

Honoring the POWs

By Gary Wills

The second-highest officer of the returned POWs confessed on TV that he had made broadcasts against the war, as a result of torture, and he was deeply ashamed of that act. His fellows, understanding the man's limits, did not judge him, but understood. And none of us has the right to do anything but concur with them.

On the same night, another POW described how he volunteered to make anti-war broadcasts. Given time to reflect on what he was doing, he reached a conclusion many of his contemporaries (and some of his former commanders) had reached back home. The war had been a disastrous mistake; and continuation of it, as a way of denying that mistake, was a crime.

Some of the other POWs take a very harsh attitude toward such volunteer war critics. The assumption seems to be that they were cowards. Perhaps some were;

but this man did not seem to be. He volunteered not only to denounce the war in Vietnam, where the act might win him some favor; but now, on his return, he volunteers again to denounce it, where his act meets with approbrium.

And this raises the interesting question: What should a war critic have done in a POW's circumstances? It stands to reason that a certain percentage of those men would become disillusioned with our venture. Parts of all our society had shown this change in attitude during recent years. Even some planners and defenders of the war underwent a conversion. If Robert McNamara, ordering the bombers out, can repent, why should the bombers themselves be frozen into a subservience to his first errors?

Apparently, the only way conscience could find its voice in prison and be forgiven by our current moralizers, was by playing a hypocritical charade: go through a token torture, and then have the truth "wrested" from you. That would

satisfy the cheering crowds in our airports.

If the Nixon administration had the courage of its propaganda, it would prosecute those who turned "traitor" in the Vietnam cells. But this would embarrass them. Nixon himself said the issue was not why we got into Vietnam—in effect, the moral basis of the war. But men who kill and risk killing may begin to wonder about the morality of their acts—and some were not satisfied to alternate prayers with their push-ups in the "loyal" regimen of prison life.

But how can this administration prosecute "traitors" for saying in Hanoi what presidential candidates and other high politicians were saying to approving crowds here at home? Will they prosecute Eugene McCarthy, or a Robert Kennedy (had he lived) or George McGovern? If not, then it makes no sense to start legal proceedings against a Hanoi Harry or two.

So the Hanoi war critics will be given amnesty—just like the ex-Pentagon or senatorial critics. In this case, the ab-

surdity of a treason charge in an unpatriotic war would be too blatant.

This reveals the hypocrisy of denied amnesty in other cases. Since our rulers cannot raise the substantial issues of the war, their vengeance is given on a procedural nicety. A war critic who went abroad and actually collaborated with "the enemy" will be spared—but one who opposed from the outset, or deserted without overt cooperation with Hanoi, can be punished for vague "refusal to serve."

This is the perfect domestic analogue to the exonerating force of hypocrisy in Vietnam itself—those who opposed the war could gain pardon by pretending to "surrender" services under torture.

Well, I prefer to honor those who used their prison time well, reflecting on the realities that history will bear out. While others grumbled at their captors, or worried that Jane Fonda would add to their troubles, these men saw just who had senselessly jailed and jeopardized them—their own commander in chief, another amnestied (and rewarded) criminal.

Election letters

There will be no limit on the number of letters accepted by the Emerald during the upcoming primary and general ASUO presidential elections.

Letters intended for publication must be typed, triple spaced and no more than 250 words in length. All letters must be signed in ink with accompanying address and class status at the University.

No more than one letter from any one person will be accepted for each election.

All letters must be submitted to the Emerald office, 301 Allen Hall no later than 3 p.m. Tuesday, April 10 for the primary election and 3 p.m. Thursday, April 19 for the general election. The early deadline is necessary so that all letters may be published before election day.

For Travis Kirkpatrick

Student government is a stupid idea. It means that our problems are to be solved by a bureaucracy that decides what we need and provides it for us. It also means that leaders speak and act for us. Student government is not only a stupid idea because it cannot work, but also because we can do these things for ourselves if given the chance.

The idea of a student association is not stupid. (ASUO, after all, stands for Associated Students of the University of Oregon. The word "government" appears nowhere in that title.) When people who think alike can get together, have access to tools and resources, and organize they get things done. An organized group of tenants defeated the Amazon rent increase.

What has the student government bureaucracy done lately? ASUO gets in the way because salaried and titled student government jocks think it is their job to do things for us. They mean well, sometimes, but language like "facilitate" and phrases like "I'll call Bogen about it" are the kiss of death for effective action. Bureaucratic methods don't make it. Obviously.

The ASUO will escape the self-imposed hassles of trying to act like a government only when the leadership stops trying to "handle" problems and starts putting students who care to work on solving them. The leaders must no longer talk about

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what students think and start creating opportunities for students to say so for themselves. Leaders can do no more than bring people of like mind together and help them get organized.

Experience shows us that the all wise chief executive and the hot-shot administrator will usually blow it, while a group of organized people will stand a fighting chance. We are, after all, in this mess together.

Organizers must replace executives in the Association. Salaries will be cut back immediately. Many of the 50 or so ASUO programs (no one knows for sure how many there are) will be dismantled by next Spring. There will be referenda on programs to be eliminated, however, so the final decision about what goes and what stays will be made by student ballots.

The Third Floor Crowd is afraid of us voting on how our money should be spent, and with good reason. People who object to Incidental Fee Referenda will, I am sure, resign before it becomes necessary to fire them.

The number of candidates in this election should answer those who told me all year that activism is a waste of time because students are apathetic. Whatever is generated by this campaign will carry over into next year. Student government will bumble along doing what administrators think is best, or it will transform itself into an Association

capable of providing the services that students express a desire to have.

Peace
Tim Travis

For Shilts-Gonzalez

The EMU administration's handling of the lettuce boycott is another example of the erosion of student influence over University affairs.

MEChA (Chicano Student Union), the Migrant Labor Project, and Eugene Friends of Farm Workers have repeatedly asked that the EMU—supported entirely by student incidental fee money—boycott iceberg lettuce which is not UFW lettuce.

The EMU spends ('72-'73) \$215,230 buying food. The power of this money can be used to force growers to recognize the UFW so the migrant workers can begin to rise above the poverty they are trapped in.

Yet, the EMU Administration—salaried by student money—has refused to help the farm workers. EMU Director Dick Reynolds instead has said (letter to Bill Wyatt August 14, 1972) that the EMU will serve both kinds of lettuce, labeled UFW or non-UFW, and let the students decide what to buy.

The EMU still buys primarily non-UFW lettuce.

Lettuce has not been labeled consistently.

When it has been labeled it has sometimes been mislabeled.

power to stipulate in the EMU budget that the EMU respect the boycott on iceberg lettuce and all UFW boycotts.

Students pay for the EMU—students should control the EMU.

New decisive leadership is needed to give that control back to the students.

The power is there—the leadership isn't. The leadership is Randy Shilts and Gloria Gonzalez.

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Congrats Lee

Lee Siegel in his brilliantly blasphemous and hilarious "Selling God" commentary of the 5th gets my personal endorsement for the "Pitchfork" Prize. The annual competition is held in Hell each April 31, and as a vote-holding member of the Pitchfork Society, I say, "Lee Siegel, the devil be with you!"

Incidentally, my personal acquaintance with Mr. Siegel had nothing to do with this well-earned praise, "cross my horns and hope to die (burn forever?)." Wholeheartedly yours,

Tom Mascott



'DO YOU THINK IT'S STILL HUNGRY . . ?'