

from plains

action similar to the takeover?
 "No, because today's students are first and foremost far livelier," he said, acknowledging that his reaction was a generalization.

He said he cannot pinpoint a time when the change in attitude took place, but he thinks Watergate had a lot to do with it.

"THE LARGE majority of students were disillusioned (after Watergate)," he said. "I fault Nixon for that more than for anything. Students began to wonder, 'if we can't believe our president, who can we believe?'"

Dan Ladely, a student involved in the M & N Building incident and current director of the Sheldon Film Theatre, is also disillusioned, but his feelings are directed toward the students.

"I see students as out for a good time and to make lots of bucks," he said.

He said the students of the 60s had, and continue to have, attitudes which promote change and are now involved in other forms of protest, such as those against nuclear power and weapons.

Ladely said it is true they are not as visible, but noted, "You can't make a living off of protesting."

The activities at UNL during the 60s were "pretty tame," according to Ladely, adding that the even such small happenings contributed to keeping the country aware of the conflict.

It would take another war and the draft to get students to react in the way they did in 1970, he claimed.



Photo by Daily Nebraskan

Students are hurrying toward the 80s with career goals and personal plans, neither of which allows time to worry about war or the draft. Societal concerns belong to the students of the Vietnam era, when anti-war protests riled even the docile Nebraska campus.

Society minus draft equals passivity

By Randy Essex

It was the end of the 1960s. Earlier in the decade, a songwriter named Barry McGuire had told America it faced the "Eve of Destruction."

But in the fall of 1969, at Max Yasgur's upstate New York farm, the lyrics were different. Yasgur had provided the site for the largest and most famous gathering of the counter culture, which emerged in the 60s.

The hundreds of thousands at Woodstock inspired Joni Mitchell's words: "... And I dreamed I saw the bombers riding shotgun in the sky, turning into butterflies above our nation..."

At the same time, American bombers flew raids over North Vietnam, destroying supply routes and defoliating the jungles with hapalm.

The bombers did not turn into butterflies in the 1970s, but, in time, the deadly strikes ceased. The draft ended, anti-war protests stopped, and many have felt the political climate of the 70s has mellowed.

"The counter culture is dead," according to State Sen. Dave Landis, who finished his undergraduate study at UNL in 1970.

"The big thing missing (politically in the 1970's) is the draft," said another state senator who was active in the anti-war movement.

"The experts promised us a short war, designed to preserve democracy. We kept hearing that we were turning the corner, that the light was at the end of the tunnel... after years of hearing that, one had to realize that was not going to happen," Steve Fowler said.

Bill Arfmann, an administrative assistant for Landis, was an ASUN senator in 1970-71. He said the draft personalized the war for students, and "was clearly the reason for the visibility of the movement on that scale."

"Students then said the grading system was A, B, C, D or Nam," said Pete Maslowski, a UNL history professor.

John Braeman, another UNL history professor, said he thinks three groups of people joined in the anti-war movement.

"The first group was worried about the draft. They didn't want to get their ass shot off. It was self-interest, pure and simple," Braeman said. He characterized the second anti-war group as "fuzzy-minded liberals," who believed in passivity and "one-worldism."

The third group, he said, provided the driving force of the movement. "They were either pro-communist or so violently anti-American that they really wanted the Viet Cong to win the war."

Maslowski said "we thought we were trying to make this government live up to its ideals."

Maslowski was a graduate student at Ohio State in 1971, when four students were killed on the Kent State, Ohio, campus by National Guardsmen who were called out during anti-war activities.

"My apartment was next to one of the streets where the Columbus (Ohio) police were mobilizing for one of their sweeps through campus. I heard the police saying

things like, 'I can't wait to club one of those little fuckers over the head.' It was some of the most obscene, foul language you could imagine," Maslowski said.

He added, however, that he felt the National Guard and the Columbus police handled themselves well, under "enormous provocation," like students throwing marshmallows at the guardsmen or getting on their knees "going oink, oink, oink."

Braeman said he thought most Americans felt anti-war demonstrators got what they deserved. He also said very few people were involved in the anti-war movement — that most Americans normally sit back and watch political events unfold.

But Maslowski said it was idealism that motivated the demonstrators, not only in the anti-war movement, but concerning civil rights and environmental issues, which began to surface in the late 60s.

Fowler also said the supporters of civil rights, the anti-war movement and certain other issues of the 70s have challenged status quo presumptions.

Rallies for the issues of the 70s lack the immediacy of war, and are not as deeply felt as the civil rights cause, all sources said.

Maslowski noted that the events of 1968 — the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the black power demonstration by John Carlos and Tommie Smith in the Mexico City Summer Olympics, the riot in Chicago during the Democratic National Convention and the Tet offensive in Vietnam — had to have a psychological impact on the American people.

The Tet Offensive was misjudged by the American press as a Communist victory, Maslowski said. In the offensive, 90,000 Viet Cong, who normally fought in the Vietnamese hamlets as guerrillas, exposed themselves in a traditional attack, he said.

Of the 90,000 Viet Cong in the offensive, 40,000 were killed.

Because the Tet offensive was portrayed as an American loss by the press, it contributed to the negative events of 1968.

1968 was followed by Kent State, Watergate and the resignation of a president.

"It's hard for a people to keep up a high emotional pitch for too long," Maslowski said. Since 1972, he said Americans have been subdued in their political action.

"But I see a recuperative factor emerging. I see a will to stand up and rebuild."

Fowler said although political action has not been as visible in the 70s as in the 60s, he thinks a great deal has been accomplished in the women's rights movement. Handicapped rights, personal liberties and the nuclear power issue have also been brought to the forefront.

Braeman said not much has changed from the 60s to the 70s. The 1972 presidential election, with the resounding defeat of George McGovern, showed that the values of those leading movements in the 60s did not represent the will of the country as a whole.

"The more radical you were (in the 60s), the more crushed you are now," Landis said. "The more directly involved you were, the less nostalgic you are."

"The system is omnipotent to a bunch of students carrying placards around on campus.

"But not shattered was the idea of participatory democracy," he said.

Braeman disagreed.

"This is not a democracy; it is a republic. In a republic, the citizens' participation usually is through representatives.

"One of the great fallacies of the 60s was that of participatory democracy," he said.



Photo by Daily Nebraskan

A familiar face. It brought new connotations to the presidency and government in general during the past decade. Former president Richard Nixon "felt comfortable" when he visited the UNL campus in 1971, when anti-war sentiment ran high elsewhere in the United States.