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% New Mobilization  
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Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear New Mobe Steering Committee Member,

I feel it is necessary to call to your attention the following incident: At our steering committee meeting in Washington Oct. 16, it was reported that a cable had been received by the New Mobe from Pham Van Dong, Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. The cable is similar to the letter which Vice President Agnew demanded the peace movement disassociate itself from, except that it is addressed to the New Mobe.

After the cable was read, I made a motion that the cable should be answered cordially and released to the press together with the answer and a press release disassociating ourselves from the Agnew-Nixon attempt to red-bait the peace movement. This motion was passed without dissent. No one spoke against it, or even raised a question about it, though several people spoke in favor of it. I was then asked to do a draft of the answer.

The next morning when I submitted this to the press room, I was told by Ron Young that Stewart Meachum had asked that nothing on this matter be released to the press, that it be "held up" because it might complicate negotiations with the Moratorium. I explained that I considered this a matter of principle, that not to answer such a red baiting attack was a bad error, and insisted that the statement be sent out. But to no avail. I then told Ron I intended to press this matter by calling members of the steering committee and co-chairmen and by talking it up at the next steering committee meeting. I tried, but was unable to reach Stewart on the phone, so I left a message with Jim Estes as to my concern in this matter.

I consider the refusal to implement the steering committee vote to be wrong on two counts: First, it is a political blunder of the most serious kind not to answer this red baiting attack head on. We all should know from experience that red baiting cannot be countered by ignoring it, it must be answered by attacking it. We also know that the November actions are putting extreme pressure on the Nixon administration and that the administration is searching for ways to counter them and divide and weaken the peace movement. We also know Nixon's own history: his own political career was intimately involved with the McCarthy witch hunt and he is a past master at this technique, and there is no reason to expect that he will not try it again. Of course, the period is different now, and we can successfully counter a red baiting attack and turn it against its perpetrators, but this requires a fighting stance on this matter. To have failed to assume that stance in relation to the Pham Van Dong letter incident represented weakness in the face of this attack and meant that we missed an excellent opportunity to educate broad

masses of people on this question.

Second, the refusal to send the statement out is wrong because it is a usurpation by an officer of the decision-making power of the responsible body, the steering committee, on a matter of great substance. This should not be allowed to continue. Stewart was present at the steering committee meeting and made no indication of dissent on this matter.

In insisting that this statement be sent out, I was fully aware of the importance of relations with the Moratorium and fully in support of the need to keep them involved in the November actions. A forthright answer to this red-baiting attack would have strengthened our hand in these relations, not weakened it.

With the growth of the antiwar movement into a real mass movement, with the entrance into activity of huge numbers who were not previously involved, and with the entrance into activity of new sections of the population we also have a number of elements becoming involved who will attempt to coopt the movement, to blunt it or divide it or attempt to drive out the radicals. It would be incorrect for us to denounce these people for becoming involved in the movement. On the contrary, we should have the attitude of "welcome aboard" and take advantage of their participation to educate the larger numbers of people who open their ears in part precisely because so many prominent figures are making statements against the war. But if we give in to their tendencies to buckle to witch hunting, a process will begin which can only end in the destruction of the movement and the prolonging of the war.

Sincerely,

s/Fred Halstead

P.S. Enclosed find copies of the Pham Van Dong cable and the draft of the reply. The wording of this draft is not at issue. I had no objection to having it elaborated or changed. I enclose it simply to show that even this moderate wording was "held up."