

Stop with the buttons and start with a policy

Public relations men are taking over Washington. And somehow they are convincing every administration that economic problems can't be solved without a gimmick.

Roosevelt had the New Deal, and it worked well until his opponents said "big deal" and asked him to deal again. Nixon had Phase 1...and Phase 2...and Phase 3...and so on until the program was finally phased out.

Not to be outdone, the Ford administration developed WIN (Whip Inflation Now), a smooth little campaign that somehow got perfectly sane people to wear red and white WIN buttons as if they were some magic talisman that would ward off inflation. The campaign died a quick death last weekend.

Presumably President Ford devised WIN for some other purpose than keeping the campaign button industry going until the next election. The concept was a kind of bandwagon approach to economics: if we all get together and talk about how bad inflation is, how can it help but go away?

But WIN got off to a bad start immediately. Americans didn't rush to the post office to place their orders for buttons, probably because they realized that anything free is also worthless. If the government had charged 25 cents and two boxtops, things might have gone better. It's a wonder they didn't think of it.

If WIN proved anything, it proved that the American public isn't as gullible as Washington thinks. Local and individual volunteer efforts to fight inflation are idealistic. Realistically, the final solution must be achieved in Washington.

Perhaps now that WIN has lost, the administration can stop designing buttons and start designing a viable economic policy.

Wes Albers



Civil disobedience—draft resister's moral duty

As the amnesty program for Vietnam era draft resisters comes to its ambiguous end, it might be worthwhile to take a final look at this bitterly contested issue before it fades into historical obscurity.

An amnesty program is a wonderful thing if the society who has considered an individual a social criminal, removes that label and admits that the resister's position was correct. The world would doubtless be more sane and peaceful if societies recognized their mistakes and injustices, were willing to admit them and, indeed, reward those who sensed the wrong early.

But, alas, there is no such movement afoot. The justification for President Ford's limited amnesty program was not in recognizing an American mistake, nor in allowing those who had assessed the situation correctly to return as redeemed heroes.

No indication that America may have been wrong appears as a justification of the program, rather amnesty is regarded as a tool to relieve personal and family hardships and to heal the nation's wounds. Clearly the amnesty program is not a reward for having been morally right.

I would not argue that one who views a law as unjust should allow himself to play a part in perpetuating the injustice of that law by following its dictates. Neither do I think that those disagreeing with a portion of law (such as a draft law) should allow themselves to be imprisoned, simply because a society cannot exist without law and thus all laws—both just and unjust—must be honored in order for a social order to be maintained.

But allowing oneself to be imprisoned as an act of civil disobedience is more fruitful than leaving the country and thus allow things to remain the same.

Civil disobedience has been a means of defying injustice in the State since ancient times. Socrates in drinking the hemlock, Antigone in sprinkling dust on the body of her brother, Christ in carrying the cross, Thoreau in refusing to pay his poll tax, and Gandhi in advocating mass violation of offensive laws—each was committing an act of civil disobedience.

It is not only necessary to feel that a law is unjust, but also to make a positive commitment against it. Feebly expressing one's desire that justice should prevail does little tangible in its favor. One who feels strongly enough about the injustice of a law to disobey it should also be prepared to do the utmost to change it.

rick johnson

rhymes and reasons

I find it somewhat difficult to sympathize with those who left the country as a result of a moral conviction that the Vietnamese war was unjust.

Leaving the country to avoid prosecution for disobedience is admitting the authority of the government to control its citizen's thoughts and consciences. By remaining within a society and not changing one's views even in the face of punishment,

one is proving that conscience is superior to brute power. To leave while one disapproves of the laws or measures of a government is in a sense yielding allegiance and support to those measures and laws.

All men serve their society with either their minds or their bodies, few men serve with their consciences. These latter serve as what Socrates called "a sort of gadfly which all day long and in all places is always fastening upon you, arousing and persuading the reproaching you."

Thoreau comments that, "if injustice is part of the necessary friction of the machine of government...and it is of such a nature that it requires you to be the agent of injustice to another, then, I say break the law. Let your life be a counter friction to stop the machine".

This is the case of those who saw injustice in the Vietnam war and are now in Canada or Sweden. Even though injustice was a "part of the necessary friction of the machine of government" during the Vietnam war, they recognized that fact, they offered no counter friction—the machine in fact ran even more efficiently without them.

The estimates of the number of draft resisters and deserters from the Vietnam era run anywhere from 15,000 to 50,000 persons. Had there been this many persons either imprisoned or with pending legal action it is unlikely the war would have lasted as long as it did.

Those who left the country can claim no moral victory. They did little to remedy the evil of an unjust war. They recognized the evil, but that is only half the battle.

