

On Thursday, October 9, 1969 President Pitzer stated, "Many members of the Stanford community oppose the war in Vietnam, and many of these men and women have - as I have - in ways dictated by their individual consciences protested against the war and against its effect upon our society, our economy, and our youths. I understand and share many of the concerns which underlie the Oct. 15 moratorium, and I applaud the sacrifice of personal time on the part of those who intend to involve themselves in it. The University must meet its continuing responsibilities; moreover, the moratorium seeks to elicit individual acts that arise from conscience. Therefore, University personnel will be expected to schedule any participation they may wish to undertake so that the University's obligations are fully met."

Pitzer's statement is the quintessence of liberal ideology, and contains some implicit assumptions which should be investigated. He posits the range of choices for action between his closing down the University, and his allowing students to protest individually. He would have us believe first of all that the university is an institution of disinterested learning removed from the war and politics, and by implication that this virtue of supposed neutrality should be maintained. At the other end of the spectrum he would allow individuals to appease their consciences, as long as no disruption of the war effort takes place. This choice contains the implicit belief that somehow we are all guilty for the Vietnam war because we have been negligent in speaking out, and that if we now raise our voices the government will respond.

Both these views admirably serve the liberal function of obfuscation of the issues by posing the problem in incorrect terms, and therefore castrate effective political action. In fact Stanford University has never been neutral politically. Stanford and its wholly-owned subsidiary, S.R.I., have been at the forefront of American war research for years. Research has been conducted in the fields of chemical biological warfare, electronic countermeasure techniques (bombing), the invention of the peasant pacification program (prison camps), and various counter-insurgency methods for use in both Thailand and Berkeley. Pitzer's closing down the school for a day would be mockery of those who sincerely oppose the war, in view of the university's active ongoing support for the war. The question is not should individual students or Stanford participate in a transient protest, but rather should we allow our institution to continue its criminal support of the war.

The second implication of Pitzer's statement is a belief in individual responsibility for the war. This view perpetuates an atomistic view of society, and smooths over all the class contradictions. In fact the war is being fought in the interests of a tiny segment of American society at the expense of the vast majority of Americans. While corporation directors like Pitzer and the Stanford Board of Trustees

need to oppose the Vietnamese liberation movement in order to protect their right to invest and make profits in South East Asia, U.S. workers see their sons drafted, their wages eaten up by inflation and surtax. Moreover, corporate overseas investments hurt workers in their daily struggles on the job. The oil strikers in Richmond found their/held down and their strike effectiveness lowered by the investments of Standard Oil in the Third World - the company was able to siphon its business to its refinery in Venezuela and thereby ignore their Richmond worker's demands.

The war is the result of a consistent policy of the American ruling class to protect its investments and a decaying economic order. Corporate capitalism demands extra-territorial investment and unproductive spending (the military, advertising, and space race) if it is to survive, and the war in Vietnam is an essential component of that investment policy. In one sense the domino theory is correct: when the revolutionary movement in Vietnam culminates in victory, revolutionaries all over the world will take heart and redouble their efforts to force U.S. imperialist mercenaries out of their countries, disastrously cutting into corporation's profits. It is therefore not fortuitous that the ruling class can find no funds to improve the cities, the status of our poorer peoples, and our ecology, while having more than sufficient funds for armaments, wars, and the maintenance of a one million man standing army around the world. It is not the misdirection of our priorities; this kind of heinous spending is the essence of our political and economic policy.

The liberal version of the moratorium on the fifteenth is a regression of analysis and action. Radicals at Stanford in the last few years have been actively investigating the imperialistic policies of the United States, have been educating the public at large in similar terms, and have been attempting to initiate the only kind of political action which would be effective in the light of such analysis - the April Third Movement was that kind of attempt. The ruling class in the United States, the formulators and implementers of our foreign and domestic policies, have always acted collectively and fully aware of their class interests. At the same time they constantly foist the notion of individual action and responsibility on the people. We must realize that the only way to combat the ruling class, to effectively end the war and eliminate its cause, is to act collectively. Students who oppose the war must unite with working people to fight against their ruling class who control both our economic and foreign policy, and the university. We must not allow ourselves to be deceived by Pitzer's ideology. We must learn who our real enemies are.

SDS Committee On War And Imperialism