

New Milford

FREE PRESS

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Moratorium / Strike

The War continues. Americans and Vietnamese are still being killed; the economic structure of Vietnam is being torn apart by the mortar shells and invasion of the Western industrial empire. The draft -- newly revised but equally inhuman -- continues to draw men into the miasmic jaws of the war machine, and spits them back in boxes. Misunderstanding and prejudice have fostered the war: it is now an institution, a tradition.

The American people have said NO! This war must end; the killing must stop. We must leave the stage where we have to prove our strength by showing our inhumanity. The goal of regaining our once-held image of invincibility must be of less importance than saving life. The seeming dishonor of admitting we were wrong to intervene in the first place cannot justify the loss of even one more life, American or Vietnamese.

We have to leave Vietnam to the Vietnamese NOW, and the American people know it. Send bread, not bombs; build, don't destroy.

The vast majority of students across the country oppose U.S. presence in Asia as a military force. And that is what the Moratorium is all about. We must make it known that we do have a conscience; that we will stand up for our beliefs; and that we will not allow the government to deny the voice of the people.

We urge every high school student in New Milford to remain out of school on the first day of the December Vietnam Moratorium, Friday, Dec. 12. You cannot remain uninvolved when so much is at stake. The presence of every person who could conceivably attend the rally on the green during the day cannot be overestimated, in importance. If you are tired of rallies or cannot come, spend the day at home and at peace. Express solidarity by staying out of school on Friday, and come to the rally if you can.

There is a double purpose for the Dec. 12 strike -- an issue often interconnected with the war protest: students' rights.



MORATORIUM (Cont.)

If you believe in the freedom of speech for all, stay out of school. If you support the principles of democratic government, support the Dec. 12 strike.

The Moratorium activities are nation-wide; high schools and colleges across the country will be subjected to mass peaceful demonstrations of protest.

Make a definite commitment NOW to stay out on the 12th, and communicate to everyone you know the same message. (There will be no hassle with the Administration if you bring in a note of permission the next day.)

BE AT THE RALLY ON THE GREEN AT 10:00 A.M.; there will be speakers and life for all.

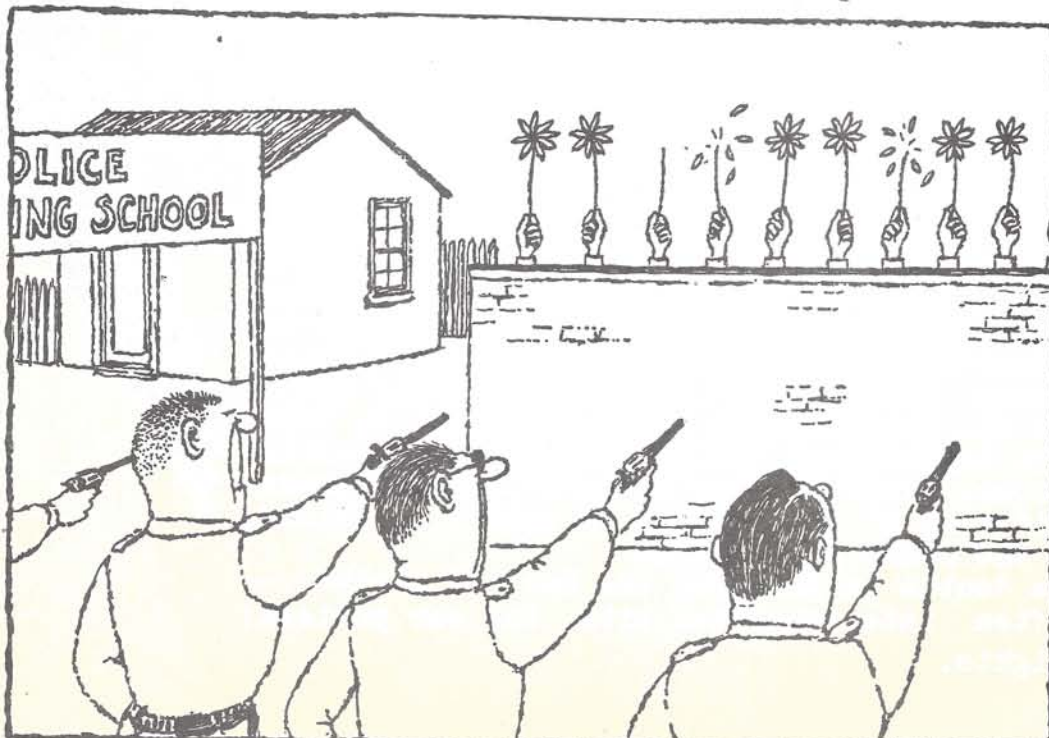
On Saturday night, Dec. 13th, the Sharon-Lakeville-Salisbury Moratorium Committee is sponsoring a special program of anti-war films and folk music to be held at the Housatonic Valley Regional High School beginning at 8 P.M. The events will be in direct support of "low number" draftees and GIs around the world.

The program will feature the folk music of Sandy & Caroline Paton and other musicians from the surrounding area. Other recording artists have been invited to participate.

The films, which will be shown at the beginning of the program, include: NEIGHBORS, the award-winning cartoon from the Canadian Film Board;

THE MAGICIAN, a short allegory from Poland, the winner of numerous film awards; MONROE, Jules Feiffer's fanciful account of a 4-year old boy who is drafted by mistake; WHERE THE PEOPLE ARE, the story of a young seminarian's search for relevance in a society torn by war.

Admission is free.



School Board Policy

The New Milford Board of Education has been especially prolific in recent weeks. We have been treated with several officially approved policies, declarations of the official (and final) school positions on the subjects of drugs and dissent.

The reactions of different people to the Bd. of Ed. policies varied considerably -- from "garbage" to "bullshit." There was agreement on the total amount of legitimate content in the sheaf of paper.

The statement on dissent is phrased so as to imply a liberalization of previous policy and a sort of broad guarantee on students' rights. Dig a little deeper, though, and it becomes obvious that nothing has changed. The principal has complete veto power of anything that anyone wants to distribute: you have to obtain "prior permission." In other words, it is the principal's arbitrary opinion that governs what is distributed in school. And we know how his mind works; anything he agrees with should be encouraged, but anything even approaching a deviation from his own ideas is immediately "subversive" and should be crushed. And the policy specifically states that if the principal wants to he can expell anyone for refusal to go along with the limits of dissent as set forth by the Board of Education.

Need we paraphrase the Supreme Court yet again? -- students have the same rights as any citizen. These rights include the freedom of speech and press WITHOUT CENSORSHIP OR CONTROL. Changing the wording of the ban on dissenting literature makes no difference; the fact is that the school has no right to make ANY restriction on our constitutional right to free speech. And we can back it up in court.

The fact is that we will not accept the school's definition of the limits of dissent.

And then there are drugs! This time

the Board has taken a generous attitude -- their policy states that if "suspicious materials" are found in a student's locker they won't publicize his sin until it has been substantiated that said materials are "drugs". Then, of course, they call in the cops.

That's damn nice of them. And it's fine, as far as it goes. But does the school have the RIGHT, either morally or legally, to search lockers in the first place? Is it any of their business who is taking drugs? Is it their responsibility to help ruin a person's life, send him to jail -- not only screw up his mind but have him spend the best years of his life rotting in prison for something he thought was right?

The policy says they will take action to remove the potential source for infection from the student body. Well, dig this: this paper is a potential source of infection. We're going to infect people's minds with the germ of free thought, or we're going to try. Or we're going to go down trying. We won't encourage the



SCHOOL BOARD POLICY (Cont.)

use of grass, but we won't discourage it either. It's up to the individual to decide the amount of personal use. We will try to give a balanced picture, something that never happens in school. We can truthfully say that grass never hurt anyone but has done a lot of people a lot of good. The old story that it leads to heroin and other "hard drugs" is a farce, as is the frequent claim the stuff is "psychologically addictive". The smoke of a good joint curling through the cortex often can enable the user to see his own mind and society in the proper perspective, unaffected by the veils of prejudice and tradition. Dope, like open, unguilty sex, often breaks down barriers, exposes one utterly, and brings people into real and intimate contact.

This is what they want to send you to prison for. This is what they're going to search your locker for, and if they find it there, or if they THINK they've found it there, you're screwed.

I propose an addition to the High School Students' Bill of Rights: The areas designated for the private storage of books and/or clothing shall under no circumstances be searched by the Administration.

Meanwhile, don't bring your dope to school.



EDITORIAL

The "Pep Rally" of Dec. 2 was one of the more blatant examples of authoritarianism for its own sake that has been seen in this school in recent months, which indicates that it must have really been bad.

First of all, the rally was mandatory. Then they complain at "student apathy". How can they expect people to be enthusiastic about something they're forced, against their will, into doing?

Also noticeable at this rally was a definite increase of teacher harassment in relation to remaining within the designated homeroom areas. A number of people commented on it. If you got out of line on the way to the auditorium you got a detention. And there were guards all the way to insure that no one did get out of line. Why the hell couldn't we sit where we wanted to? The official reason is because they have to know where we are at all times, which in itself is ludicrous. By the time people reach high school level a certain amount of maturity has to be assumed -- enough to allow students to take care of themselves in an auditorium.

And, finally, a number of people split because they didn't happen to want to sit through a boring pep rally. They were all suspended. Is that part of getting an education? They lost nothing by leaving before the rally except a lot of shouting. If it's not their thing, why did they have to do it?

We've got nothing against a feeling of affection for the school; that's fine. But when it comes to cramming patriotism down people's throats, it won't work. The instinctive reaction is to regurgitate. If they want us to be proud of the school, why don't they start by trying to not force that pride on us. We can't be proud of an institution that tells us how to dress, how to think, how to act, and punishes us if we differ.

We've had enough of this crap. If they don't start giving us our freedom pretty soon, we're going to start taking it.

DROP OUT!

High School students in our enlightened educational system are fed propaganda from time to time about the various horrors and woes that invariably beset the high school drop-out.

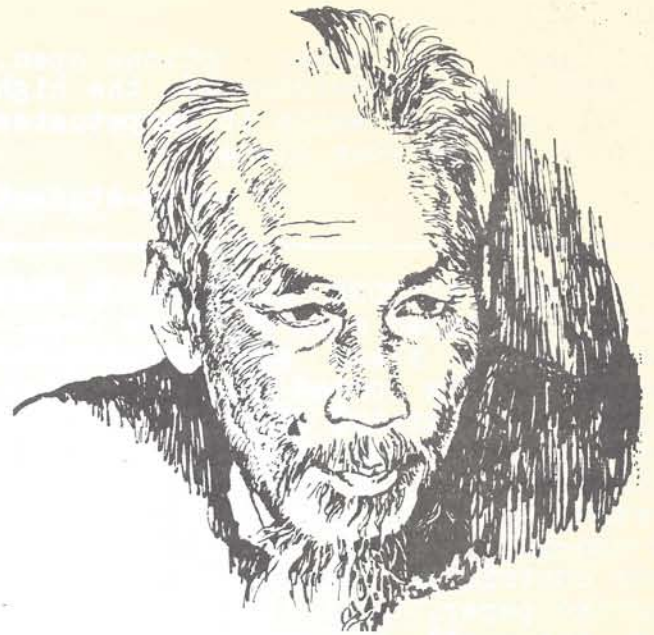
Drop-outs are regarded, they tell you, as the lowest echelon of society. If you drop out of school you will live your life in the slums, you will be unable to get a good job, you will be looked down upon by your fellow man. In short, if you drop out, you are doomed.

When I went to NMHS (two years ago) I remember seeing a series of propaganda films (produced in 1958) which the entire student body was subjected to. In these films, the drop-out was invariably a weak, skinny, acne-faced slob, whose father was a garbage collector or a street sweeper. In the end he was convinced to return to school by a suave football-hero-type, at which point he became the most popular kid in his class, got his own car (a shiny new 1958 Chevrolet), and went out with numerous girls every night. These films were always preceded with a few words by Dan ("Baggy Pants") Center, and were followed by a spine-thrilling pep talk by the Wee Wonder, Joe Wiser.

Of course, most students recognize these films as so much bullshit. But there is still a stigma attached to the drop-out, and there are still doubts in the minds of many students who have had enough of the public school system and would like to leave.

Let me reassure you, potential drop-outs: the prospect is not at all as bad as the administration would like you to believe. As a matter of fact, there are many interesting opportunities open for drop-outs.

Each of the fifty states offers what is known as a High School Equivalency diploma to anyone over the age of 18. To obtain this diploma, you must pass a series of quite simple examinations, in the areas of mathematics, English, literature, science, and social studies. I have taken these tests, and I can tell you that they are a breeze. To pass the math test you need to know the basics of Algebra I, but nothing much more than



that. In English, a basic familiarity with grade 7 or 8 level grammar will get you by. And in social studies, science, and literature, the tests are based on reading comprehension. In other words, you are given a couple of paragraphs and you have to answer several questions which are answered in the paragraphs. There is no time limit, and the tests are short. If you can read, then you can pass. (In science and social studies, it helps to have some familiarity with the terms and phrases of the field, but there is nothing that needs to be memorized.)

The State Diploma is recognized in all of the states, and in some other countries. Many colleges and universities are now accepting students with State Diplomas.

So what is the use of sweating your ass off for four years of your life, taking all kinds of crap from the school administrators and teachers, when you can spend a month or two brushing up and get your diploma in one week?

A great local institution for drop-outs is the Street Academy, in Danbury. This is a state-funded group whose purpose is to help drop-outs to get their diplomas. And there are a lot of hip discussion groups and etc. going on there, too. The office is at #3 Elm Street in downtown Danbury (just off Main St., near the Mall). It's open weeknights from 7 to 9. You can drop in for information without obligation.

If school is getting to be a drag, don't let it drag you down. Remem-

DROP-OUT! (Cont.)

ber, there are other options open. The absolute omnipotence of the high school is a myth which it perpetuates to keep you in your place.

-- an ex-student

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