

n o r s t r i l i a n c o m m e n t s

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'Demonstrating seems to be, to me at any rate, a useless sort of thing to do. I can achieve more for whatever cause I like to choose, simply by sitting here and bashing away from my typer. I see no point in going out and spending the day tramping around for a cause I believe in but which I don't believe I can do any good for by tramping around.'

(Leigh Edmonds, TRISTAN und 4, Apa-L Distribution 270)

Quite possibly this is a common attitude amongst Australian fans. Many subjects are discussed in fanzines - mostly by people who haven't the vaguest notion of what they are talking about - but it is probably true that there are more subjects which are simply not discussed. I rarely have any urge to print any of my own opinions of this subject, but there has been a confluence of events which, to my mind at least, justifies the exercise.

The most interesting thing about Leigh's remark, quoted above, (as I said to him just a couple of days ago) is that the only occasions on which I have observed Leigh rallying to a cause behind his typewriter is when he has been defending himself against charges of inaction in real life. He more or less agreed.

In the June mailing of Apa-L I made some brief comments about the events in Adelaide involving the withdrawal of penalties imposed on some soldiers following their beating-up of several demonstrators (mainly girls, I understood) and the implications of that withdrawal. This evoked the following comment from Bob Smith:

'and as its the home of 3 Battalion the Moratorium people were probably lucky they were not really done over, but then that's the privilege of a free country, oh? Your citizens can practically take over the damn place and disrupt things whilst they voice their mainly un-realistic ideas, but the military has to bite its tongue and shaddup. No doubt drink played a large part in the soldier's attitude in Adelaide, but the general feeling of frustration because this emotional attitude, so well organised, gives, to the soldier, an unfair picture of things, isn't hard to spark off. And for a young man, no killer but probably fairly proud of his uniform, to be ordered not to wear it on that day doesn't help either. Your Moratorium marchers, so proud (and not a little relieved) of their non-violent day apparently want it both ways: peace they want, but are not particularly enthusiastic about paying the sacrifices that the true believer usually cops, and has down through the ages. Its interesting to note that the two countries demonstrating so hysterically for Peace, both very much involved in SVN, have never been pounded into their own home ground by an

nonomy... Okay, I'm sure the academic, the intellectual, the student (always the student!) and the pacifist can blow great holes in my views (and of course I'm a soldier so I'm unable to think for myself), but while they are doing it some one else is making sure that they are free to do it... One doesn't have to make a big noise to know. I believe your Puppet-Master, Dr. Cairns, is going to try again (this month?)...'

(Bob Smith, SORE-KAFA, Anzapa Mailing 12)

You will note that there is no reference to the subject of my essay: that the soldiers ran to Mommy RSL for protection. There is much discussion of the whys and wherefores of this rather broader subject. 'Blowing holes' is not a game. But I would like to help Bob (and others) see the possible contradiction in the position described above. For example, the notion that the marchers cried uhelo hardly ties in with the (noted) fact that there will be another march later this month (September 18 to be precise, Bob and others). There are many countries in the world which have never been pounded by an enemy who are neither in Vietnam or suffer demonstrations (for that cause): the connection is between the two last, and the first has nothing to do with the matter. The objection to citizens taking over 'the damn place' seems to suggest that public areas don't belong to the citizens but to Big Brother. For that matter, I should be most interested to see a documented study of the change of government in the various countries of the world, comparing the number of take-overs by (a) 'academics, intellectuals, students and pacifists' and (b) the military. (I mean violent changes, up there). The objection to 'organisation' is hard to follow, unless the Army, the most organised part of the community, fears my rivals.

And finally there is the totally unjustified assumption that the Army is doing anything to keep Australia free (from neocons and pacifists, perhaps?). Australia has three divisions in Vietnam (more or less), the minimum practical size for any sort of operation. If there is a threat to Australia in Vietnam, why are there not more troops over there? Because the public in Australia wouldn't buy it? Or because the premiums on the ANZUS policy are low? Considering that many leading US senators and congressmen have until recently been unaware that Australia was fielding a team in Vietnam, perhaps the premiums are too high. And perhaps that is why one division is coming home later this year. The chances of the ANZUS Treaty being supported by the US in time of trouble seem to decline yearly.

If we are pulling out troops, the battle and the war unwon, how have those troops helped to keep Australia 'free'? This notion, that young men must go to die in Vietnam to 'keep Australia free' is one of the most evil lies propagated in this country, and it has some competition. Precisely because this lie is killing young Australians (even 'students', Bob, my former students killed by the wicked lie) it must be fought with the greatest possible efficiency.

Now it may be argued that it is necessary to 'Kill For Peace', and someone taking that view may be able to point to particular instances which seem to justify it. But this is not the official view of the Australian Government, and I propose to document it.

In explaining the refusal of a visa to the filthy n-----, Dick Gregory, the Minister for Immigration (Mr. Lynch) said (inter alia):

'This Government is not prepared to allow the entry to Australia of persons whose activities are stated to be contrary to Australia's national interest and where their stated purpose of visiting Australia is not judged to be bona fide.

'In the Government's view, this applies where the intentions are related to a one-sided, distorted anti-war moratorium campaign inimical to the objects to which Australian troops are fighting in Vietnam.'

(my underline)

(THE AGE, Thursday Sept. 3, page 1)

The appalling grammar may be the fault of THE AGE. The above statement is, however, a carefully prepared one. It has been repeated, with minor variations, by various members of the Government, but always the underlined words (with the very rare exception of 'distorted') have been fundamental to the quotation.

Now the 'one-sided' accusation can be dismissed instantly. The Australian Government's representations on this matter have always been 'one-sided'. The actual objection is to 'other-sided'. 'Distorted' has, I think, a similar connotation, though there is no reason to believe that the 'other side' may put forward distortion views - views just as distorted as anyone might have. On the other hand, there is difference of opinion on that side, whereas the Government is monolithic. Perhaps this should be brought to the attention of those MPs on the Government benches who delight in discussing 'one-party totalitarian' governments.

But anti-war - that's something else. Superficially, the Government of Australia likes to think that it is not pro-war, yet in statements of this kind a truer picture of reality emerges. It is not that young and old marchers are marching which is annoying, it is that they are marching against the war in Vietnam. It is not so much that which is annoying as that they are marching against War. And it is not so much that as that they are marching against the present world-wide systems of government which consider war a necessary part of life (what a peculiar juxtaposition that is!).

Before moving completely away from this view to another one, I'd like to handle a bridging matter: the 'Silent Majority'. It is frequently a fantasy retreat of the inactive and slothful that they form a 'Silent Majority'. (In anarchist terms, these are the slobs who keep the present systems going to voting for persons whose views and actions they know nothing of and probably never will.) This is cold comfort, I'm afraid, on at least two grounds (quite apart from whether or not the view they espouse is correct).

First, in Melbourne alone at the last Moratorium march in Melbourne, 75,000 people marched. This is more than the Australian Army and Government can raise by normal methods (including conscripts and the CMF). It is also about three times the turnout for the last local celebration of Australia's bloody wartime defeats, Anzac Day. Secondly, if there's only you, me and him in the room, a majority ain't many, brother. What are the world-wide views on the subject?

Hard to obtain, currently anyway. There's little point, in most countries. But I have some figures for November 1967 (a Gallup Poll). I'll quote two figures - the first being the percentage believing the US should begin to withdraw, the second being the percentage who believe the US should maintain or increase its commitment.

Finland	81 ... 9	Sweden	79 ... 14	Brazil	76 ... 10
France	72 ... 13	India	66 ... 12	W. Germany	58 ... 25
Argentina	57 ... 12	England	45 ... 30	Canada	41 ... 39
U.S.A	31 ... 63	Australia	29 ... 55		

Figures change, of course, but how comfortable is that 'Silent Majority'? And I point out that, in deference to the higher feelings of my readers, I didn't include any figures from the USSR.

Moratorium marchers can, of course, draw no comfort from forming the 'Silent Majority'. Their concern is the deaths of human beings, and they will be marching on September 18.

'This bullshit about dissent by ballot box is as ludicrous as we all know it is from experience: the probability of finding a party whose policy fits over fifty percent of your own is almost zero. Hell, it is zero! The majority, the uninformed majority, is nearly always wrong: look at Hitler's democratic majority using its privilege to wipe out the minority, the Jews. Dissent is not only the right of the minority, it is the duty of those who disagree with a vital policy of the government: it is the moral obligation of we who can see the evil being done in the name of our taxes, used by our government, elected by us the people.'

(David Grigg, ALEPH, Apa-M or whatever, dist. 2)

Well, partly. You don't have to vote, you know. But you have to be prepared to tell the Government where to put it. I do whenever they ask. So if you object, don't register and if you have registered, don't vote. Not paying taxes is difficult in a PAYE country, but I managed it anyway (the hard way). Next year when I have some income I must try to get around it.

But elsewhere in ALEPH David draws inspiration from WOODSTOCK and THE GLASS TEAT. Heaven forbid! Surely as inhabitants of a country crawling with American east-off crud this is something we can do without.

Why demonstrate? A couple of reasons, I guess. One's a simple matter of standing up and being counted. Not that one agrees with everything which the organisers of a demonstration, but merely that one can't agree with what is the present policy. Not that one feels that one's own presence will change the world, but that marching is more effective than scratching on a piece of paper - that birthright for a morsel of pottage.

So stand up if you will, all of you - yes, Leigh and Bob, you too.

Because if we all stand we can change the world. If we want to hard enough.

But it is easier to get calluses on your nose watching the box, isn't it?

(distributed also through ANZ.PA and to some disty of Apa-L)