

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN – EAU CLAIRE

**DRAFT RESISTANCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF
WISCONSIN MADISON: AN EXAMINATION OF THE
AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE**

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ABBREVIATIONS KEY

AFSC ----American Friends Service Committee

MAC ----Madison Area Committee

SDS ----- Students for a Democratic Society

WDRU --Wisconsin Draft Resistance Union

WRL ----War Resisters League

GWOC --Get War Off Campus

SSS -----Selective Service System

C.O. -----Conscientious Objector

ROTC---Reserve Officer Training Corps

B.D.R.G. -----Boston Draft Resistance Group

ABSTRACT

The American Friends Service Committee dedicated itself to the pursuit of peace, particularly during the Vietnam Era. During the Era of Vietnam, the University of Wisconsin – Madison was a tense and hostile environment with protests and violence to the point of bombing the university science building. During this intense period, the AFSC approved the establishment of a unit in the Madison area that would later be referred to as the Madison Area Committee. This was associated with many community projects, but also became known for its actions against the war and the draft. The MAC would become notable for its program involving conscientious objector (C.O.) counseling and later became associated with its draft counseling. In addition to counseling, the MAC was also responsible for creation of the “Get War Off Campus” (GWOC) group, which involved itself in a number of activities against the military on campus. However, the MAC did have some cracks in its façade related to issues in its identity. This crisis of identity was common throughout many groups and not just restricted to the MAC. Eventually as the Vietnam War came to a close, so did the draft and the need for draft resistance. As this continued, the movement began to disintegrate until very few organizations remained.

INTRODUCTION

The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) organization within the Madison area was also referred to as the Madison Area Committee (MAC) and was based at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. The American Friends Service Committee, during the Vietnam War Era, was an organization that sought to pursue a peaceful means to end the war through nonviolence, resistance, and awareness of the conflict. This group had multiple branches of their organization throughout the United States, all of which adhered to a somewhat central leadership headquartered in Pennsylvania. Branches of this organization were located in states such as Illinois, Wisconsin, and California. Many of these groups had a large amount of independence in the activities they were allowed to carry out.

Individuals, such as Carl P. Zietlow and Jack Gleason were gathering the interests of numerous individuals throughout the campus, but there was no place to consolidate these interests and resources in one location. Carl displayed a general interest in the Madison area and in the following report it was stated, “Carl was generally frustrated about where the AFSC might take hold in such a large and complex campus already full of organizations and resources. He wonders how he might have pulled contacts and visits together, and on what the value and follow-up of these visits was.”¹ This statement demonstrates a general interest by the AFSC in the Madison campus and university for establishing an organization that would be dedicated to the AFSC. Furthermore, the mention of previous visits to the area provided evidence that the AFSC considered Madison an important area in which they could spread their ideas and beliefs.

The Madison Area Committee (MAC) established itself on the Madison campus in order to remain in constant contact with, and give access to, university students. This organization was

¹ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

not originally established by students, but was designed to have students and adults work together within the organization. Proximity to the campus was a necessity due to the activities carried out by this organization. The AFSC often required close association and contact with the campus students in order to carry out its activities on the campus and with their target population. Draft counseling was one activity that the AFSC and/or MAC specialized in as organizations. This group also took part in other activities involving the draft resistance, such as “Get War Off Campus,” which concentrated its efforts on removing military activity from the campus. Other draft resistance activities focused on interfering with the military recruitment efforts on the campus, such as boycotting mandatory Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) orientation, which all male students were required to attend.

The main argument of this paper is that even though the AFSC established the facade of an organization cemented to its ideals through the anti-war and anti-draft activities it carried out, at the same time, it was also suffering periods of identity crisis with these ideals. Additionally, the organization’s activities and ideals were increasingly coming into conflict with its own functions, as well as with its ability to participate with other organizations in coordinated groups. However, this paper will also focus on how the beliefs and ideals of the AFSC contributed to the activities that they created as well as the ones in which they participated. Even though they caused limitation in their organization during some periods, they also provided them with guiding principals to follow.

In concentrating on this specific area, one must naturally turn to the academics of sociology to understand the inner workings of draft resistance groups, particularly in terms of membership or enlistment into the group. In the past, sociologists have concentrated their

energies on figuring out what makes an individual an activist.² In addition, sociologists studied or analyzed the group workings of activist organizations.³ However, most sociological research dealing with draft resistance or anti-war groups dates back to the 1960s and 1970s. After the 1970s, research into these groups seems to have ceased.

In addition to the sociological studies, historical studies of the draft resistance during this period have also suffered the same fate as studies dealing with sociological aspects. Most historical studies of the draft resistance occurred only a few years after the Vietnam War, such as in the late 1970s and mid 1980s. In the 1990s, there appears to have been little research done on the subject. However, a new interest in the topic has apparently taken root with the publication of recent books on the draft resistance in the new millennium. It is also interesting to note that the authors in these writings have had a past association with the draft resistance, such as Michael Useem.

² Roger M. Kahn, and William J. Bowers who wrote the journal article, “The Social Context of the Rank-and-File Student Activist: A Test of Four Hypotheses,” focuses on the research of certain aspects that appear to be associated with an activist. Edward E. Sampson, Harold A. Korn, and Associates focus on the same topic with their work *Student Activism and Protest*, which focuses on the characteristics of an activist. In addition, this work focuses on some of the other aspects associated with students and the draft, such as the stress caused by the system.

³ Michael Useem who wrote both *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict: The Life and Death of a Draft Resistance Movement* and the journal article “Ideological and Interpersonal Change in the Radical Protest Movement.” Both of these works focus on the group workings of draft resistance organizations, However, Useem’s book also concentrates on the history of the movement incorporating both sociological and historical thought into the writing. His journal article goes into more detail about the group workings, particularly the changes that occur within a group. Barrie Thorne takes more of an anthropological approach with the fieldwork that was conducted during his time in the draft resistance movement. Thorne still takes a sociological approach that is mixed with history in his work, “Resisting the Draft: An Ethnography of the Draft Resistance Movement,” which was his dissertation. Thorne takes a sociological approach in his journal article, “Protesting and the Problem of Credibility: Uses of Knowledge and Risk-Taking in the Draft Resistance Movement of the 1960’s,” which focuses on two strategies used by resistance groups to spread their beliefs and thoughts as well as recruit new members. Michael Foley the author of the most recent book *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War* covers the history of the draft resistance in its entirety. Many of the older resources that have been written by individuals, such as Useem can be found cited in Foley’s book.

The AFSC also supported and sometimes affiliated itself with other draft resistance and anti-war groups, such as the Madison Resistance. No one has yet to focus on some of the problems these groups had interacting with each other. At the time, it was felt that through these activities, the AFSC, and to an extent the MAC, hoped to make an impact on the Selective Service System as well as the war itself by making the draft process difficult for the government and by raising awareness on issues surrounding the draft. Before understanding why an organization such as the AFSC would pursue a movement of draft resistance, an individual must have an understanding of the draft system itself.

Draft Classifications and Policies

Many Americans, particularly students, resisted the draft because of the policies and programs pushed by the draft system. Understanding these policies and programs, along with the draft's classification system, provide an idea as to why this system was met with resistance. The Selective Service System of the Vietnam War period was a complex system. There were various classifications under which a male individual could be labeled that then determined his immediate placement within the draft system. The Selective Service System itself established influence, in conjunction with its establishment of policies and programs concerning the recruitment of soldiers.⁴ Additionally, one could view the Madison campus area as a core sample of views and reactions to the draft as well as the war. The main reasons were that, within the campus, views were freely expressed and the environment was more conducive to the draft resistance itself. The reactions and feelings of students on the UW Madison campus, toward the

⁴ George Q. Flynn has written expansive works on the draft that includes *The Draft, 1940-1973*, and *Lewis B. Hershey: Mr. Selective Service*. Both of these sources have described the draft system in detail by providing definitions to the various draft status classifications. Furthermore, these sources provide an expansive overview of the various programs and policies put in place by the Selective Service System.

draft system, could be said to reflect the larger viewpoint of a majority of draft resistance groups toward the draft.

Numerous classifications existed within the draft system. These included: 1-A, which meant that the individual was available for duty; another was 1-A-O, which indicated an individual was a C.O. (conscientious objector) but was available for noncombat service; 1-O, which represented that someone was a C.O., but was available for civilian service as an alternative.⁵ Other classifications included 2-S classification, which represented college deferment, and 4-F, which meant that an individual was disqualified from military service on moral, physical, or mental grounds.⁶

In specific terms, if an individual was classified as 4-F status, it meant that the military rejected that person. Specific reasons for rejection were on either physical or mental grounds. For example, the individual might have had a physical ailment that prevented that person from carrying out military service, such as ulcers or colorblindness. In terms of rejection based on mental reasons, this was because an individual had a mental defect, such as Downs Syndrome. An individual rejected on moral grounds meant that the military found it morally wrong to put such individuals in the military. Other classifications did exist within the system, but the classifications listed above were most applicable to the draft resistance and the AFSC. These classifications were more prevalent in their use during this period, and also appeared largely on universities.

Other than classifications, the Selective Service System also implemented programs and policies meant to increase induction. These were usually occurrences on campus grounds in

⁵ George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973*, (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1993), 117.

⁶ George Q. Flynn, *The Draft, 1940-1973*, 117.

relation to university students. For instance, there was the implementation of a test in which those who failed to score a particular grade faced the possibility of losing their college deferment. There was also the use of current grades of students to determine whether or not they would be inducted into the military. Policies such as these not only created a sense of anxiety and fear; they also created an environment in which resistance towards the draft could be expected.

History of the Madison Area Committee

Before the establishment of the Madison Area Committee, Carl P. Zietlow was scouting out the area as a potential site for establishing an AFSC unit. After his visit to the area on November 16, 1964, Zietlow submitted his findings and recommendations in a report during December of 1964. The following is one of the findings recorded by Zietlow in his report: “It was clear that there are a number of Friends and other people interested in the Service Committee and its program in Madison and at the University of Wisconsin.”⁷ This finding provided one of these incentives for the establishment of the Madison Area Committee. Zietlow also provided some of his own recommendations as to the formation of the organization. One of these was to be the basis of the committee’s membership. Zietlow stated the following: “That a committee be made up of both students, faculty, and other people and that it be made of approximately half Friends and half other people sympathetic to the concerns of the Service Committee.”⁸

⁷ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” p 1., Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

⁸ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” p 3., Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

The Madison Area Committee held its first official meeting at 8:00 PM on the 9th of December 1964, at a Friend's⁹ house at the address of 2002 Monroe Street, in the city Madison, Wisconsin.¹⁰ After several other meetings, the group began to hold their sessions at the homes belonging to other members of the committee.

⁹ Friend – A term used in reference to a supporter or member of the AFSC.

¹⁰ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TMs, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

CHAPTER 2

CLIMATE OF THE CAMPUS AT THE TIME

The climate on the campus at the University of Wisconsin - Madison was particularly tense during the 1960s. This stemmed from both the policies that the Selective Service System (SSS) had placed within the school and the current rate at which the war was progressing. In terms of policies, the Madison campus, among many other schools around the nation, had accepted policies established by the SSS that directly or indirectly influenced the lives of students. One of the policies that directly influenced students and their lives was the Selective Service College Qualification Test (SSCQT), which determined whether a student would be drafted. Michael S. Foley discussed that Lewis B. Hershey resurrected the test, which was last used in 1963 and involved 2,145 men, but in 1966, in order to tap into the student population, 767,935 men took the test.¹¹ This represented a significant



Figure 1. A picture displaying the East Wing of Sterling Hall and the damage received after the bombing on August 24th 1970. Four individuals carried out the bombing by detonating a van containing six barrels of explosives. Sterling Hall Bombing, Circa August 24, 1970. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID# 33884. Reproduced with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society

portion of the student population and also put many students at potential risk, because of the

¹¹ Michael S. Foley, *Confronting the War Machine: Draft Resistance During the Vietnam War*, (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 39-40

potential loss of deferments. If students failed the test, they would lose their college deferment, which immediately led them to being classified as 1-A status.¹²

In addition to this direct effect on students, there were also policies that indirectly affected students. For instance, some administrators and faculty within institutions established

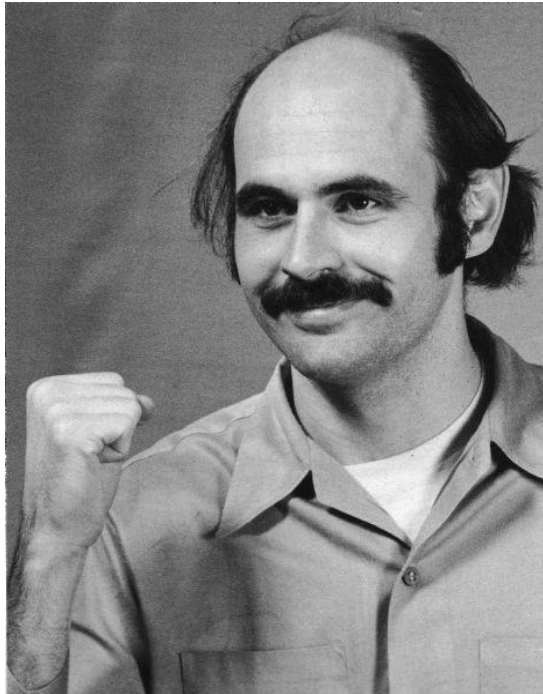


Figure 2. Karl Armstrong is one out of the four responsible in the 1970 bombing of Sterling Hall. His primary motive for the bombing against Sterling Hall was its association with the Military. The Mathematics Research Center was a U.S. Army funded facility. Ant-war activists deemed this “military math,” felt it contributed to the war’s casualties. Karl Armstrong, Circa 1972. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID#33877. Reproduced with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

either formal or informal arrangements that allowed the government to maintain war-related agencies on campus, such as the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC); some campuses even hosted military projects for the government.¹³ Even though these policies did not directly affect students, a few were upset by the fact that the university or college they were attending was being used in the war effort.

At the University of Wisconsin in Madison, many students were not happy with the university’s close relationship with the government and the military. This particular issue ultimately led to two occurrences on campus. The first of these occurrences was on Tuesday, the 17th of May 1966, when more than 200 students took part in a massive sit-in at the administrative building. Those participating were opposed to the university’s

¹² Michael Useem, *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict: The Life and Death of a Draft Resistance Movement*. (New York, John Wiley & Sons, 1973), 57.

¹³ Useem, *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict*, 52.

cooperation with the government and the Selective Service System.¹⁴ The second incident occurred shortly after the sit-in when the Student Senate became involved in the issue. The student senate actually passed a resolution, in 20 to 11 vote, which requested that the university sever its ties with the draft system.¹⁵ The Student Senate made the following statement:

The present Selective Service arrangement is inequitable; the use of grades and class standings to determine who will be drafted places an unfair pressure on the students and faculty; the university is an academic community and should not cooperate with in any way with the Selective Service System.¹⁶

This statement adds further support to the argument that college life during this period was stressful and anxiety ridden. Students had to keep their grades above a specific level in order to avoid losing student deferment. There was also the situation with the



Figure 3. A photo of the Dow Chemical demonstration at the University of Wisconsin Madison, where student demonstrators are beaten back by the police.
Dow Chemical Demonstration, Circa 1967. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID# 3780. Reproduced with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

¹⁴ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

¹⁵ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

¹⁶ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

Selective Service College Qualification Test (SSCQT), which also determined eligibility for student deferment.

As the Vietnam War continued, the draft likewise continued, but there was an increasing sense of anger among university students about the school's policies on allowing military institutions and industries that supported the military and the Vietnam War on the campus. One example was the protests against Dow Chemical, which was producing weapons for military use in Vietnam. The student protesters were met by the riot police, which immediately began to engage the crowd. The particular issue was that the university allowed Dow Chemical personnel to use the offices of the University for Job Interviews.¹⁷ Another reason was the kind of weapons the Dow Chemical Company was making and therefore became associated with, such as Napalm.¹⁸

¹⁷ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

¹⁸ Napalm is an incendiary weapon that was commonly used during the Vietnam. Furthermore, Napalm was a devastating weapon containing a mixture of what would best be described as jellied gasoline. This substance would stick to almost any surface and begin to burn at thousands of degrees. The weapon often found itself being used on or around civilian population centers.

CHAPTER 3

AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE COMMITTEE AND DRAFT COUNSELING

The use of draft counseling by the AFSC was meant as a method to increase membership through their counseling services, with the idea that those who benefited from the services provided would support the organization either directly or indirectly. However, this plan did not go as originally planned, because most of their clients were more interested in getting out of military duty than they were in giving ongoing support to the group. Additionally, this led to a crisis of identity, because the MAC, and also the AFSC, used their services to basically filter in more individuals who shared ideas similar to the AFSC members. These were individuals who were more likely to apply for the status of conscientious objector. This organization was helping individuals of its own belief structure until more individuals focused on utilizing other classifications.

Draft counseling was probably one of the most practiced activities carried out by the AFSC in the anti-draft movement and particularly applied to the MAC. The main function of draft counseling was to provide individuals with the information and aid needed to seek an alternate classification within the draft system in order to avoid induction into the military. However, draft counselors could not encourage their clients to resist the draft, such as by fleeing to Canada or burning their draft cards; these encouragements were deemed illegal by the government and those caught practicing them faced criminal prosecution¹⁹. The most significant purpose served by providing draft counseling, as believed by and commonly felt among its members, was that it would provide new supporters for the organization. Furthermore, if individuals came in applying for the status of a conscientious objector (C.O.), it would add to the

¹⁹ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TMs, p. 1, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

ranks of its members. Another common belief was that by registering individuals as C.O. they would slow down the American war machine. The general theory was that the more individuals who were registered as C.O., the less people the government had available to draft.

Throwing the Wrench into the War Machine

It was believed among many draft counselors that their work was not only providing individual aid to those facing induction, but that it also provided another form of draft resistance in and of itself. This led to the development of a mass system of draft counseling in which the more that they could register individuals into a classification that would place them out of induction status, the less manpower the government would have to fight the war in Vietnam. Arthur Boyd's "Working Paper on Draft Counseling: A Report of AFSC/NERO Peace Intern," discussed such views relating to the beliefs of draft counselors. In this paper, Boyd stated that, "Through all these stages of the evolution of draft counseling has been an additional purpose: to 'beat the draft' by helping as many people as possible get deferments. This supposedly denies the man power needed by the military."²⁰ This argument made by some draft counselors was supposedly based on the idea of disrupting the draft system's recruitment process by denying the human resources needed to continue the war.

Drawbacks to an Overly Ambitious Plan

The Madison Area Committee's goals in providing draft counseling appeared overly ambitious. In the preceding description on disrupting the war machine, Arthur Boyd argued how draft counselors believed that providing their services would disrupt American military efforts. However, Boyd also goes into detail about the limitations of draft counseling as a method of

²⁰ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TMs, p. 2, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

disrupting the U.S. draft into the military.²¹ Although not clear at first, there is an apparent sharing of ideas in the goals of draft counseling through different branches of the AFSC organization. This sharing of ideas through pamphlets and essays gave the impression that what one branch of the AFSC thought about draft counseling might represent what other branches felt, including the Madison Area Committee.

The major drawback to this plan was the numbers involved, for every individual the MAC helped to be classified as a C.O., there were many more drafted into the service. Another difficulty or drawback not always mentioned is that the process of classifying someone as a C.O. was a complicated and difficult task. For instance, the government required multiple forms of documentation and witness verification of one's claims of being a C.O. in order to be successful. However, this often proved a difficult process, because individuals would often come out as being a C.O. later in life, which made the government question these individuals.

²¹ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TMs, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

CHAPTER 4

A CRISIS OF IDENTITY

As more individuals sought out other classifications besides conscientious objector (C.O.), the Madison Area Committee began to experience a loss in potential membership. Those who applied for C.O. status were more likely to agree with the organization's beliefs and ideals, because the process for acquiring that status required an explanation to the government by the individual applying. This included naming others who could provide evidence of the applicant's beliefs as a C.O. to support why the government should accept the individual's application for this particular status.

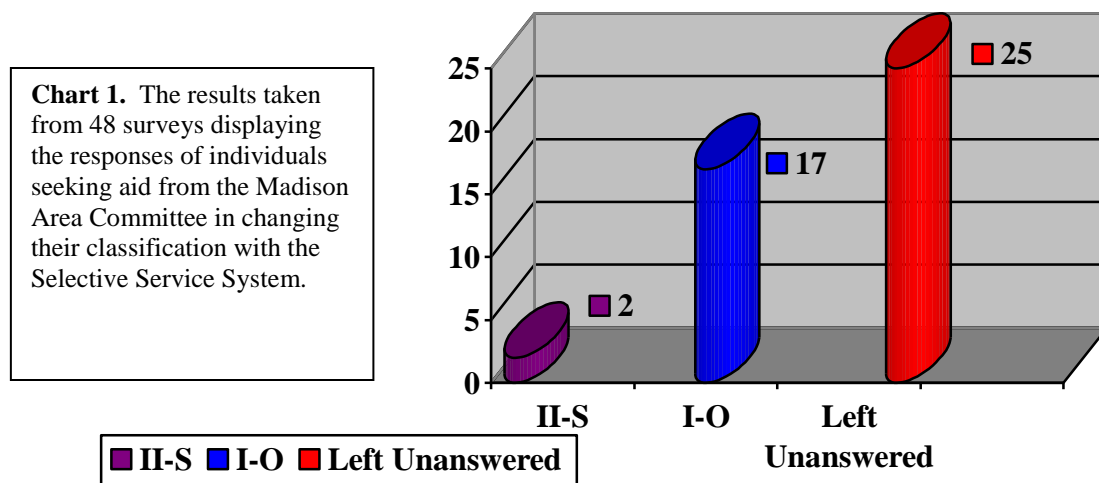


Chart 1 suggests that there was a decrease in the number of applicants wishing to attain I-O status, which was referring to conscientious objector status. This chart consisted of a collection of 48 counselee questionnaires between the years of 1967 through 1971.²² Another interesting note was that periodically there would be questions or inquiries raised by an applicant

²² American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

to the questioners as to whether a particular physical impairment or ailment would provide them the necessary evidence to receive a 4-F classification.²³

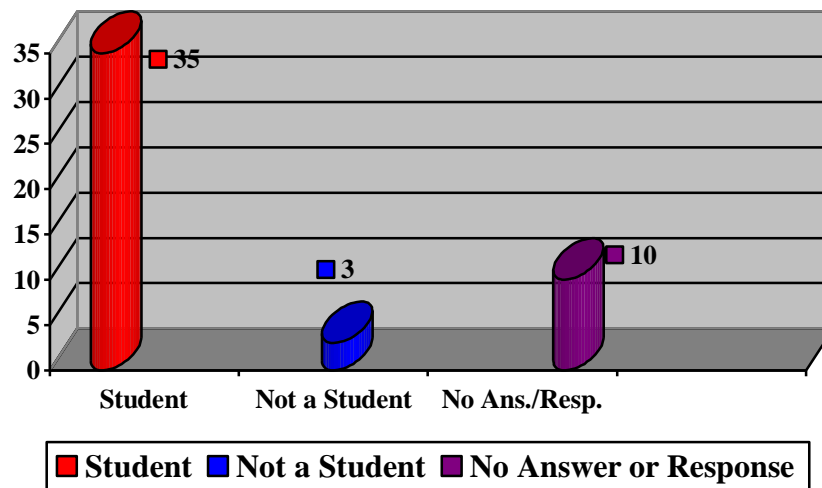


Chart 2. This chart presents the number of students who had taken the questionnaire versus those who were non-students. However, a number of individuals had given an indication of their status.

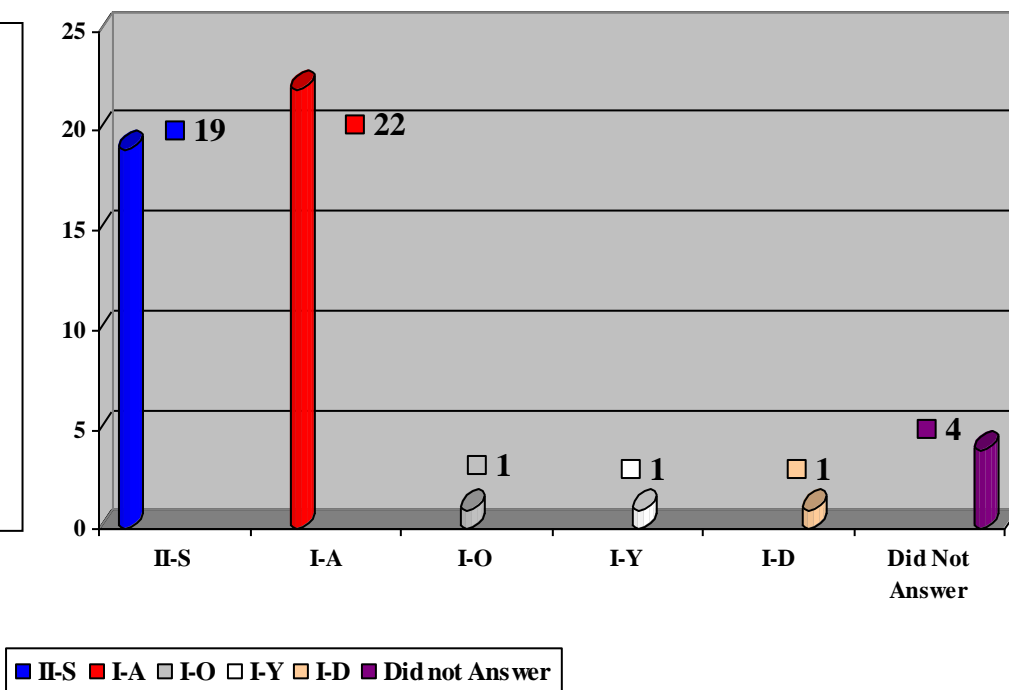
Furthermore, there was a change in the type of counselees that draft counselors were now seeing. According to David Finke of the Peace/War Issues Programs, “In recent months we at the American Friends Service Committee have come to recognize the newer group of draft refusers as ‘unsuccessful cooperators’ as distinguished from ‘principled noncooperators.’”²⁴ In addition to this, David Finke provided a more detailed explanation stating, “We now speak of ‘refusers’ instead of ‘resisters,’ because nearly all the men we see have been administratively denied claims to which they felt they were entitled and which they were pursuing in good faith with some expectation of success.”²⁵ This can actually be seen in the preceding chart, where there are actually more students with I-A status than II-S before seeking aid in achieving C.O.

²³ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

²⁴ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

²⁵ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

Chart 3. The data collected above came from questioners originating from the Madison Area Committee, which number 48 questionnaires in total. The data itself presents what classifications individuals had before seeking help from the Madison Area Committee in changing their status or preparing to change their status once out of college.



classification. The problem for the MAC in this situation was that the inflow of concerned students and other individuals wanting to avoid the draft would most likely drown out potential members who shared similar beliefs to the AFSC.

Barrie Thorne elaborated that draft counseling was one method in which draft resistance organizations brought in new members; while discussing this Thorne used the Boston Draft Resistance Group as an example to provide context. Barrie Thorne explained this process effectively stating:

Offering this information through formal and informal draft counseling was a way of demystifying the Selective Service. It also provided the “bait” for bringing registrants to the B.D.R.G. office and into contact with the movement. In counseling sessions, B.D.R.G. workers combined technical information with political education, trying to “radicalize” those they talked with and to persuade them – however their individual draft situations turned out – actively to oppose the draft and the war. B.D.R.G. workers saw themselves primarily as political organizers, but technical expertise was essential in establishing their initial credibility with potential recruits and sympathizers.²⁶

²⁶Barrie Thorne, “Protest and the Problem of Credibility: Uses of Knowledge and Risk-Taking in the Draft Resistance Movement of the 1960’s,” *Social Problems* 23 (December 1975): 113.

The fact that these numbers gave credence to the idea that not all students had deferments and so some faced higher risks of induction than others. In fact, there was a shift from C.O. counseling to draft counseling with special emphasis placed upon particular groups in the populations. There was an expressed concern to starting a draft counseling program as recorded from the meeting minutes for October 12, 1967.²⁷ It was from this meeting that the beginnings of a draft counseling program started to form to work alongside the C.O. counseling program.

²⁷ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

CHAPTER 5

CRISIS OF IDENTITY AS COMPARED WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The Madison Area Committee was not the only organization facing an identity crisis. Other organizations as well faced similar situations, because there were similar factors and variables that led to their crisis of identity. A crisis of identity can stem from various causes, but in the case with the War Resisters League, the cause was rooted in arguments focusing on the meaning of draft resistance.

War Resisters League

Other organizations also suffered a crisis of identity, when compared with the situation of the Madison Area Committee. For instance, the War Resisters League (WRL) had a similar period of crisis as stated by Jerry Elmer. Elmer provided the following account:

Nevertheless, there was one respect in which I wholeheartedly believed that the arguments of my WRL friends against the philosophy of the Catholic Left and the specific tactic of draft-file destruction were most emphatically correct – that is, the elitist attitude of many of the participants. By this the WRL critics meant not that draft-file destruction was a tactic that only a few could undertake, but rather that the attitude of so many in the Catholic Left was that this was the one right way action necessary to end the war and that all other anti-war efforts that activists engaged in were worthless.²⁸

As seen from this statement, there was a debate within the group on the importance of draft file destruction when other activities provided an equal amount of significance in demonstrating draft resistance. This centered on those who argued that other activities could be just as effective as draft file destruction, while the other group argued that draft file destruction was the only way. Furthermore, Elmer describes a specific event that took place at a debate in August 1969 during the WRI triennial convention. This debate occurred between Joe O'Rourke, a supporter of draft-

²⁸ Jerry Elmer, *Felon for Peace: The Memoir of a Vietnam-Era Draft Resister* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2005), 86.

file destruction as well as a co-defendant in the DC Nine, and Jim Peck, who was one of the WRL staffers. According to Jerry Elmer, the following incident took place:

At the WRI Triennial in Haverford, a large discussion group carried on a lively debate about the propriety of draft-file destruction. In the end, it developed into a debate between Jim Peck and Joe O'Rourke. Joe ended up making a scurrilous attack on Jim. The gist of Joe's attack was "You have not done what I have done; therefore you have made no contribution whatsoever to the peace movement. I have found the one right tactic to end the war, raiding draft boards; nothing else has any value."²⁹

The last statement provides an excellent example as to why some draft resistance groups suffered a crisis in identity. There were two opposing groups within one organization debating over an activity that some within the group viewed as an identification of the organization. Michael Useem discussed this issue of identity rather thoroughly. Useem elaborates that often with the rapid influx of new members this may be the cause of an identity crisis. If the new members are ones that lack a personal acquaintance with the movement and the group, which this could result in the identities of the new members remaining the same while the character of the new movement is altered.³⁰

²⁹ Elmer, *Felon for Peace*, 88.

³⁰ Michael Useem, "Ideological and Interpersonal Change in the Radical Protest Movement," *Social Problems* 19 (Spring 1972): 452.

CHAPTER 6

AFFILIATION AND COOPERATION WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

The American Friends Service Committee in the Madison area also involved itself with other organizations in carrying out draft resistance activities. However, there were requirements provided by the AFSC, as far as strings attached to this support, that limited this organization's abilities and functioning. One of these restrictions was that organizations should be committed to nonviolent forms of noncooperation and protest similar to those of the AFSC. These requirements were often blurred by actions considered not to fall under nonviolent forms of protest either supported or carried out by the group itself, but by definition and reasoning were considered forms of nonviolent action. An example was the MAC's support of the Milwaukee 14 during their trial, in which they faced charges based on the destruction of draft files at a draft board office. In comparison with the actions and forms of destruction carried out through other organizations labeled as violent, what made the destruction of draft files any different? It is through such a comparison that one can best understand some of the MAC's and the AFSC's beliefs and ideals, along with the limitations they placed on the organization. Another issue was the increasing number of other organizations based on draft resistance, along with the anti-war movement. These organizations often created conflict with the MAC, because the differences in beliefs in the methods of draft resistance and protest applied.

The Meaning of Nonviolence to a Draft Resister

Jerry Elmer who wrote his memoir *Felon for Peace* and served in several draft resistance groups, such as the War Resisters League and American Friends Service Committee, gave his version of what nonviolent protest entailed, particularly on the matter of draft file destruction. According to

Elmer, “Actions that kill or harm people are by definition violent. Actions that do not kill or hurt or harm people are not violent.”³¹

Additionally, Jerry Elmer also discussed that through history, certain human property has been responsible for the destruction of human life and Elmer equates draft files to being the kind of property responsible for the loss of human life. Elmer reasons that because draft files ultimately aid the government in sending young men off to war where they either die or kill the enemy to survive; this results in the loss of life. Jerry Elmer states, “Thus, I believed that destroying draft files was not merely a nonviolent action, but was a moral imperative.”³²

New Kids on the Block

The AFSC organization has existed over a long period, far longer than the actual Vietnam War. Most records of the organization’s activities range from their actions in the First World War to their current existence in present day. However, many of the organization’s branches established around the nation blinked in and out of existence. Some of these new organizations followed ideals and beliefs similar to that of the AFSC, while others followed paths that greatly differed and did not at all conform to their ideals or beliefs. The MAC referred to new organizations cropping up or becoming established in the area. One of these organizations was the Wisconsin Draft Resistance Union (WDRU), which the MAC made several references to in their meetings. These references toward the WDRU had to do with their methods of counseling; the MAC was still employing C.O. counseling, meaning that their counseling focused on

³¹ Elmer, *Felon for Peace*, 85.

³² Elmer, *Felon for Peace*, 85.

individuals interested in C.O. status, while the WDRU focused their efforts on draft counseling, which was broader in the population that it targeted.³³

Restrictions for Cooperation

In terms of affiliation and cooperation, the AFSC had restrictions based on their organization's beliefs in nonviolent protest. This is demonstrated through their hesitancy to take in other groups as allies or partners, and their process of admission. In the meeting of November 10th 1966, a long discussion on the committee's relationship with other groups became the focus of debate and the following measures were agreed upon:

- 1) Whenever AFSC participation in other groups activities involves any kind of public demonstrations or co-sponsorship it must be brought to the Madison Area Committee and referred to the Chicago Office.
- 2) Whenever individual staff is involved in civil disobedience projects, he needs to counsel with Kale Williams, John Anderson, and other appropriate staff persons.³⁴
- 3) Unofficial organizational aid in the form of AFSC material and labor by a staff person must be approved by the committee or Kale.
- 4) When we decide to co-sponsor a program with another group we need to be able to fully relate to the other group and feel confident of our having enough influence to be involved. In addition, it was decided we should get a statement in writing of what the group expects us to co-sponsor. This statement would then be sent to Kale with our recommendations including the past history of the group and our plans for participation.³⁵

This statement presented by the MAC laid out the guidelines on how to deal with outside groups in terms of cooperation and partnerships. It also represented their selectiveness in choosing which groups to associate with, even extending this down to individual members of the committee. This could be interpreted as both beneficial and detrimental to the organization. The detrimental effects stem from the concern that their beliefs were filtering out potential members

³³ For reference, see page 23.

³⁴ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, p. 1, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

³⁵ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, p. 2, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

and allies that would provide aid to their organization. In addition, one could also view their beliefs in such a situation as positive. For instance, they disassociated their group from more radical organizations that could have attached a bad image to their organization. In statement four, it was mentioned that the MAC would ally itself with a group that shared a common understanding with the MAC. This statement had different interpretations, which included the high possibility that the MAC would only work with groups that shared similar beliefs in nonviolent protest, as well as an ideology similar to that of the Madison Area Committee.

CHAPTER 7

DRAFT RESISTANCE ACTIVITIES

The Madison Area Committee followed through on numerous draft resistance activities both on and off campus. These draft resistance activities demonstrated the limitations the group's ideals and beliefs placed upon them. Many of these activities were representative of their organization's belief in nonviolent protest. The examination of a committee founded by the MAC provided examples of how their organization's beliefs and ideals influenced their activities. The AFSC in Madison was involved in numerous activities of resistance towards the draft, but their activities always



Figure 4. The photograph displays a crowd of Anti-Vietnam War demonstrators marching down Wisconsin Avenue in Madison, Wisconsin. The lead banner states “Stop the Bombing. Sign the Treaty Now! U.S. Out of Indo-China Now!” Anti-Vietnam War Demonstration, Circa 1972. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID# 1903. Reproduced with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

involved nonviolent forms of protest, such as draft card burnings or card turn-ins, sit-ins, and other forms of protest against the war. Most of these activities involved disruption of military recruitment efforts on campus, such as mandatory ROTC orientation, which the AFSC in Madison encouraged students to boycott. The limitations that resulted are demonstrated in one of the committees established by MAC called “Get War Off Campus”.

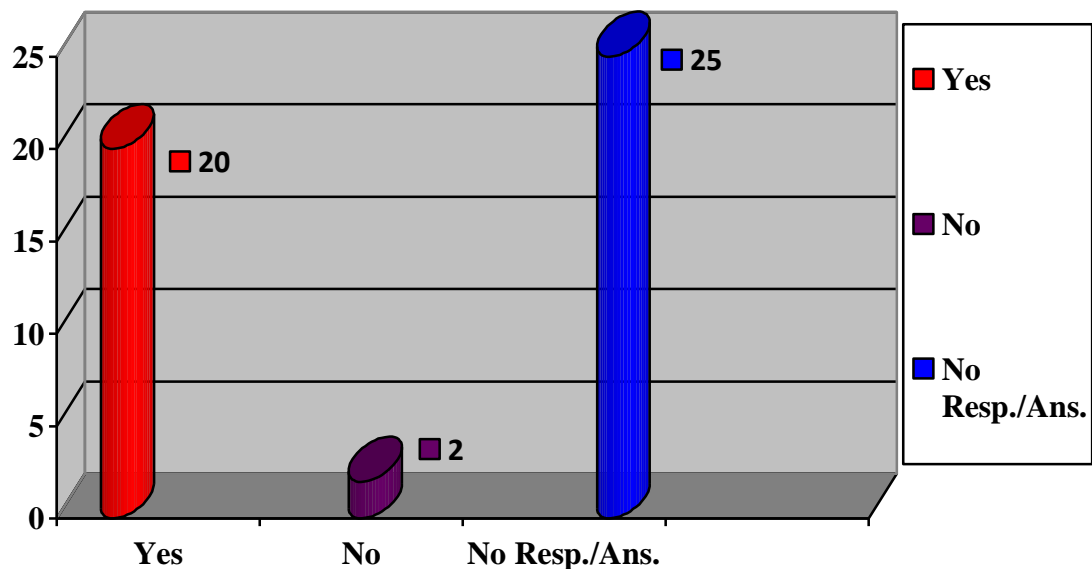


Chart 4. This chart describes the number of students who listed ethical or moral beliefs as being one of the reasons why they could not or would not serve in the military. These numbers are taken from questionnaires, which originated from the Madison Area Committee. The total number of these questioners was 48 in total.

A Peaceful Means of Protest

The Madison Area Committee established the “Get War Off Campus” (GWOC) campaign or movement as a peaceful means of resisting the draft and denouncing the war through methods other than draft counseling. This specific group tasked itself with the goal of removing military influence and associations related to the military from the campus. For instance, ROTC would be considered a military influence and on different occasions, the MAC tried to remove it from campus or restrict it. The GWOC group’s statements matched the beliefs of those of the AFSC’s and likewise the MAC’s. The following statement is an example of the group’s ideals: “We are a group of students, faculty, campus religious workers, and other citizens interested in dealing with nonviolently with war on the University of Wisconsin

campus.”³⁶ After this statement, the next statement provides the basis or reasons for their belief and later their recommendations to the school:

The unfortunate effects of violence are even more disastrous when brute force is used to try and to solve international disputes. For this reason we believe that it is inappropriate for a university dedicated to sifting and winnowing for the benefit of mankind to be an accomplice to war.³⁷

It should be noted that the previous statement goes along the same lines as the one made by the student senate’s statement resolution to the university on its association with the SSS.³⁸ This statement has also illustrated that many students and other individuals within the university viewed that an institution dedicated to education should not be associated with war. This was also a view shared within the MAC; universities should not be places of military presence and this extended to the industries associated with the military, such as the Dow Chemical Company.

Get War Off Campus

Disruption of the Reserve Officer Training Corps Recruitment Efforts

The “Get War Off Campus” (GWOC) started by the AFSC on the UW Madison campus was an attempt to remove military activities and programs from the campus grounds and the classrooms. This group was active on the Madison campus with its actions against military targets, such as the ROTC. However, this group is best described in a reference made towards it during the meeting of November 1967:

John Anderson introduced the work of an AFSC – initiated group called “Get War Off Campus.” The demonstrations on the UW campus against the recruitment by Dow Chemical Company, on October 18, gave rise to a feeling among many of us that we should take peace action on campus more consistently in the spirit of non-

³⁶ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

³⁷ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

³⁸ See page 15 for reference.

violence. At first the group called together saw itself as a possible “third force” to act as a buffer between antagonists at any future confrontation. Some of us approached the University Administration to encourage both their abstention from use of violence to deal with protest and their seeking ways to preserve the legitimate functions of the University from corruption by the military. Later the group came to feel that we need to take initiative action, rather than simply to react to a situation conceived by others. We decided to plan for the upcoming appearance of the CIA, and began defining a means of semi-obstructive non-violent confrontation. But the group flattered [sic]³⁹ in its assessment of obstructive tactics, in its confidence in its ability to influence other protesters, and in its basic concept of what nonviolence [sic] is. Nonetheless those of us from the AFSC felt that this group may still be valuable in raising the issue of war on campus, and will need our support.⁴⁰

The statement provides information as to the evolution of GWOC over a period time until it eventually became

associated with its

actions against military

organizations on

campus. This

statement provides an

example as to how the

beliefs and ideals of the

AFSC were imbued

into the actions they

carried out. For

instance, the statement

above mentioned how the



Figure 5. Students clash with riot police at the University of Wisconsin – Madison over the involvement of Dow Chemical in the Vietnam conflict. Dow Chemical Demonstration, Circa 1967. Wisconsin Historical Society Image ID# 2289. Reproduced with permission of the Wisconsin Historical Society.

group sought out the school administration in order to find less violent means when dealing with

³⁹Faltered.

⁴⁰ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, “Records 1964-1974,” TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

protesters. The demonstrations against the offices of Dow Chemical Company were used as an example of the UWM's actions against the protesters.

In particular, the types of activities that the Madison area AFSC was targeting included: military recruiters on campus grounds, companies associated with the military that were recruiting on campus, and other related policies and military activities on campus. In a February 8th, 1968 meeting, one committee member, John Anderson, laid out tactics the group could implement, such as attempting to mock the ROTC presentations on campus, speaking about alternatives available besides the draft, and researching companies involved with recruitment on campus.⁴¹ There were also attempts to boycott ROTC orientation at the university as according to the following letter:

This week a substantial number of freshmen will walkout of and boycott the ROTC Orientation because it is mandatory. We ask all freshman men and woman (sic) to join in these actions. Although you may wish to take the orientation, we implore you to support our right not to take the course.⁴²

These activities were specifically designed to disrupt military activities on the campus and their efforts in recruitment. For example, at a February 20th, 1968 meeting, members discussed methods of dealing with ROTC orientation on the campus. In this meeting, it was suggested that, "After much informative conversation about ROTC and orientation lectures those present did decide to start working on a course or lecture to fill in the gaps left by the ROTC slant, and some people plan to go to ROTC orientation lectures to ask appropriately pointed questions from the audience."⁴³

⁴¹ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

⁴² American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

⁴³ American Friends Service Committee, Madison Wisconsin Area Committee, "Records 1964-1974," TD, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives, Madison, WI.

CHAPTER 8

DECLINE OF A MOVEMENT

Organizations and their movements are inseparably linked to one another in most cases; without a cause, there can be no organization in many cases. However, the AFSC defied this common fate faced by many organizations, due to their beliefs as well as the organization's flexibility and activities within communities. Besides the draft counseling, the AFSC worked on community projects and activities that continued along the line of their ideals. Those organizations that were completely dedicated to draft resistance became extinct, because without the draft in effect they no longer had a goal for the group to pursue or a common enemy to bond the members of the group together.

Apparent Decline of Draft Resistance

In 1969, a decline in the number of draft resistance organizations in the U.S. started to become apparent. This began with several of the draft resistance groups in New England, such as the New England Resistance, and the New York Resistance.⁴⁴ This was not just restricted to the New England area; the demise of draft resistance groups occurred elsewhere throughout the country, such as in Wisconsin with the departure of the Wisconsin Draft Resistance Union.⁴⁵ However, some groups did manage to hold onto their existence and even saw a resurgence with the May 1970 Cambodian Invasion, but all this was not enough to stop the inevitable decrease of draft resistance organizations, unless they were to redefine themselves into something different.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Useem, *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict*, 263.

⁴⁵ Useem, *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict*, 264.

⁴⁶ Ibid

New Objectives Besides the Anti-War Movement

Even before the draft became a major cause or issue within the AFSC, the group carried out numerous other activities that involved the community and the nation. Some of these activities dealt with the issue of violence in films and other issues connected with the beliefs of the AFSC. However, the AFSC as a national organization had many smaller units and it is difficult to determine the number that went under after the Vietnam War. The AFSC continued exist as an organization and still does to this day; even though smaller units and branches of the organization ceased, the main branch continues to function. Then why did so many draft resistance organizations fade out of existence? Michael Useem provided the best answer to this question stating:

A movement founded around creation of a rapid and massive mobilization of a group requires an effective means for drawing people into the protest process. But such means may not be readily available for organizing certain types of groups. The chosen tactic of direct assault on governmental authority left the Resistance without prospects for local campaigns that could yield small but nonetheless tangible victories. In the absence of localized struggles, winning people to the organization necessarily came to be more contingent on creating a faith in the distant goals of the movement, and failure to inspire such long-term commitment was a major cause of the inability of the Resistance to expand its ranks beyond a few thousand resisters. Defeat of the major Resistance program was fatal, since the movement was incapable of redefining its reason for existence.⁴⁷

Useem was elaborating that the absence of struggle with the government led to decreased membership, because that was a major source of membership for many organizations. The attention received for their acts against the governmental system brought in new members, but with no draft, there was no struggle and without this struggle groups found it difficult to bring in fresh members. This was actually a strategy best discussed by Barrie Thorne, which he elaborates on as non-cooperation. In these activities, members of the group would do something spectacular and attention grabbing, such as a mass burning of draft cards, in the hope of drawing

⁴⁷ Useem, *Conscription, Protest, And Social Conflict*, 284-285.

in new members by creating a platform from which they could explain the reason for their actions, thereby appealing to the masses.⁴⁸ However, without this platform, there went a significant method for attracting new members to the organization.

⁴⁸ Thorne, "Protest and the Problem of Credibility," 115.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Draft resistance proved an important part in the history of the Vietnam Era. Even though it did not change the course of the war, it did change the course of the lives of numerous individuals that would have been greatly altered if drafted into the military. Draft resistance was not just a battle between potential draftees and the military, but also an aspect of the peace movement and the war. The AFSC used draft counseling along with many other activities at the time in order to bring peace. The MAC was no exception in the methods they used, because they followed the same path as their parent organization the AFSC.

Most importantly, the significance of the draft resistance stemmed from not only the beliefs and ideals involved, but also from their impact on the individuals or potential draftees. It was the potential impact of preventing an individual who may not want to go to war from being drafted, but also preventing needless death and casualties, which was most meaningful.

According to Jerry Elmer, he had a conversation with an individual, whose life was altered, because of his draft board raid:

...I applied for a license to practice law in Rhode Island. Naturally, one of the questions on the bar application is whether I had ever been convicted of a felony. I knew that, because my answer was yes, my application would receive special scrutiny. ...On the day of my interview, I was a bit nervous. I did not for a moment regret my participation in the RIPOFF⁴⁹ Action, but I was also acutely conscious of the fact that I might not be allowed to practice law because of my criminal record. My interviewer, however, was far more nervous than I was. He dithered around a bit, seemingly tongue-tied. Then he said what was on his mind. "So, you're the guy who destroyed all those draft files in 1970?" Yes, I am, I said. I was just getting ready to start in on my *spiel* about nonviolence, Thoreau, Gandhi, and Martin Luther King Jr., when my interviewer spoke again.

⁴⁹ RIPOFF stands for Rhode Island Political Offensive For Freedom, which was a group formed by Jerry Elmer and some other members that would conduct draft file destruction. Jerry Elmer also comments that he and some other members chose the name for the nice acronym it created.

“My brother was classified 1-A when you did that. You probably saved his life. I’ve been waiting twenty years to thank you. You’re approved.”
That was the end of the interview.⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Elmer, *Felon for Peace*, 260.

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