

Feb. 1971

Letter to President Richard W. Lyman from Stanford Community Women for Peace

Dear President Lyman,

On February 26, members of our group demonstrated in front of the Placement Center to protest the presence of Food Machinery Corporation recruiters on the campus. It was a symbolic act only, since we did not attempt to prevent interviews from being held.

Having tried to make a point by demonstrating, we continue our effort by making a direct appeal to you. We ask you to prohibit all interviews on campus by military recruiters and companies whose principal activity is the production of weapons. We realize that such a ban would have to be carefully formulated, since many companies manufacture items that can be used equally well by civilian and military consumers. Such items do not include armored vehicles, flamethrowers, and grenades which explode into hundreds of flesh-tearing darts.

There are at least three arguments against imposing such a ban:

1. Freedom of speech. The campus should be a place where anyone can express his point of view, however unpopular that view happens to be.

Our response is that recruitment is not speech. It is the first, and perhaps most important, step in the process of production. Without high calibre employees, such as Stanford can provide, a company cannot function efficiently. Neither can the armed services.

2. Freedom of choice. Students should be able to choose courses of action for themselves, among legal alternatives, even if some of those alternatives are repugnant to certain members of the community.

Our response is that Stanford cannot insulate itself from certain moral imperatives. Employers who discriminate on the basis of race are not permitted to interview here. Even if such discrimination were legal we believe it would not be permitted at Stanford. Our athletic teams cannot play against Brigham Young University, nor can members of the community watch contests between the two schools, even though they might wish to. Producing anti-personnel bombs in support of our present foreign policy is as immoral as practicing racial discrimination, and legal only in the narrowest sense.

3. While the Vietnam war is wrong, providing for the defense of the United States is necessary; therefore producing weapons and maintaining an army are not, in themselves, evil. To demand that Stanford ban recruitment by war manufacturers and the military is to ask the University to publicly favor unilateral disarmament.

Our response is that while all members of our group are not pacifists, we are appalled at the uncontrolled growth of the military establishment in this country. Since World War II we have spent more than one trillion dollars on the military budget and Secretary Laird proposes to increase it once again. You

have spoken eloquently against the war in Indochina and we are sure you share the profound helplessness we feel in the face of an administration that feels bound neither by the Constitution, the laws of Congress, nor the will of 73% of the American people.

At this moment our government is steadily laying waste a once beautiful portion of the earth and destroying its people, with an inferno of fire-power. If we are ever to become free of the irrational forces responsible for this tragedy we must do what we can, wherever we can, to reduce the power, the prestige, and the influence of the military establishment.

At Stanford we can make the job of supplying the war machine more difficult by slowing down military recruitment and the production of weapons. If the armed services and war manufacturers were forced to hold their interviews off campus, the news would spread and hopefully other Universities would follow Stanford's example. The message would be clear--to students, to the government, and to the public--that agencies of war are no longer welcome on the campus. In view of the continuing, daily, slaughter in Indochina, an end to Stanford's association with the war would not be a political act but a moral one. We ask that the University say "no" to what is anti-human and to shut its doors to those whose business is killing.

Signed:

Name

Address

P.S. In view of your own feelings about the war and the fact that the issues we have raised are of concern to the Stanford community as a whole, we hope you will understand our decision to submit this letter to the Stanford Daily for publication.

(Note: Please return letter and signatures to Stanford Community Women for Peace, Box 8874, Stanford, Calif. by Wednesday, March 17, or bring with you to next meeting at the Clubhouse on Thursday, March 18.)