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Student Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam
National Office: 1029 Vermont Ave. N.W.
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October 31, 1969

Dear Friend,

We are writing you about some issues of great concern to the student antiwar movement, and the antiwar movement as a whole. A tendency toward exclusion of the Student Mobilization Committee and buckling to pressure from the Establishment -- including red-baiting pressure -- has been exhibited recently by some of the officers of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam.

On October 25 the New Mobe Executive Committee, composed of officers and project directors, held a meeting in Philadelphia. Several SMC staff members were also present. Also invited were the four coordinators of the Vietnam Moratorium Committee, two of whom attended. But the Student Mobilization Committee was not invited, although SMC had asked to come. When two SMC representatives went to Philadelphia and telephoned the meeting while it was in progress, they were told the group voted nine to five to exclude the SMC from this particular meeting.

This comes at a time when the newspapers are full of rumors of "split" between those sections of the movement with connections with congressmen and those sections of the movement such as the SMC which have no such ties, and when politicians -- from Agnew to Harriman -- are making statements that some parts of the movement, like the sponsors of the Moratorium, are "acceptable" while others, such as the New Mobe and Student Mobe, which are non-exclusionary, are not.

We have no quarrel with inviting representatives of the Vietnam Moratorium to planning meetings. We welcome their participation in such meetings and their support for the November 15 action. They are a part of the movement as it is developing and broadening, and there is a place in the movement for liberals oriented toward electoral activity within the Democratic and Republican parties. But to exclude the SMC under such pressures is a travesty and we do not intend to stand for it.

One of the things to be discussed at the meeting was speakers at the rally November 15. There is great concern in some quarters that Senators be invited. We do not reject this since important sections of the movement feel that is what they want. These congressmen are coming to us because of the tremendous pressure from the mass of American people to bring the U.S. forces home from Vietnam. But these congressmen bring with them demands and pressures which, if yielded to, will destroy the antiwar movement and allow the Nixon administration to continue the war as it wishes.

For example, Representative Lester Wolff (D-N.Y.) said he would endorse the November Washington events as soon as the New Mobilization Committee acts to "purge from its ranks those elements that have the avowed goal of destroying our society." In the minds of such people anyone who wants fundamental changes in the system or who doesn't believe that American society is the last word in human achievement is out to "destroy society." All such radicals must be purged before Wolff will support the movement. That is the logic of the Joseph McCarthy witch hunt, and the logic of the cold war. It is one of the most important points on which the antiwar movement must educate the American people because it is this logic -- or rather illogical hysteria -- which has allowed the warmakers to commit genocide in Vietnam.

Demands like this from Representative Wolff -- and pressures of the same kind from less crudely outspoken congressmen (some of whom gave their support to the October Moratorium) -- have a history in the movement. The present movement was built by rejecting such red-baiting and attempts at exclusion. Back in 1965, sections of the more liberal oriented peace movement demanded of SDS similar things when SDS called the very first mass demonstration against the Vietnam war. The organizers of the march stood firm, however, and that march was the beginning of the movement we have today.

Now that the antiwar movement has grown to be a powerful force, the Nixon administration and others are attempting to split it. One example is the Agnew-Nixon demand that the movement repudiate the letter sent to the American peace forces by Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. In this announcement, the administration was appealing to the most backward sentiments of the American population to discredit the antiwar movement. If you don't repudiate this support, said Agnew, you are an agent of Hanoi and totalitarian godless Communism. This is the old cold-war hysteria. If a Communist happens to agree with you on a point you must repudiate him, and after that, you must repudiate anyone else the witch hunters pin a label on.

The SMC rejected Agnew's demand. Regardless of what we may think of Hanoi's history and program -- and there are many views on this among members of SMC -- we agree with Pham Van Dong on at least one thing, the need for immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops from Vietnam. We are proud of our policy of non-exclusion and therefore welcome all who are willing to participate within such a framework. We welcome participation by all individuals, be they congressmen or not, willing to join with us in calling for immediate total withdrawal of all U.S. troops from Vietnam.

We issued a press statement which put the blame for the death of the 40,000 American GIs of our generation where it belongs -- on the U.S. administrations that have prosecuted this war against Vietnam -- and we welcomed this message in our common struggle for the immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops and said that the U.S. should

limit its interference in Vietnamese affairs to such letters.

Unfortunately the Moratorium Committee did not respond as we did. Neither did the New Mobe. Although the steering committee of the New Mobe, a broadly representative body, decided to answer the attack in a similar form, the answer has yet to be released publicly.

The explanation by co-chairmen of New Mobe when questioned about this is that such a forthright answer to Agnew might alienate some of the more moderate individuals and groups whose support we hope to obtain for the November actions. No matter how you stack it, this is yielding to pressure from the establishment, is a usurpation of a steering committee decision, and is totally unwise and undemocratic. We believe it is untenable to abandon basic principles in this manner. The logic of this trend is to adapt totally to the more establishment-oriented wing of the peace movement and to become dependent on their whims and fears, instead of drawing them into the antiwar movement and educating the new people coming around.

The same type of pressure exists in relation to the speakers list at the November 15 rally in Washington. Some of the more establishment-oriented forces have been pressuring the New Mobe to remove from the speakers list the more militant spokesmen of the antiwar movement, including the Student Mobilization Committee. To invite a Senator is one thing, but to remove the Student Mobilization Committee or anyone else because the Senator may object, is quite another.

Our generation has given more than numbers to the peace movement. Even more important has been our contribution in helping to establish the political principles which have built the movement and kept it strong. These principles include the following points on which the SMC is based. (1) For immediate and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. forces from Vietnam; (2) for non-exclusion, for rejection of red-baiting of any form; (3) for mass legal peaceful demonstrations which are independent of any political parties or candidates; and (4) for democratic decision making in the movement.

Some of the new forces that are speaking out against the war do not agree with all these points. This makes it all the more important and imperative that in welcoming their support to the antiwar cause, and strengthening the unity of the movement, we do not alter or abandon these principles which can really force an end to the war.

We wrote this letter to let you know what is going on, what some of our thinking is on this matter and to urge the New Mobilization Committee to stand firm on the basic principles on which this movement was built and make sure that the November 15 mass demonstration in Washington is a truly historic antiwar action.

s/Carol Lipman, for the National
Interim Working Committee