gradual peace settlement?” Solberg asked.¹¹⁴ The attitude of avoiding senseless killing of people like Solberg eventually fused with other rationales for getting out of Vietnam, like that of George Wiley, chairman for the National Welfare Rights Organization and zealous antiwar protestor. He wanted to “stop the war and bring home the money to the pockets of the poor. Nixon’s top priority is war. Our top priority is those people

[in the U.S.] who go to bed hungry and babies who never tasted fresh milk.”¹¹⁵The antiwar movement allied with issues of civil rights abuses, poverty, and fiscal irresponsibility, which diversified the national movement beyond just students.

Though local moratorium participants believed their cause was noble and warranted, the interest in the national moratorium dwindled in April 1970. As the numbers receded, fewer and fewer students showed up to leafleting and picketing activities, even as Wisconsin mobilized their own state antiwar moratorium.¹¹⁶ Though the majority of people who marched in the Wisconsin moratorium in Madison were students, La Crosse had a rueful representation of only 30 students and community members. Dubbed a success by the organizers, the statewide march had a lower attendance than other past student-led rallies in Madison. With the national Vietnam Moratorium Committee disbanding after the April moratorium, citing public disinterest and lack of media coverage, the national antiwar movement floundered for new leadership. *The Racquet*, once booming with controversy and political activism, had no new stories or student responses to cover or print.

Just as the antiwar movement at WSU-L began to wilt with the national moratoriums, two major events sparked another massive gathering on campus, bolstering the roller coaster ride of student protests upwards again: the Cambodian Incursion and the deaths of antiwar protestors at Kent (OH) State University. In response a perceived North Vietnamese threat to a new Cambodian government sympathetic to the United States and “eager to attack North Vietnamese sanctuaries,” the United States and South Vietnamese armies invaded North Vietnamese forces and sympathizers in southern Cambodia.¹¹⁷ The Cambodian “incursion” produced “limited results, [claiming] to have killed some 2000 [North Vietnamese] troops, cleared over 1600 acres of jungle, destroyed 8000 bunkers, and captured large stockpiles of weapons.”¹¹⁸ Though Nixon promised a reduction of American military involvement through Vietnamization, or gradually handing over the war controls to the South Vietnamese, protests broke out across the nation and spawned the U.S. Senate to vote to terminate the Tonkin Gulf Resolution of 1964, which President Johnson claimed legitimized early American troop presence. The Cambodian Incursion ultimately left Congress and the American people enraged at Nixon, broke American peace talks with the North Vietnamese in Paris, and opened the door for the Khmer Rouge to eventually take political power in Cambodia.¹¹⁹

Almost 1000 WSU-L students marched on campus in a joint protest of Nixon’s Cambodia war policy and the Kent State shootings. Gathering in front of Main Hall and winding around campus and adjacent off-campus streets, students chanted, raised protest signs, and sported black armbands with peace symbols on them. Rally organizer and student Colin Fagan blasted Nixon and his hypocrisy of peace in Vietnam. Sending troops into Cambodia was a “blatant contradiction” of Nixon’s promise to downscale the war through Vietnamization. Not only did the protestors march against Nixon’s Vietnam policies, but the crowd also moved to support the National Students Association (NSA) in a student class strike. *The Racquet* editor Janel Bladow read the strike proposal in front of the crowd:

“Whereas we believe the U.S. involvement in Cambodia to be an unconstitutional presidential war, and whereas we condemn the U.S. involvement in Vietnam and Laos, and whereas we deplore the actions of the National Guard at Kent State University; we therefore resolve for a nationwide student strike, and we also, therefore, propose a student strike starting Wednesday [May 6] at Wisconsin State University La Crosse.”¹²⁰

Bladow read the proposal again at the 1000 marchers and another 100+ new bystanders rallied between Drake and Wentz residence halls. With very feeble opposition from a few students, the crowds moved to adopt the proposal for a student class strike.

Though the student class strikes lasted only one day, WSU-L students still demonstrated their ardent dismay for the Vietnam War. Students picketed outside Main and Cowley Halls, though "protesting students remained orderly and did not disrupt or prevent students [who wished] to attend class."¹²¹ Professors from the Department of History, especially Professors Vettes, Richard Snyder, James Parker, and Martin Zanger, continued their efforts to educate and help rally antiwar support among the student body. Their presentations at the teach-in reiterated the history of Vietnam, the determination of the Vietnamese people and Ho Chi Minh to create their own nation and government, the failing efforts of Vietnamization, and the outrage over the Cambodian Incursion.

Members of the religions ministries at WSU-L also contributed to the student class strike and commented mainly on the morality of the war. Rev. George Hinger from the Newman Center pronounced, "War contributes to the degradation of all men."¹²² Rev. Gary Putnam from United Campus Ministry reassured the students "that to oppose war as unpatriotic is a fallacy. To have respect for another human being is patriotic to your God."¹²³ Putnam was also very active in draft counseling for WSU-L males and counseled around 300 males in the Spring 1971 semester alone.¹²⁴

The protest and rally also showed student contempt for the Kent State shootings. On May 4, 1970, Kent State students were part of the 4.5 million students nationwide who protested the invasion of Cambodia. Though the town of Kent, OH was a politically conservative town, the school attracted students from working class families from northeastern Ohio because it offered cheaper tuition than neighboring private schools. Because of this working class and union background, the student body was the prime breeding ground for socialist groups, labor parties, and SDS. The most public antiwar group at Kent State was the Kent Committee to End the War in Vietnam, who organized protests and peace rallies as early as February 1965. From the very beginning of the Kent Committee and SDS activity at Kent State, they faced heavy opposition from hawkish students, Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC), campus and city police, and the FBI in the forms of intimidation, interrogation, undercover surveillance, and violence.¹²⁵

Taking orders from Ohio Governor J.A. Rhodes, the National Guard moved into Kent on May 3, 1970 in anticipation of violence in the town. There was complete disarray between the National Guard, Kent State police, and the City of Kent police as to jurisdiction rules and how to mobilize in order to keep the peace in the city. None of the three military/law enforcement bodies consulted Kent State President R.I. White for his advise, furthering the confusion when the National Guard showed up on campus the next day.¹²⁶ On May 4, about 500 students turned out for a rally to be held at noon on campus. Shortly before noon, the National Guard fired tear gas into the crowd while they moved "shoulder-to-shoulder" towards the students and into a defense position. In anger, the students moved closer to the soldiers, throwing rocks and spent tear gas cans at them. Feeling that the students were getting too close, the Guard opened fire on the students, discharging 61 shots in 13 seconds. In the aftermath, four students were killed in what was the most lethal attack on students during the anti-Vietnam War protests in the United States.¹²⁷

Student reactions to the Kent State murders were mixed in severity, but all students interviewed by The Racquet agreed that the shootings were unnecessary. Shirley Bjork had a moderate view, stating that, "I know that some students were killed and I don't think that it

was necessary." George Moestue, however, saw the shootings on a larger scale. "The action taken by the National Guard was an atrocity to all people in the U.S." Other students, like Stu Frandorf, placed direct responsibility on the National Guard, citing that "the Kent State University students had every right to protest [U.S.] foreign policy."¹²⁸ These student reactions were the complete antithesis of the Madison riots, where polled WSU-L students thought that police officers were justified in striking student protestors. This showed that perhaps the education presented by the antiwar movement was starting to rub off on the values of the WSU-L student body.

As the 1970-71 school year rolled around, WSU-L had seen its last major protests against the Vietnam War drift away, falling back into the "stage of information." Once again, a small group of antiwar students maintained the charge at WSU-L. Only a handful of students attended a meeting sponsored by Susan Voss, a regional coordinator for Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (SMC), who advocated, "that only through a united front of students and workers could the people of [the United States] hope to be heard by the war makers in Washington." She urged WSU-L students to start a SMC chapter on campus, citing that recent protest rallies had been successful in forcing "President Nixon to...guarantee [that] U.S. armies be out of [Vietnam] by a certain date."¹²⁹

In December 1970, nine WSU-L students involved in the newly formed La Crosse SMC went to a national conference sponsored by the National Peace Action Coalition (NPAC).¹³⁰ The convention met to plan antiwar activities for the spring semester, "including rallies, meetings, picket lines, vigils, teach-ins, press conferences, referenda, etc., to be organized on a local basis to build opposition to Nixon's escalation and further continuation of the war." This proposal by the national SMC validated the La Crosse SMC's previous activities, including a rally in support of the "Kent State 25" students who were indicted on second degree riot counts from the May 1970 shootings.¹³¹ Again, attendance at these events was marginal and never rose above 200 people. Most of them were local high school students or SMC members from Winona (MN) State University.¹³²

Despite low participation numbers, the La Crosse SMC chapter quickly became the leader of the SMC chapters around Wisconsin, hosting the first regional antiwar conference in Wisconsin, including over 15 colleges and universities and many more high schools.¹³³ At the conference, the SMC established new chapters in Eau Claire, River Falls and Stevens Point campuses, worked to network with women's and veterans groups to bring "more sectors of the population into the antiwar movement," and to formally ally with the NPAC. Though the new changes sought to extend the reach of the SMC to different groups, they still maintained, "that the antiwar struggle to be a peaceful, non-exclusionary, independent mass action [for] immediate withdrawal of troops from Vietnam."¹³⁴

The La Crosse SMC was not discouraged by the lack of students interested in their programs, as they continued to educate the campus on Vietnam War issues. Responding to Nixon's two-year draft extension in January 1971, the La Crosse SMC felt like "the majority of U.S. citizens, [that] Mr. Nixon [was] not going to end the war in the near future." The La Crosse SMC held an educational workshop on February 9, 1971 called "Which Direction for the Antiwar Movement?" covering anti-Vietnam War history, tactics of past antiwar protest groups, and the importance of mass demonstrations of people from diverse backgrounds in giving the antiwar movement legitimacy.¹³⁵

Another issue that the La Crosse SMC addressed at the workshop was the presence of Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) at WSU-L. Until 1970, ROTC was never really an issue on campus. In October 1969, the WSU system reported that a mere 691 males, only

4%, at four system schools were in ROTC.¹³⁷ Though there was an increase of ROTC programs at colleges and universities throughout the time span of the war, it could not keep with the significant national drop in ROTC members. By November 1969, ROTC reported a 14% national drop of participating males due to increasing opposition to the war, the draft, and threats to ROTC members and facilities on campuses across the country.^{CXXXVII} For example, in light of the Kent State shootings in May 1970, over 30 ROTC buildings burned at American campuses such as Madison, Yale, and Michigan State.¹³⁸

It appeared that WSU-L would be salvaged from having an ROTC program, according to WSU-L Vice-President Maurice Graff. He cited in The Racquet in October 1970 recent reductions of government funding for ROTC programs and the lack of proper facilities as the main reasons for not having a ROTC program.¹³⁹ However, just three months later, WSU-L President Kenneth Lindner said that, “he saw no problems with implementing ROTC [at WSU-L].” Lindner was happy that the Army chose WSU-L as an ROTC site:

“Personally, I am delighted. It provides an additional opportunity to our students, as many of them go into the service after they graduate. Philosophically, I want to see Army officers trained at universities such as ours where they will get a good background in the workings of democracy.”¹⁴⁰

The enthusiasm of President Lindner to have ROTC on campus was met with skepticism of the faculty and opposition from the La Crosse SMC. The Faculty Senate discussed the issue for two hours at a meeting in February 1971, due only to a petition of inquiry by several faculty members. Though the Faculty Senate voted 12-7 to subject the ROTC program “to the same procedures and scrutiny that any proposed academic programs are given” on campus, they did not move to reject Lindner’s endorsement. Allen Bircher, Faculty Senate President, cited that “the [Faculty Senate] had every opportunity to say we didn’t want [ROTC]. We chose to do nothing.”¹⁴¹

The La Crosse SMC immediately mobilized to protest the decision of President Lindner and the apathy of the Faculty Senate. SMC student member Jim Havnen, a staunch antiwar and anti-Nixon supporter, took the reigns of the SMC at February 9 “Which Direction for the Antiwar Movement?” workshop concerning ROTC issues. He blasted ROTC, claiming that, “the university was ‘a center of academic learning,’ not a place to ‘learn military tactics and how to best murder Vietnamese.’”¹⁴² He also felt that the administration and faculty was “violating the neutrality of campus.”¹⁴³ Citing this alleged unfairness, he claimed that, “if ROTC should be on campus with credits and degrees then a Peace Studies department should be financed by the school, with credits and degrees given for that study.”¹⁴⁴

Two days later, a powerful opinion letter written by Havnen appeared in The Racquet. His first major point addressed the inequity of having ROTC on campus:

“How do you think that WSU-L administration would react if SMC demanded its own classrooms, office space, storage space, and parade ground? They would be told that the facilities aren’t available, and even if they were, they couldn’t do it because they would have to offer all the other organizations the same facilities. ROTC will receive all of these with a warm smile and a handshake. How would the administration react if SMC would approach them and ask for the right to teach the arts of violence, such as Mob Violence 201, Effective Window Smashing 342,

Advanced Fire Bombing 357, and so on? The leaders of SMC would probably be thrown in jail just for asking. ROTC on the other hand will teach the most devastating method for killing political adversaries know to man—FOR CREDIT!¹⁴⁵

Havnen also attacked what he perceived as the apathetic, conservative nature and hypocrisy of the university community in accepting ROTC on campus:

“The fact [is] that La Crosse has been trying to get ROTC for years and has been turned down every time. But let’s face it; ROTC is getting very hard up for a place to hang its helmet. It is being thrown off every major campus across the United States. Students everywhere are refusing to allow the war machine to push them around. They are ending a generation of campus complicity with the war machine. And in such bad times as these, what better place for ROTC to turn than quiet, apathetic, right-wing La Crosse. A subdued school which will welcome them with open arms and pocket book.”¹⁴⁶

Though the SMC displayed their resistance to ROTC on campus, President Lindner clearly did not heed to any student opinion. In an update in *The Racquet*, Lindner proclaimed that, “ROTC is coming. This is a firm position. The decision has been made and [the university] will acquire personnel to implement the program in September 1971.”¹⁴⁷ The issue was never formally brought to the student body, and only once was a referendum for student opinion even mentioned.¹⁴⁸ From President Lindner’s February announcement of ROTC approval to the beginning of ROTC enrollment in mid-March 1971, SMC members “accused President Lindner of acting without polling student opinion or projecting the feasibility of ROTC operations on campus.”¹⁴⁹ Though a select group of SMC members addressed the issue, they failed to entice the student body to rise up with them. The student body was apathetic about the ROTC controversy, though one opinion letter in *The Racquet* by “Sharon,” claimed that “[SMC] is constantly advocating democracy, yet they talk about the elimination and prevention of another view on campus—ROTC. This is democracy in action? I hardly think so! Perhaps the SMC should take a close look at their values and goals, and if I may cite a cliché, ‘Practice what you preach.’”¹⁵⁰

Beginning in the fall of 1971, ROTC began their tenure at WSU-L and was placed under the College of Letters and Sciences because, according to President Lindner, “of administrative purposes.”¹⁵¹ This College included the Department of History, whose faculty was one of the most public about resisting the American military presence in Vietnam. From the beginning of ROTC at WSU-L until the end of the war, the student antiwar movement was at the declining end of the antiwar roller coaster. From Fall 1971 to Spring 1972, there were no substantial rallies against the Vietnam War or ROTC. *The Racquet* continued to run national articles on draft counseling and ROTC, not in opposition but information on joining, information sessions, and the financial benefits that they offered.¹⁵² *The Racquet*, who once ardently opposed any faction associated with the Vietnam War, began to run full-page ads for ROTC right next to stories about the war. Outrageous stories from Vietnam, like the My Lai massacre, only received a few paragraphs in February 1972, where the Cambodian incursion sparked over 1000 WSU-L students to protest just 18 months previous.¹⁵³ This was a direct sign that even the small, adamant antiwar protestors at WSU-L were growing weary of the war.

A new student and community group called The La Crosse Committee Against the War organized one last tired attempt at mass demonstration by WSU-L students in April 1972. The La Crosse Committee still believed that rallying was effective in stopping the war, by asking, "Who is to say just how involved in war we would be now if it weren't for all those [people in] previous years who believed in democracy enough to risk voicing their opinions?"^{cliv} Four hundred students and community members attended the march and rally from Cartwright Center to the La Crosse Post Office by the La Crosse Committee on May 4, 1972.^{clv} The speakers at Cartwright Center adamantly condemned the further military escalation by Nixon against the Hanoi government. After the speakers, the crowd moved through campus to pick up more students and marched to Cameron Park in Downtown La Crosse. Parade marshals kept protestors on the sidewalks as they chanted several liberal and obscene chants about the war. With the city police watching closely, the protestors held a candlelight vigil, led by the Revs. Allan Townsend, Norman Erickson and Gary Putnam, who "stressed a theme of love over hate...for [the] Vietnam War."¹⁵⁶

After the candlelight vigil, 150 of the protestors moved from Cameron Park into 4th St., marching to the Rivoli Theatre and completely blocking the street.¹⁵⁷ The protestors eventually stopped at the intersection of 4th and Main St., while "some sat and smoked [and] others lit candles and either held them or placed them on the street."¹⁵⁸ The restless police called Dr. Harvey Ideus, WSU-L Director of Placement, from the crowd, and with some reluctance, the police allowed Dr. Ideus to move the students from the intersection. The demonstration, from Cartwright Center to the dispersal of the crowd, lasted almost three hours.¹⁵⁹ Though there were no physical clashes with the protestors, the police believed the protestors were lucky they left unscathed. One officer said, "[the] police could be criticized for not making arrests of obvious law violations; on the other hand, arrests probably would have led to major trouble." Another officer said, "It made me sick to see a Lutheran minister (Erickson) leading a group who would use [obscene] words. If I were him, I'd have gotten out and not had anything to do with it."¹⁶⁰ Though generous with their conduct, the police obviously felt intimidated by the demonstration and were shocked that Erickson would be involved in protest activity, which further showed the conservative nature of the La Crosse community towards antiwar protestors.

Aside from a few side comments in The Racquet after May 1972, the antiwar movement quietly dwindled down to nothing. Anne Kienitz, The Racquet editor-in-chief in 1974-75, finally laid the antiwar movement at WSU-L to rest in April 1975, as the last American soldiers were finally leaving Vietnam:

"Vietnam. There is not much more to be said that has not been said in the past 20 years. Not being a student of political science, I'm not completely sure who did or didn't do the right thing. But then, neither are most political experts.

We failed in Vietnam, militarily and politically, because we failed to take the time to learn the difference between Asian and American values. It was a tragic lesson. It cost us 55,000 lives. Let's hope it was a lesson well learned."¹⁶¹

The opinion by Kienitz is essentially the point that Dr. William Vettes made in 1966, in that the United States underestimated the Vietnamese and were eventually defeated not by Vietnamese communism, but their strong drive of nationalism and self-determination of government.

The antiwar movement at WSU-L also died out because the core group of students that kept it alive finally graduated and moved on. Activists like Solberg, Evens, Janel Bladow, and others came to college at relatively the same time and were all gone by 1972. The combination of a struggling national antiwar movement and an eventual American peace agreement with the North Vietnamese put the movement to rest. However, these core groups of vocal and behind-the-scenes activists were the catalyst in rallying support for issues on campus and motivating the WSU-L student body to become aware of the world around them.

If the antiwar movement at WSU-L were placed on a grid, it would have a roller coaster shape. The "stage of information" served as the rising action of the roller coaster by stimulating discussion in the classroom and The Racquet about activism and politics associated with the war and the controversy over SDS and freedom of speech. The peak of the "stage of information" was the presence of Dow Chemical on both the Madison and La Crosse campuses, sparking issues of morality and war and bringing La Crosse its first public protest aimed directly at American involvement in Vietnam.

After 1967-68, a year filled with protests, panel discussions, guest speakers, and hope for peace in Vietnam, the roller coaster plunged with the August 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. The antiwar movement at WSU-L and across the nation tried to pick up the pieces of McCarthy's loss and police brutality on antiwar protestors by building up the "stage of information." Continued efforts by The Racquet to cover antiwar news and publish personal anecdotes by past WSU-L students in Vietnam attempted to bring the war into the personal lives of the student body and break their "apathy." It was only when national events occurred, such as the October 1969 national war moratorium, that WSU-L antiwar protestors were able to appeal to the student body on a wide scale. Just as the Concerned Citizens for Peace in Vietnam of La Crosse were able to attract 1200 people to the October march and rally, the majority of them fell through the cracks during the November moratorium and brought the roller coaster back down.

As the roller coaster plummeted, another series of national events, the Cambodian incursion and the Kent State shootings, brought WSU-L students out in droves. The vast majority of the 1100 people present at the Cambodia/Kent State rally were for a student strike, but very few of them actually showed up to picketing, leafleting, and teach-in activities. This was a serious indication that the average WSU-L student was just along for the antiwar protest ride, hopping on when large rallies occurred but never following through on further commitments.

A few attempts to rekindle the antiwar protest fire, such as the La Crosse SMC and resistance to ROTC, were attempted by antiwar students. Not only did the average WSU-L student body remain indifferent towards resisting the war in Vietnam, the antiwar movement suffered from a lack of sheer numbers. The core group of 50+ antiwar protestors made up only a fraction of the student population. Schools like Madison had more success because a small fraction of their student population was large enough to organize a substantial protest movement. A small student body, mixed with apathy for resisting the war, made the antiwar protest movement at WSU-L a constant uphill battle.

The one substantial achievement of the WSU-L antiwar movement was the persistence they had to educate other students about the Vietnam War and radical viewpoints about the war and politics. An average student could learn many things by reading the columns and national stories printed by The Racquet. A select group of faculty members, like Sheldon Smith, Merrill Barnebey, and members of the Department of History, took the extra time to

write to The Racquet and present at teach-ins to at least offer alternative viewpoints to the war. Solberg claimed that he helped many male students avoid military service with his draft counseling. He certainly would have been in the military after being drafted if he was not educated about how to avoid it.¹⁶² The legacy of the small but dedicated WSU-L anti-Vietnam War movement was that of diligence, fervor, and a sense of moral obligation to educate their fellow classmates, and though they did not move mountains with their efforts, they probably ended up saving some lives and making more educated citizens out of their cohorts.

LIMITATIONS

My main concern with my primary sources, especially The Racquet, was that it was hard to find a truly accurate portrayal of the opinion of the entire student body on the war, since the majority of the writers, articles, and opinion letters were slanted towards the antiwar point of view. I was also limited by time as to the number of oral interviews I conducted. I could only do a few interviews because of the extensive time commitment to prepare questions and transcribe the interviews from audiotape into written notes. The e-mail comments I received from WSU-L male alumni were helpful, but it was hard to document experiences in any depth from e-mail correspondence. I was also geographically limited to who I could interview, since many WSU-L antiwar protestors I wanted to interview now reside outside of the La Crosse area.

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