

Chapter 12: Vietnam, the Draft, and the Columbia Strike

The thing the Sixties did was to show us the possibilities and the responsibility that we all had. It wasn't the answer. It just gave us a glimpse of the possibility.

John Lennon

The American foreign policy trauma of the Sixties and Seventies was caused by applying valid principles to unsuitable conditions.

Henry Kissinger¹

When great changes occur in history, when great principles are involved, as a rule the majority are wrong. The minority are right.

Eugene V. Debs²

The Sixties, of course, was the worst time in the world to try and bring up a child. They were exposed to all these crazy things going on.

Nancy Reagan³

A. The War in Vietnam

I entered Columbia College in the fall of 1963. President Kennedy was still alive, and while he was alive the war in Vietnam did not seem (from America) like all that big a deal. The prevailing strategy of containment did imply a need to support the anti-Communist government in South Vietnam against what were seen as encroachments

¹ He was President Nixon's National Security Advisor, later Secretary of State, and prime henchman during the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. He said this many years later, in *The Guardian*, December 16, 1992.

² Eugene Victor Debs (1855-1926), was the leader of the Socialist Party and its candidate for President four times between 1904 and 1920 (in 1900 he had run as a Social Democrat). In 1918 he made a speech advocating resistance to the wartime draft and was arrested and tried under the Espionage Act. He presented no witnesses but addressed the jury for two hours – the quote above is from his speech to the jury. They convicted him anyway and he was sentenced to ten years in prison (he ran for President from prison in 1920). The Supreme Court affirmed his conviction in *Debs v. United States*, 249 U.S. 211 (1919), which includes a review of the supposed facts. President Harding commuted his sentence to time served in 1921.

³ Future researchers: she was the much-facelifted wife of President Reagan.

from the Communist north. As will be discussed in Chapter 13, I was a cradle Democrat, a liberal, a supporter of Stevenson and Kennedy, and an anti-Communist. This strategy didn't seem out of line to me then.

Everybody understands now that as applied to Vietnam, containment was a deceptively simplistic view of the situation, badly misconceived as well as deliberately misrepresented. Instead of being a simple Communist power grab as in Eastern Europe, the Vietnam conflict had complex roots in the Vietnamese national anti-colonial struggle against the French and the Japanese and then the French again, culminating in the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu in 1954. But at the time, from 1954 forward, what American policy-makers saw was Communists in the north and anti-Communists in the south, just as in Korea. The Communists in the north looked to western eyes like pawns for the Chinese Communists to the north of them, just as the supposedly nationalist partisans in Eastern Europe really were pawns of the Russians.

Lenin said "Probe with the bayonet. If you meet steel, stop. If you meet mush, then push." Russian expansionism after World War II convinced American policymakers that they must present steel to the Communists or they would keep on expanding. This was the Domino Theory: if you let one country fall, the next country will fall next. The American experience of stopping Communism in Greece (the Truman Doctrine), and the British experience of countering the Communist insurgency in Malaya, reinforced this idea. Thus President Eisenhower sent advisors to train the South Vietnamese to resist Communist pressure from the north and maintain their anti-Communist state in the south, and blocked nation-wide elections in Vietnam.

President Kennedy was very cautious about committing American military power in Vietnam. He sent a few hundred Special Forces advisors to South Vietnam in 1961, but resisted sending more. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara asked him to send 200,000 men, but by the time he died in November 1963 President Kennedy had committed only 16,000 men. This was a lot, but not enough to tear the country apart – not our country and not theirs either. But after the Bay of Pigs and the Berlin Wall and some other foreign policy failures, he didn't want to risk another defeat – he felt we had to take a stand somewhere and mean it.

I supported the war at that point, because I believed the anti-Communist rhetoric which was used to justify our involvement. But in the summer of 1964 I had a dialogue on the war with my college classmate Peter Miller, who was a pacifist in those days. I know it was the summer after freshman year because I was in my post-freshman apartment on 120th Street, but I was having this dialogue by mail, which wouldn't have been necessary during the school year. Peter was convinced the war was wrong politically and morally, and I spent a long time trying to write a letter to him justifying the war, but no matter how hard I tried I couldn't write a convincing argument for it. So I concluded that he was right and changed my position.

I was therefore of the peace party in 1964, and supported Lyndon Johnson, the peace candidate, against the supposed warmonger Barry Goldwater. Johnson promised “We are not about to send American boys nine or ten thousand miles away from home to do what Asian boys ought to be doing for themselves,” that is, fight in Vietnam. However, in August 1964 President Johnson used the trumped-up Gulf of Tonkin incident to get a resolution from Congress allowing him to do pretty much as he liked in Vietnam. Despite this, I certainly did not expect the treachery to come, and neither did most Americans. As we saw it, Johnson was going to avoid the massive American involvement Goldwater would have launched.



Johnson was elected in a landslide in November 1964 and immediately began ramping up the American role in Vietnam to previously unimagined levels, in terms of the number of Americans in action, our role in the war, and the ferocity with which we were fighting (defoliation, napalm, burning villages). The bombing of North Vietnam was sharply escalated just after the election. By March 1965 we had nearly 30,000 soldiers in Vietnam, including some in combat rather than advisory roles. By July the number was 125,000. In November 1965 it was announced that troop levels would rise to 400,000; eventually it would go significantly higher. Most of these soldiers were draftees.

Meanwhile it was becoming increasingly clear that the South Vietnamese government was a corrupt cabal more or less incapable of defending its regime on its own. What we were really doing was intervening in a civil war on the inevitably losing side. The Communist forces in Vietnam were not proxies of China or Russia, and American security would not be threatened by even a Communist reunification of the country.

Moreover, we on the Democratic left were realizing we had been lied to. They said the war was going well, and it wasn't. They said the South Vietnamese were our plucky allies fighting for freedom, and they weren't. They said our ships had been attacked in the Gulf of Tonkin, and they hadn't been. They said North Vietnam was an aggressor state invading its peaceful neighbor, Korean-style, and that was a mischaracterization, to put it mildly. They said we controlled land we did not really control. They said we were winning the hearts and minds of the Vietnamese people, while really those hearts and minds were supporting and protecting the enemy. Later they said we were not fighting in Cambodia and Laos, when we were.

The idea that the American government, and in particular the President of the United States, would flat-out lie to the people was an enormous shock. This may be hard for a younger generation to understand. Nowadays, forty years later, we have come to *expect* the government to lie – in fact the repeated, colossal, outrageous, utterly shameless and

transparent lies of President George W. Bush and his confederates surprised hardly anyone. But in the 1960s this caused outrage and galvanized large portions of my generation, and many much older, into the streets. Our outrage was heightened by the sight of the war on television (a new experience for most people), by iconic images such as the napalmed girl running naked in the road and the South



Vietnamese police commander shooting a suspect in the head, the relentlessly increasing casualty lists, the My Lai massacre, the emergence of the uniquely credible Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and most of all by the knowledge that the government was using the draft to compel young men to participate in this unjust and ineffective war.⁴ The Communists' Tet offensive in 1968, and Walter Cronkite's commentary about it, helped the growing understanding in the center as well as the left that the war was unwinnable.⁵

The more outraged we got, the louder we shouted, and the louder we shouted the more people came around to our point of view. A vocal and articulate non-student left helped sway people in a way that has not been possible since – I think of such leaders as Benjamin Spock, William Sloane Coffin, A. J. Muste, and Bayard Rustin (left to right, below).

⁴ The My Lai massacre in 1968 was an atrocity of mass murder by an American unit under the command of Lieutenant William Calley. When this became widely known in 1969, it further undermined popular support for the war.

⁵ In fact, now that the tapes of his phone calls have been released, we know that *Johnson himself* knew the war was unwinnable even as he was pouring in American soldiers and telling the country that victory was coming.

Walter Cronkite (1916-2009) was the anchor and star of the *CBS Evening News*, an evening summary of the news on network television. It will be hard for future researchers to understand how important these network programs were to popular opinion in the pre-Internet era – they were most people's main source of news, and television was changing the news into a visual event. Cronkite himself was characterized by a poll as "the most trusted man in America." Therefore it was a great shock when, on February 27, 1968, just back from Vietnam after the Tet Offensive, Cronkite reported his own opinion that the war was "mired in stalemate," could not be won, and that having "done the best [we] could," the only sensible course was to negotiate a withdrawal. President Johnson said "If I've lost Cronkite, I've lost Middle America," and withdrew as a candidate for re-election not long afterward.



SPOCK



COFFIN



MUSTE



RUSTIN



KING

Another factor in the opposition to the war and the activism which it inspired was the parallel struggle for civil rights. The connection between the two was not well understood – when toward the end of his life Martin Luther King (above, far right) tried to explain the connection he confused a lot of people. But what the civil rights movement had done was accustom people on the left to mass demonstrations and protests as a way to appeal to broader public opinion. It seemed natural to extend this method of protest to the war, in a way which had not been the case in previous wars, and would not be duplicated in wars to come.

- Also previous wars had not been both massive and unjust – the massive ones had wide support, and the unjust ones were small and fought by volunteers. We have seen in the war in Iraq how difficult it is to mobilize widespread and determined opposition to a war fought by volunteers, even when the volunteers have essentially become conscripts through involuntarily extended service and multiple deployments.

I strongly sympathized with the civil rights movement and had even gone to Mississippi on the Meredith March in June 1966. James Meredith was walking from Memphis to Jackson to support voter registration and when he was shot and wounded not far into Mississippi. Dr. King and others called for volunteers to continue the march, and I flew to Memphis to join in. I was billeted overnight in a black household and driven to the march the next day (see right). I marched for a couple of days – it was very exciting, with the Mississippi Highway Patrol unwillingly guarding us by day and our unarmed marshals guarding us by night, and with rumors that the Ku Klux Klan were lurking outside our camps. Dr. King spoke in our tent. But then my bag disappeared from the luggage wagon, and I had only what I was wearing, not a toothbrush, not even a book, and after a few days I began both to smell and feel not so great from sweating unshowered



down that highway, and it all became rather uncomfortable. So I left, tail firmly between my legs, and hitchhiked shaggily back to Memphis with a redneck truck driver who asked what I thought of Martin Luther Coon. I challenged him only gently. He must have known why I was there on that highway, scruffy and reeking of Yankitude.

I mention this in part because it was such a vivid episode in my life. I'm glad I had that experience and got that campaign ribbon. I only went on that one Mississippi march, but that's one, anyway. I went to civil rights demonstrations in New York, though, and anti-war demonstrations seemed like more of the same. The distinction between the two causes was not all that clear – many of the leaders of each cause (excluding King and Rustin) tried to keep them distinct, but the people in each movement tended to be partisans of both, and the rhetoric at demonstrations for either cause often splashed over to the other.

I mention it also to show where I was coming from in those years. I was angry about two big things – the war (and the draft), and racial segregation and the suppression of civil rights in the South. And with what indignation I had left over, I was angry about red-baiting and COINTELPRO (an FBI counterintelligence program to repress political dissent in the United States) and on-campus recruiting by the Dow Chemical Company, which made napalm.⁶ And other things too – as other things to be outraged about were suggested, I added them to the list. Even socialism was beginning to seem like not such a completely bad idea. I was being radicalized, and changing from a liberal into a radical.

- There was a masterful piece of political theatre about napalm around this time. An antiwar group publicized its intention to napalm a puppy at a stated time and place. Predictably this generated widespread disgust and outrage and demands that it be prevented no matter what. At the appointed time the organizers revealed that there was no puppy, but if people felt that strongly about napalming a puppy, what about napalming people in Vietnam?

I went to many antiwar demonstrations during my Columbia years and afterwards – American forces did not leave Vietnam until 1973. For example, I was at the Moratorium demonstration in Washington in 1969 (students from Penn Law were recruited as “legal marshals” so they could report police violence with some accuracy). A popular chant was “Hey, Hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” Another chant was “One, two, three, four! We don't want your fucking war!” I didn't chant – chanting made me uncomfortable – but that pretty much spelled out how I felt. I describe in

⁶ Napalm was a kind of jellied petroleum which burst into flames on contact and caused ghastly injuries; white phosphorous was another horrible incendiary agent which stuck to people's bodies while it burned into them.

Chapter 13 my support for antiwar candidates in 1968, and my indignation at the suppression of dissent at the 1968 Democratic Convention by the ham-handed Chicago police. It may be hard for people who were not there to realize now how angry we were by 1968 – seven years into the Iraq and Afghanistan catastrophes nothing like those repeated protests ever happens or is expected. But I’m getting ahead of my story here.

B. The Draft



It was against this background that my personal involvement with the draft began. I had registered with the Selective Service System at 18 in the ordinary way. I was glad to do it, in a sense, as it was a rite of passage and in September 1962 I thought student deferments would place me at least five years away from eligibility and that there was no prospect of my being involved in the war. By 1966 both those things had changed – I had been suspended from college (see Chapter 11.B), which ended my student deferment, and as discussed the war had gone into high gear and was soaking up draftees at a rapid rate (almost two million conscripts were inducted between August 1964 and February 1973). Even if I had not been suspended, I would have been exposed when I graduated in 1967. I was clear that I was unwilling to go to Vietnam. But it was far from clear that I would not be ordered there anyway. Was I a conscientious objector, or just unwilling to go?

A conscientious objector, or CO, was someone who was eligible for compulsory military service but whose conscience would not allow him to serve. During World War I, COs were allowed to serve in the army in non-combatant roles, typically as medics, but those who could not conscientiously do that either were imprisoned. In World War II the government took a different approach, and allowed COs who could not serve in the military to be drafted into civilian work “of national importance.” The draft ended after the war but was soon revived under a new law, the Selective Service Act of 1948, which continued more or less the same policy toward conscientious objectors.

The imminent loss of my student deferment forced me to decide whether I was a conscientious objector or not. The draft was administered in the first instance by Local Boards, on the quaint theory that a person’s friends and neighbors would be best suited to know his circumstances and decide questions like hardship deferments. Of course this made no sense in New York City, but we had local boards too (although the city was unique in being treated like a separate state for Selective Service purposes, and had its own Appeals Board). I felt it would be better to ask for a CO application (Form 150) *before* being classified I-A (available for induction) rather than after. So I wrote to my Local Board and told them that I was no longer a student but that I was requesting Form 150. Returning (or maybe even requesting) the CO form legally prevented the Board from drafting me until my application had been acted on.

The Board responded quickly, reclassifying me I-A (available for induction) and providing a copy of Form 150. When I got the form the first thing I saw, and it was a shock, was that I had to complete it and return it within 10 days. Some of the questions were very hard – for example “Under what circumstances, if any, do you believe in the use of force?” I was not really prepared to answer these questions off the top of my head. So I called the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors (CCCO) in Philadelphia, at that time almost the only resource available to give serious well-informed advice to men preparing to claim CO status, and asked them if 10 days really meant 10 days. Yes, it did.

So I went into emergency mode to get this form figured out and answered. My parents were out of town, so I moved temporarily back into their house at 112 East 70th Street. I set myself up in my parents’ bedroom, which was comfortable and well-lighted and air conditioned and had my mother’s electric typewriter on a convenient worktable. Mary was downstairs to cook for me and run the house. And I started in to answer the questions.

I decided I *was* a conscientious objector. This did not require a total commitment never to use force under any circumstances. One of the classic draft board trick questions was: Would you use force to stop someone from raping your grandmother? It was a trick question because the law did not require a grandmother-abandoning level of pacifism to qualify a man as a CO – he only had to be conscientiously opposed to *participating in war*. But it had to be *all* wars, war *in any form* – a conscientious objection just to the war in Vietnam (even on a religious basis like the Catholic just war doctrine) was not enough.

Also the objection had to be *religious*. It used to be thought that this meant membership in a “peace church” like the Mennonites or the Quakers, or at least a belief in Supreme Being. But the Supreme Court had recently decided (in *United States v. Seeger*, 380 U.S. 163, 176 (1965)) that belief in a Supreme Being was not required, but that the law had to recognize a “sincere and meaningful belief which occupies in the life of its possessor a place parallel to that filled by the God of those admittedly qualifying for the exemption.” Seeger had what he called a “religious belief in a purely ethical creed,” which qualified him as a CO.

I was still nominally an Episcopalian at this point (see Chapter 18.B), and decided to claim a religious objection on that basis. Although it was not a peace church, there was a legitimate pacifist strain in the Episcopal Church. Also two of the Columbia Episcopal clergy, Chaplain John Dyson Cannon and Assistant Chaplain William Starr, knew me and were prepared to back me as an Episcopalian objector. And it helped that I had joined this church while I still had a student deferment, long before I asked for Form 150.

Of course my objection to the war in Vietnam preceded my objection to all wars, and if the question had not been forced by my being suspended from school I doubt I would have taken a comprehensively pacifist position. But thinking it through, I really, honestly could not justify participating in war in any form. I feel quite differently now, but this was then. This meant I could not accept the non-combatant medic role either, because the role of the medics was clearly stated in the Army Manual as supporting the army's military mission.

So I thought and thought, and I wrote and wrote, and made one draft after another on the typewriter (no word processors in those days), and by the time of the deadline I had a document 64 pages long. I had never written anything close to this long before. I still have a copy and will send it to Yale as one of the Supplements. I did this pretty much on my own. CCCO sent me their *Handbook for Conscientious Objectors*, which was very helpful, but they were in Philadelphia. The American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in New York had a staff member who worked part time on draft issues, but he was not equipped to help me work through Form 150. Neither was the War Resisters' League. I completed the form and sent it in on July 5, 1966.

When I was finished with my own CO form, I started thinking about doing something about the lack of help available to me. It took me nine days of heavy full-time work, in an air-conditioned townhouse equipped with a cook, using an electric typewriter, with no competing responsibilities, and with advanced verbal skills and most of a Columbia education, to figure this out and complete the form on time. What about people who did not have these advantages? Some kind of help was needed for CO applicants on a general basis.

So I went back to AFSC, in the elegant white-pillared Friends Meeting House on Rutherford Place near Union Square (right), across a small park from Beth Israel Hospital which my family had helped found. There I discussed this problem with Jim Knapp, the staffer, and later with Dan Seeger. Seeger, the defendant in *United States v. Seeger*, was Director of the New York Regional Office, and I got to know him fairly well. We



decided, with AFSC's unhesitating support, to establish a Committee on Conscience and the Draft. AFSC had program committees on many subjects and this became another one. In their organizational structure, a committee was headed by a volunteer chairman, other volunteers contributed to the work of the committee, and a paid staff member provided organization and support. I became the chairman of the Committee and Jim Knapp was the staff person.



The first thing we did was get a copy of the Selective Service Act and Regulations and read them through. I don't remember if we were sophisticated enough at that point to know that we needed the interpretive Memoranda also, but we soon learned we did. We decided that we would counsel men not only on CO status but on other classifications they might be entitled to, on the ground that keeping unwilling conscripts out of the army was a good thing whatever the basis.

The classification system worked like this. A man of draft age was classified I-A (available for induction) unless the Local Board placed him in lower classification instead. In theory the burden was on the registrants (as we were called) to prove their entitlement to a lower classification. I-A-O was for COs who would serve as non-combatants; I-O was for those who wouldn't. Men in all three of these classifications were equally subject to being drafted; the difference for I-Os was that they would be drafted into alternative service rather than into the army.

But there were other classifications which would defer or avoid draft eligibility. II-S (college student) was the most relevant for most of us. The rules for this kept shifting. At one time graduate students were deferred too, but this was phased out. Undergraduates had to be on schedule, that is, a quarter of the way through after one year, and so on. At one time class standings were relevant too – under student pressure Columbia avoided cooperating with this by refusing to compute class standings. There was no draft lottery in those days.

IV-F, another popular classification, meant “mentally, morally or physically unfit” for service. “Morally unfit” could mean a prison record, drug use, subversive politics, or homosexuality. “Physically unfit” did not necessarily require a serious illness or disability. Back or knee problems, bad enough eyesight, and even (in theory) the traditional flat feet could make a person IV-F. A registrant could ask for IV-F, or it could be given after an army physical examination. I-Y meant unfit at the moment, but maybe not later if the need for soldiers grew acute enough, or if the disqualifying condition improved or responded to treatment.

And then there was a long list of other classifications, most of which we seldom saw. II-A was for essential civilian employment. Until 1968 this included not only war-related work such as that in defense plants, but teachers in areas of teacher shortage, and service in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps only deferred you while you were in, but as with a student deferment you could still be drafted when you got out, plus it took a long time to get in if you even could, so that was not much use. But a lot of people did become teachers to get a II-A deferment. The rules for this became much more discretionary in 1968. II-C was for essential agricultural employment – there was not much of that in New York City.

III-A was the hardship deferment – sole *surviving* sons, some fathers and “Kennedy husbands” who got this classification during Kennedy’s presidency while it was still available, and special cases decided on an individual basis. IV-C were non-resident aliens, but if you took the IV-C you couldn’t become a citizen later. Resident aliens could be drafted. IV-D were ministers and seminarians. II-D was for National Guard and reserves – we didn’t see a lot of those, but many men did join these units to avoid being drafted into the “real” army. IV-B were officials deferred by law – I was amused to see the Vice President of the United States specifically included in this class, even though to qualify as Vice President a person had to be 35 years old, which made him V-A (over age) anyway. And there were others. All women were exempt.⁷

A classification could be appealed, first through a personal appearance at a local board hearing, and then to the state appeals board, and then to the Director, the despised Lieutenant General Lewis B. Hershey (1893-1977) (right), director of Selective Service from 1940 to 1970.



After Jim and I and a few volunteers read the regulations and the memoranda and understood the statutory system, we opened for business as draft counselors. We were immediately overwhelmed by the demand, and soon decided that our primary role should not be to do the actual counseling, although we continued to do it to maintain our skills, but to train counselors so there would be enough of them to meet the need. I developed a curriculum and a set of materials for training volunteer draft counselors and we started doing that.⁸ By the time I was finished my two programs, at AFSC and Columbia, had trained hundreds of draft counselors and counseled uncounted thousands of men.

As the chairman of a committee I was *ex officio* a member of the Executive Committee of the New York Regional Office of AFSC. Every month I they sent me the agenda and background documents, on paper colored according to subject, and I studied them

⁷ These categories changed slightly over the years – the table of classifications looks somewhat different now, with Arabic numerals instead of Roman. At the present all-volunteer moment (2010) registration is still required, but all registrants are classified 1-H (not subject to processing for induction until a draft is enacted) and stay 1-H until they become 5-A (over age).

⁸ Reading this over, it occurs to me for the first time that I was doing exactly the same kind of work – developing a curriculum and training materials, training volunteers, and running a volunteer program – that my mother had done with the School Volunteers. See Chapter 2.

conscientiously to prepare for the Executive Committee meeting at Rutherford Place. I took this very seriously, in part because at 22 I was by decades the youngest member and didn't want to seem to be not up to the job. We always started with a period of silence, in Quaker fashion, and I got quite interested in the Quakers. I liked them more than I liked the Episcopalians, even though they had no music or incense or copes with embroidered orphreys, and for a while I identified spiritually with the Quakers even though I did not ever actually join up. On the Executive Committee I also met Dick Russell (not the Senator from Georgia), who arranged a job for me at the National Conference for New Politics (see the next section).

By the time I returned to Columbia, the AFSC Committee was up and running and training counselors and counseling draft age men in fair numbers. I decided to establish a similar project at Columbia, which was full of men of draft age. I went to Earl Hall, as the University's religious office was called after the building which housed it, and the Chaplain's Office sponsored it as a student activity. I knew Chaplain John Dyson Cannon well from my Episcopalian adventure. We couldn't use the Columbia name – that was one of the rules – so I called it the Student Draft Information Center (SDIC) instead. The Chaplain gave us an office in St. Paul's Chapel (right), a beautiful building across the campus from Earl Hall. It was downstairs, right next to the sacristy where clergy robed and kept the communion wine. It was a pretty basic office, but it had a desk and a phone and some chairs, and we could run the operation from it and even do counseling there. Rev. Bob Price, a young Methodist minister from Arkansas just finishing his pastoral training working with the Columbia chaplain's office, was detailed to SDIC as paid staff. So the organization was similar to that at AFSC – me as chairman, a young paid staffer, plenty of volunteers who had to be trained first, and a substantial and respectable permanent institution to provide premises and support. Document 12-1 is an informational leaflet about the SDIC.



The work of these two centers was basically the same – to help men who didn't want to get drafted avoid being drafted, help them work through whether they were COs and if so help them get classified accordingly, train counselors (16-hour program!) and counselor trainers, and provide an information resource. We published a few things in a mimeograph sort of way, I think; I published informational articles in the *Columbia Spectator*, appeared on the radio at least once, and spoke at events on war and draft issues.

We had two 3-ring notebooks in the office – Bob Price, fresh from his ministerial training, labeled the one with the Regulations the *Mishnah* and the one with the Interpretive Memoranda the *Gemara*.⁹ The *Torah* was the Selective Service Act itself, but we didn't use the Act much – we mainly used the Regulations instead. We had a subscription so the Selective Service System would send us updates to the Regulations and new Memoranda as they appeared.

I took a lot of people through the CO process, including many of my friends – Joel Solkoff, for example, and Geoff Greene. I was pretty rigorous in exploring the issues. You say you don't believe in the use of force? How about using force to open a window? And so on Socratically until we got to what the man really believed. In many cases he was not quite sure what he believed. We were careful not to maneuver people into positions which satisfied the law if those positions did not truly reflect their beliefs. A lot of what I did in CO counseling was help people, who may not have been any more certain than I was when I filled out my own form, figure out just what they really did believe.

We were very good also at technical details. Don't ask for the form until you've prepared answers to the questions first. A teaching job will (or won't) get you a II-A because. You're too old for a statutory II-S, you need Local Board permission, and given your circumstances here's what you might say in your request. This I-A may look scary but it doesn't mean you're about to be drafted, only reclassified. And lots more of the same. It was great training for a lawyer and I think it is the reason I was later admitted to Penn Law despite my spotty academic record.

We also counseled people who wanted to break the law – by not registering, by refusing induction, by burning their draft cards, or by fleeing to Canada. We were very scrupulous not to tell people to break the law, but we did tell them very specifically what was involved, what was legal and what was not, what they could expect if they did what they were planning to do. We urged people at least to consider using lawful methods first – do you *need* to ignore the classification process and get prosecuted if you can qualify as a CO or get a deferment or an exemption? There were conscientious reasons why people might want to do this, and we respected them – we just wanted to be sure people understood what they were doing and knew the full range of their options.

Bob Price qualified to escape the draft on at least four grounds – he was a minister of religion, a conscientious objector, a Kennedy husband, and had a disqualifying health

⁹ The *Mishnah* is the central text of the Talmud, and the *Gemara* is the principal commentary on the Mishnah and also part of the Talmud. The *Torah* (the first five books of the Hebrew Bible) is the central text of the whole Jewish religion.

problem. Nevertheless he insisted on burning his draft card, being reclassified I-A as a result, and refusing induction. We gathered in taxicabs at 117th and Amsterdam, behind the chapel, and went down to the Army Induction Station at 39 Whitehall Street in lower Manhattan to support him. Bob and his lawyer were in the first cab, and I got to tell the driver “follow that cab!” I’d always wanted to say that. We had to support him from outside the building, but I’m sure it was comforting for him to know there were people there rooting for him. I never heard what finally happened to him – whether he went to prison or not – because I left for Philadelphia soon thereafter. Bob’s lawyer was Michael Kennedy – that’s how I first met him, and that was the contact that led to my summer job in 1970 and my first job as a lawyer in 1971. See Chapter 15.A.

Counselor training was more or less as it had been at AFSC, except by now our technique and teaching materials were much refined. I wish I still had my syllabus. We used seminar rooms Earl Hall found for us. Lots of organizations outside Columbia sent us people to train, and individuals came also. I trained Chaplain Cannon and Linda Leclair and lots of other people. I also did some training on counselor training, training people to train counselors in their own organizations and communities. We did some outreach into Harlem and some people from there came to us to be trained. I spoke at the Lisle Conference in upstate New York, and at the Interchurch Center (called the *God Box*) near Union Theological Seminary, and by invitation went with Andy Karr, one of my best counselors, to teach counselor training at a conference held at McPherson College, Kansas (we flew via Chicago to Wichita and were driven the rest of the way). There were other places too.

After a while we outgrew the small office in the lower level of the Chapel and the Chaplain arranged for a larger suite in the appropriately named Dodge Hall (right), one of the original standard-issue McKim Meade & White buildings. That suite was very impressive, fully fitted out with phones and carpets and offices and counseling rooms – we could run as many as 20 counseling sessions at once if we had to. I worked very hard to keep all this together and still do my schoolwork – it’s a good thing I had lots of help, and Bob Price on staff.



In addition to training and administrative work, I continued as a counselor. I was a “super-counselor,” of which there were only about half a dozen on the East Coast. The hardest cases were referred to us, cases with military involvement and where adverse decisions needed to be modified (for example, I got a state appeals board to postpone an

induction to allow my client to get in his CO form, and did something similar for a man already in the military). Arlo Tatum of CCCO, who had been imprisoned twice in the 1940s and whom I got to know pretty well, was the greatest super-counselor of them all, and even super-counselors consulted him if we were perplexed. He retired to England some years ago. I also worked with Ralph DiGia, of the War Resisters' League, on resistance cases. The more I did the more I learned. As noted, my work as a super-counselor was the reason I studied military law at Columbia Law School in my senior year.

Anti-draft work merged seamlessly with anti-war work. But even at the time, we had our doubts about how much good it was doing. We got thousands of men out of the army one way or another – incredibly, I can't recall a single one who tried to get out but who eventually had to go in anyway. And I suppose it did some good in raising awareness, and in helping some genuine pacifists crystallize their thinking and avoid impossible conflicts. But for every college student we helped get out of the draft, the army (or the marines, who drafted too in those days) just drafted someone else. We may have made more work for Selective Service, but we didn't slow the war down for a minute, and we may have diverted attention from substantive protest into procedural issues.

Here's my own draft story. As required, I notified my Local Board that I was no longer a student, and they reclassified me I-A and sent me Form 150. I returned Form 150 and waited for them to deal with me. I had made a pretty good case, had lots of letters to back me up, and was about halfway confident I would eventually be classified I-O. However, the next thing to happen was not a local board hearing on my CO application, but the start of processing me for an army physical examination. I assume the local board had a policy of trying the physical route first. If a registrant failed the physical, he would be IV-F or I-Y and they would not have to deal with his CO form. Even if they classified him I-O or I-A-O, failing the physical would still stop them from drafting him to non-combatant or alternative service. So why even consider the CO thing if the physical might moot the whole question?

So they sent me a questionnaire, which I filled out in detail. Among the questions was one about psychiatric history. Had I ever...? Well, I had, of course, see Chapter 8, so I said yes. They wrote back to me asking me to sign a release so they could get my records. I figured if they had to ask my permission then I could withhold it, so I refused to sign. They wrote back demanding that I sign. I refused again. They wrote back saying if I didn't sign and let them look at my records, they would not consider my claim to be IV-F. I wrote



back saying that was fine with me, for I had made no such claim, I was not unfit for service, it would be illegal for them to classify me IV-F (I was laying it on pretty thick by now), and reminding them that I wanted to be I-O, not IV-F.

The next thing I got was an order to go down to 39 Whitehall Street for an army physical, early one morning in 1966 or 1967. This building was a huge pile of granite, red brick and sandstone, built in 1886 and inscribed with the name of the old War Department. Many generations of New Yorkers had their physicals in this building, with its enormous hollow center, and it was also the place for being inducted (or refusing induction). So I went there and moved from one line to another all day, being examined by one army doctor after another. The part of the examination people remember most vividly was being made to stand with your legs apart (no pants of course), lean over, and spread your buttocks so the doctors could get a good look at your rectum. My rectum was adequate for military purposes.

However, when we got to the army psychiatrist things got interesting. The psychiatrist, a major I think and a lifer by the look of him, was seated behind a desk in a comfortable office with a stone fireplace. He asked me why I wouldn't sign the release and I told him I didn't have to. He asked me why I had been suspended from Columbia and I said for not doing my work. He asked me why I didn't do my work and I said this has now gone beyond the point where I wish to discuss the matter with the army. He thought a while and told me he thought I was "unsuited for army life," and stamped my file accordingly. I told him (not knowing when to shut up) that I agreed with that, and in fact was a conscientious objector and wouldn't go anyway.

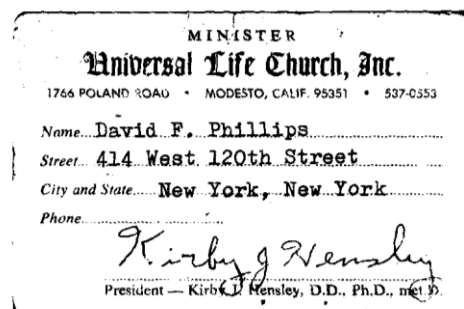
So that was the end of my army physical, and soon thereafter I was classified IV-F. I was not *trying* to be rejected by the army – if I had been, perhaps they would have thought I was faking, and passed me. And they were completely right – I was about as unsuited for army life as a man could be. At the time, however, I was so passionate about my claim to be a conscientious objector that I was ready to appeal! I wanted I-O, damn it, and I wasn't going to settle for anything less! But wiser heads soon prevailed. There was a technical problem in that appeals were for a *lower* classification – I would be asking for a *higher* one, which was procedurally difficult. More important, though, since I had escaped the whole thing by being IV-F, did I really want to be liable for alternative service, and be drafted to spend two years doing social work on an Indian reservation in North Dakota? What for?

When it was put to me that way I calmed down and took the IV-F, which I have not regretted. I was not going to go into the army no matter what, and I wasn't going to flee to Canada either. So if I had not been IV-F (or I-Y) I would either have been I-O and sent somewhere uncomfortable, or I-A, and refused induction, and sent to federal prison. At the time, having no clear idea what was involved, I was blithely ready to go to prison

if I had to – I would probably have felt differently about it when the doors clanged shut behind me for a three-year sentence. Thank God it never got that far.

I am no longer a pacifist and would no longer qualify as a CO. I would have supported World War II, and I supported the first Gulf War (to expel Iraq from Kuwait), and the interventions in Kosovo and East Timor.¹⁰ There are occasions when force is needed in international relations. Some good tests: is the war essentially defensive (as in Kuwait or Korea), or an intervention against inhumane conduct by a government (as in Kosovo or Timor)? Is it supported and participated in by an international consensus (as in Korea and Iraq I) or is it basically just us (as in Panama and Iraq II)? Is our war aim something we have the right to insist on (as in Iraq I, but not Nicaragua)? Have peaceful methods been tried? Are the objectives clear and reasonable militarily (as in Timor but not Vietnam)? Is there a reasonable way to stop the war once it starts? Is it being fought with a volunteer force? And so on.¹¹ This topic is a fruitful source of casuistical opining – I don't mean to lay down the whole of the moral law here – but the fact that the right answers to these questions matters to me makes me no longer a conscientious objector to all wars in any form. Fortunately I am now over-age (V-A), and anyway am still unsuited for army life.

- This might be a good place to mention the Universal Life Church, started by Kirby J. Hensley and Jefferson Fuck Poland (as he called himself), which ordained people on request, by mail, so they could claim to be ministers of religion and be classified IV-D. Of course this did not work, as the Selective Service System had already adopted a rule for Jehovah's Witnesses (who also all claimed to be ministers) that to qualify for Class IV-D you had to do 100 hours of church work a month. Naturally there was no church work in the Universal Life Church. Their doctrine was "We believe in that which is right," a hard dogma to argue with. We were very scrupulous at AFSC and SDIC, and would never have tried to use a phony ministerial credential to get someone a IV-D.



¹⁰ And I would not have any scruples against serving in the Israeli army whether there was a war on or not.

¹¹ For an excellent discussion of these issues, see President Obama's 2009 Nobel Lecture at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2009/12/10/obamas_nobel_lecture, or listen to it at <http://nobelprize.org/mediaplayer/index.php?id=1221>.

But I sent away for an ordination certificate anyway, which was free in those days, and was ordained a minister by Kirby Hensley on April 8, 1968, by return mail. My membership was not in any real sense religious, but it was fun to have, and I still have my ordination certificate – see Document 12-2. Although it was no good for a deferment, by a quirk of the First Amendment it is good for weddings, at least in California, because who dares to say I am not a minister? To date I have performed five weddings, and am always on the lookout for more. All of my weddings have been mixed in some sense – white and black, Anglo and Japanese (three times, including one gay couple), Jew and *goy* (twice, although one groom's mother's mother turned out to have been Jewish, so maybe not). And all have been successful and apparently permanent. In fact, I make a promise: satisfaction guaranteed, or your old girlfriend back.

C. The National Conference for New Politics

As mentioned, I started working at AFSC in the summer of 1966, soon after I left Columbia. I was a volunteer and *ex officio* a member of the Regional Executive Committee. Dick Russell, a fellow member of the Executive Committee, asked me if I needed a job, which I very much did, both for money and because I had to be doing something I could report back to Columbia that I had done. So he arranged for me to see Greg Finger, who was the political director (or some such title – I forget exactly) of the National Conference for New Politics.

I went down to see Finger at the NCNP office in the Fisk Building, 250 West 57th Street at Broadway (right). Finger was a slender young man, although not as young as I was – maybe 30. He had a moustache and goatee and a lot of energy. After meeting me, and on Dick Russell's recommendation, he hired me as office manager, something I knew how to do from my days at the Ryan for Mayor campaign (see Chapter 13).

NCNP had been founded that very year, I think. Its purpose was to effect a fusion among the traditional white non-Communist left, the so-called "New Left" pioneered by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the black civil rights leadership with its various branches. A lot of very distinguished people in all three camps had been persuaded to put their names on the NCNP letterhead – Benjamin Spock was one of the whites, as I recall, and Dr. King, Julian Bond and even Stokeley Carmichael were among the blacks. Bill Pepper, a political science (or maybe history) professor at Mercy College in Dobbs Ferry, NY, was the Executive Director, and Greg Finger was in charge of programs and of me.



It was not entirely clear what our programs were to be. There was talk of giving money to electoral campaigns in the 1966 election, and there was a big wall map locating likely campaigns, and some of that may have happened. We sent out mailings to raise money, but most of the money came from Marty Peretz' girlfriend Anne Farnsworth, a Singer heiress, whom he later married and who many years afterwards would buy our house on Cape Cod (see Chapter 25). I will never forget the awe I felt receiving Anne's check to NCNP for \$16,000 (a far bigger check than I had ever seen before).

Anyway, although the organization was political, and that's why I discuss it in this chapter, my job was not political – I was the office manager. I ran the office, arranged for office supplies, printing and payroll, directed the work of our secretary, and managed the office machines including the Gestetner mimeograph machine that every political office had then (right).¹² There was a huge Xerox copier, which replaced an old feed-one-page-at-a-time desktop copier (even that was a rare luxury in those days).

When we prepared literature I managed the proof process, and the printing and mailing which was done off-site.

Sometimes I even wrote the copy. I took in the contributions and deposited them in the bank, and wrote (but could not sign) the checks. Greg taught me double-entry bookkeeping, which I enjoyed once I got the hang of it – columns in ledgers, done in red and black ink with twin-bottle ink eradicator in case of mistakes (a Virgo's delight). This is all completely obsolete now,



¹² Mimeograph was a reproducing process, sophisticated and primitive at the same time, based on a stencil. You typed your text onto the stencil using a typewriter with the ribbon removed (many typewriters in those days had a setting to prevent the ribbon from rising to meet the key). Without the cloth ribbon in the way, the metal key bit into the stencil, leaving a thin spot. Then the stencil was suspended between two drums (see illustration) and horrible sticky ink was loaded onto the machine. When power was applied (either electricity or a hand crank) the drums revolved, the stencil went around, and the ink bled through the thin spots in the stencil and onto the paper. The rotary motion of the drum moved the paper from the paper bin, under the stencil, and onto the tray for completed work. Printed sheets remained sticky and smearable for some time. In those days, when you needed more copies than carbon paper could provide, mimeograph was the main (although not the only) method of reproducing text short of actual letterpress printing. It was used everywhere, even by the government.

but then it was a worthwhile skill as there were no computers in our office or anyone else's in 1966. I would often stay very late, making sure everything was in order, that the accounts balanced, working longer hours than I needed to just as I had for the Ryan and Flatow campaigns the previous year (see Chapter 13).

One of the things I did during my time at NCNP (in early 1967) was arrange for a large meeting of everyone on our advisory board, to figure out the strategy for the future. Since it was up to me, for sentimental reasons I chose to hold the meeting at the Algonquin Hotel, 59 West 44th Street, site of the famous Round Table of *New Yorker* wits of years before.¹³ A lot of famous people came, and many who were distinguished even though not so famous – I think particularly of Marty Peretz, now publisher of *The New Republic*, and Arthur Waskow of the Institute for Policy Studies. The meeting was a great success and a convention was planned for Chicago later that year.

In late spring 1967 I gave Bill Pepper my resignation and returned to Columbia for the Summer Session, preparatory to going to law school the following year (see Chapter 11.C). The Chicago convention was held as planned, but I was not present. At this convention the biracial nature of NCNP completely fell apart. As I heard the story later from Waskow, the blacks caucused on their own and demanded that the whites agree in advance to whatever the blacks decided they wanted. This was of course unacceptable to the whites, first because they were not about to let other people of whatever color decide their politics for them, and second because the very idea of that kind of racial *Apartheid* was anathema to the white left, which was solidly integrationist. The organization shattered over this, and its files were put in boxes and left on the street. Someone called the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, not that far away in Madison, and said if you want these records come get them before the sanitation department hauls them away. They sent a truck down and got the archives – anyone interested in NCNP should look at them in Madison, Wisconsin.

I got a lot out of working for NCNP. Not only did I have something to show the dean at Columbia about how I used my time, but I liked the work, especially the responsibility and the double-entry bookkeeping, and I enjoyed meeting people like Benjamin Spock and Julian Bond. I also liked the idea that I was working for progressive politics and positive change from the left. That the organization was doomed didn't bother me because I didn't know it was doomed – no one did yet. I was not present at the beginning of NCNP and I wasn't present at the end. But I had a good time in the middle.

¹³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Algonquin_Round_Table).

D. The Columbia Strike

When I returned to Columbia in the summer of 1967 there was a lot of political ferment, mostly due to the war. But other things were brewing, especially those that were being deliberately cooked up by Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). SDS was a New Left group, founded by Tom Hayden and others in 1962.¹⁴ By 1967 there were chapters at a lot of colleges including Columbia.

I am not going to attempt a history of the events of Spring 1968 at Columbia. It is a complicated tale.¹⁵ For present purposes I will just tell what I remember. I have marked in red on Map II some places related to these events. For a “virtual tour” with pictures of many of the buildings, see www.columbia.edu/about_columbia/tour/01.html.

As noted, there were a lot of issues in the air that spring, and there were demonstrations about most of them. In my newly left-wing incarnation (left of Adlai Stevenson, that is) I was sympathetic if not always active. The issues included:

- The War in Vietnam. This was not a Columbia issue exactly, and the university administration could not have stopped the war even if it had wanted to. But the university was a member of the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA), a sort of consortium where universities looking for government contracts (some on secret or defense-related subjects) met and talked shop with the government agencies in a position to commission projects. Among the student left, Columbia’s membership in IDA was considered equivalent to complicity in the war. That President Grayson Kirk was a solid gold member of the Establishment and president of the Council on Foreign Relations just made it seem more evident to us that Columbia was on the wrong side here.

¹⁴ The organization actually began earlier, as a youth group within the socialist League for Industrial Democracy. But SDS as it figures in this story traces back to the Port Huron Statement of 1962, a New Left founding document. The split with the socialists turned on SDS’ rejection of the anti-Communist exclusionary practices of the League.

¹⁵ For those who are interested I recommend the chapter on this event, or group of related events, in *Stand, Columbia: A History of Columbia University*, by Barnard history professor Robert McCaughey (2003). He goes into it quite fairly and very thoroughly. He also has a follow-up chapter on what the university did over the next couple of years to come back from the crisis – that is just history to me, because by that time I was gone from the scene and living in Philadelphia. Also good are James Simon Kunen’s *The Strawberry Statement: Notes of a College Revolutionary* (1969) and Robert Friedman, ed., *Up Against the Ivy Wall: A History of the Columbia Crisis* (1969), drawn primarily from on-the-spot coverage by the *Columbia Daily Spectator*.

- Campus Recruiting. Another aspect of the war issue was campus recruiting by the Marines, the CIA and the Dow Chemical Company (makers of napalm). There had been demonstrations against their recruiting efforts at Columbia. Yet another was the University's submission of class rank to the Selective Service System, for use in awarding (or denying) student draft deferments, a practice which it abandoned after student protests.
- The University's relationship to the neighborhood. This included Columbia's policy of buying up land on Morningside Heights to turn into graduate housing and program offices. Columbia needed the space, but the effect was often to take affordable housing off the market and whiten the district surrounding the university. There had been demonstrations about this too.
 - There was a Columbia College student song, long predating the neighborhood issues, referring to Columbia's land around its first campus (near Trinity Church in the Wall Street area) and its second campus in midtown (where Rockefeller Center was later built). The song went:

Who owns New York? Oh, who owns New York?
 Oh, who owns New York, the people say?
 We own New York! Oh, we own New York!
 C – O – L – U – M – B – I – A.

The neighborhood issues gave this song a certain irony.
- The Gymnasium. Another aspect of the neighborhood issue was the proposal to build a gymnasium in Morningside Park. Columbia had very inadequate gym facilities, and one of the trustees had been agitating for years to build a proper gym. Morningside Park was a narrow, steep, hilly park east of the campus. It was little used and was generally considered too dangerous for Columbia students even to enter. But (symbolically only) it connected the university on Morningside Heights, above the park, to low-lying Harlem below. The University had long hoped to build a gym in this park, including facilities for the community which Columbia would provide, with a student entrance above and a community entrance below. This project had been pending for years while Columbia tried to raise the money; opposition was growing and Columbia finally decided to go ahead while it still could. But the idea of building a Columbia facility in a Harlem public park, and especially the unfortunate symbolism of having our entrance at the top and theirs at the bottom, led to community opposition, which SDS deliberately exploited.
- Amnesty. As noted, there were demonstrations on a lot of these issues, but under President Kirk's rules demonstrating in University buildings was prohibited. However, the administration was reluctant to enforce these rules for fear of inflaming passions further and encouraging even more demonstrations. Amnesty

for past demonstrations became an issue in future demonstrations, and by the time the crisis came there were at least as many amnesty issues as substantive ones.

- Alienation. An unspoken subtext was the alienation of the students from the administration. As the 60s progressed and mores got looser, rules like parietal hours, which restricted contact between the sexes, and similar attempts to act *in loco parentis* grew more irksome to undergraduates.¹⁶ Other new regulations abruptly made tuition deferrals harder to get. Prohibitions on demonstrating were deeply resented, especially when there was so much to demonstrate about. The administration was aloof and establishmentarian and considered out of touch. President Kirk, a stuffed shirt if ever there was one, with his silly little moustache, was a perfect symbol of this, and Provost David Truman (Professor of Government, formerly Dean of the College and heir presumptive to President Kirk) was close behind. Truman's attitude was shown by his notorious statement that "A university is definitely not a democratic institution. When decisions begin to be made democratically around here, I will not be here any longer. Whether students vote yes or no on an issue is like telling me they like strawberries." This was the "strawberry statement" James Simon Kunen used for the title of his book (see note



¹⁶ By 1968 *in loco parentis* (in place of a parent) was already quite obsolete as a principle of college governance – the colleges (and often the parents) just didn't yet realize this.

15). Truman is to the left in the picture, Kirk (looking a lot like King Farouk in exile) to the right.

- Pretextual rabble-rousing. Finally, SDS itself was determined to cause trouble for its own reasons. A “praxis axis” in SDS, which emphasized organizing and persuasion as a means toward building a mass movement of the democratic New Left, was challenged by an “action faction,” which wanted confrontation as a way of catalyzing radical action and potentially revolution. Mark Rudd, a Columbia undergraduate just back from a visit to Cuba, was the charismatic and fearless leader of the action faction; he was elected chairman of Columbia SDS on March 13, 1968. He is shown above, in the right of the picture, speaking in front of Low Library (not a library any longer but the administration building) at the center of the Columbia campus.

Rudd was determined to provoke confrontation. He and his allies thought of themselves in a Leninist mold – they knew (or thought they knew) from the not-remotely-comparable Bolshevik experience in 1917 that when a large and discontented mass lacks effective leadership, a small but disciplined cadre can seize momentum and eventually power. I think Rudd really believed he could spearhead major revolutionary change in the United States. He couldn’t, but it certainly wasn’t for want of trying.

There had been a number of demonstrations on many of these issues during 1967 and early 1968; I remember participating in some of them myself. Disciplinary actions were pending against some of the leaders, including Rudd, but nothing much was happening about that because the university really didn’t want to cause a crisis. But the crisis came anyway in April 1968. Martin Luther King was assassinated on April 4, and there were riots in black neighborhoods all over the United States. Mayor Lindsay managed to avoid serious rioting in New York, but things were tense. On April 9 the University held a memorial service for Dr. King in St. Paul’s Chapel, presided over by Chaplain Cannon. I think I remember being there, although I’m not completely sure I am not just imagining it. Mark Rudd came up to the front of the chapel and deliberately disrupted the service, declared it an obscenity, and then left. Sensation! Chaplain Cannon did not help matters much by appearing to condone this, saying it was OK for people to speak up if they felt they were guided by the Spirit. The idea that Mark Rudd might have felt himself guided by the Spirit is pretty funny.

Rudd was still pushing for opposition. I think he wanted to force the university to discipline him for his earlier demonstration in Low, and then at the King service, so its action against him could be a focus of defiance. Whatever else you might think of this strategy, it was courageous. On April 19 Rudd published a deliberately disrespectful

diatribe he called “A Letter to Uncle Grayson,” which ended with the slogan “Up Against the Wall, Motherfucker!”¹⁷

- I note in passing that this became a catchphrase, and veterans of the Columbia Strike called each other *motherfucker* for a long time afterward. Joel Solkoff and I still send each other Mother’s Day greetings. I was a little surprised when I called a colleague at Penn *motherfucker* in an affectionate way and he seemed offended.

On April 23 there was a rally at the Sundial, called by SDS and the black students’ organization SAS (the Student Afro-American Society, led by Hilton Clark). The Sundial is a campus landmark, at the south campus side of College Walk at the heart of the undergraduate campus – just as Low Library was no longer a library in my time there, the Sundial was no longer a sundial, its granite gnomon having been removed years before. It was unusual for these two organizations to hold a joint rally. After some speeches the action moved to neighboring Hamilton Hall, the main undergraduate classroom and site of the Dean’s office and the administration of the undergraduate college. As afternoon became evening and then night, the rally turned into a demonstration and then into an occupation. I was not at the rally, but when I heard about the occupation I went right over and joined in. Hamilton Hall is shown at left in a later picture – the flags were not there in my day.

The occupation of Hamilton Hall was one of the most exhilarating nights of my life. What a rush! People were hanging around in all the rooms, talking politics. Later on people brought sleeping bags and tried to sleep, but I doubt many people really did. I was accustomed to staying up all night anyway, and this was thrilling. We felt we were accomplishing something, but were not quite sure what. But solidarity forever! Columbia out of IDA! Up



¹⁷ This line was written originally by the African-American poet and playwright LeRoi Jones, later called Amiri Baraka – such language was not yet part of everyday American speech.

against the wall!

Toward the early hours of the morning a stunning thing happened. The black students told the white students that this was a black thing, that we weren't invited, and that we were to leave Hamilton and get our own building if we wanted one. What? Wow! Why? This was exactly the same thing that had happened in NCNP (see previous section). But our "leadership," meaning SDS, meaning Mark Rudd and a few of his inner group, agreed to this demand and asked the white students to comply. So at about 5 AM, a little deflated but pretty tired and perhaps secretly not minding being able to leave Hamilton Hall in an honorable way, the whites trooped out and went to bed, and the blacks remained triumphantly occupying the building (see picture above). Dean Coleman was briefly detained in his office, but he asked not to be forcibly rescued and was released unharmed the next day.

Some of the white students, though, took the black students' advice to get their own building, entered Low Library (the university administration building, right), and made their way to the President's Office where they sat in Kirk's chair, put their feet on his desk, rifled his files, helped themselves to cigars from his humidor, and acted with considerable swagger. The University Police, who consisted of a total of nine officers in those days, with a one-man



shelter outside Low, couldn't do much to stop them. The swagger faltered a bit when a guard came to the President's office not to eject the students but to rescue a Rembrandt hanging on the wall, and the demonstrators, including Rudd, thinking they were about to be arrested, dove out the windows (the way down from the ledges was pretty easy). But it was a false alarm and the occupation of Low Library was quickly re-established.

The next day, April 24, there was much excitement as the movement seemed to be spreading. Undergraduate classes were unofficially suspended as Hamilton Hall was unavailable. Some architecture students refused to leave Avery Hall, where the architecture school was located, and so that made three buildings under occupation. SDS set up a command center in Ferris Booth Hall, in an office assigned to the Columbia Citizenship Council (CCC), a relatively non-political help-the-neighborhood student group. There was a big counter-demonstration on the south campus, in front of Hamilton, led by relatively conservative students opposed to the occupation. They called themselves the "Majority Coalition," but the lefties called them *Jocks* (meaning student athletes). The Jocks called the lefty students *Pukes*. The Jocks provided a lot of the leadership for the counter-demonstrators, and were influenced in their tactics by the advice of the basketball coach.

In the meantime the faculty were forming and reforming in a bewildering kaleidoscope of factions, trying to decide where their sympathies lay and how to mediate a peaceful resolution. This continued at this for the rest of the spring and into the summer, long after the occupations were over. Their resolutions generally included some version of these points: withdraw from IDA, suspend construction of the gym, have a tripartite (administration-faculty-student) commission to apply uniform discipline (meaning no singling out of ringleaders), and interposition of the faculty if necessary between the administration and the students. Sympathetic students passed food up through the windows into Low; Jocks tried to prevent this; faculty tried to prevent clashes between Jocks and Pukes. It was all very exciting.

The following day, April 25, a group largely composed of graduate students seized Fayerweather Hall on the north campus. This was the coolest and hippest of the occupations, with lots of political talk and good vibes and even a wedding. I visited there, although I did not join any occupation after the first night in Hamilton. The day after, hard-liners for whom Fayerweather was too wimpy seized Mathematics Hall, also in graduate territory on the north campus, and hoisted a red flag on the building.

By now the administration was getting pretty freaked out. Sometimes someone would remind us that this was all hothouse stuff – Robert McCaughey quotes one member of the Strike Committee as saying “You know, for Christ’s sake, this isn’t the Winter Palace. This is cruddy little Fayerweather Hall.” We weren’t all so sure about that – the next week left-wing students nearly brought down the government of France, and probably would have if the Communists had not backed off.

The next few days were taken up with frantic discussions and negotiations among the faculty, the administration, the trustees and the police. It would be tedious to detail them all here – McCaughey’s book is very good on that. I was not involved in these discussions, and I wasn’t occupying a building either. Jocks wore blue armbands, Pukes wore red, and faculty cordoning off buildings wore white. Although a Puke, I wore an unauthorized white armband because the faculty was the group I most identified with. There were black armbands too – I forget what those meant. Maybe anarchy?

The police had been summoned, arrived ostentatiously in formations, and waited around for orders. In the early morning of April 30 they were finally unleashed. They entered Hamilton from the tunnels and the black students marched peacefully out of the buildings, were arrested, and were put into vans. Low was cleared easily also, from the tunnels. There was some resistance at Fayerweather and a little more at Avery, but not a pitched battle. Mathematics was a battle, with liquid soap on the stairs and police pulling occupiers down the stairs by their hair, and some beastliness on both sides. But by 2:30 AM or so, all the buildings were cleared.

And then came the climax. *After* clearing all the buildings, the police massed on college walk. A huge crowd of students had gathered peacefully on the south campus greens,

between College Walk and Butler Library, to watch the events. The police ordered them to disperse (which was questionable in itself, as they were not occupying anything and were an entirely lawful gathering). But they could not disperse, because the gates leading from College Green off the campus to 114th Street and to Broadway, were locked. But the police were angry. They had had to fight to clear Mathematics, and to a lesser extent Avery and Fayerweather. They were exhausted from having been kept waiting for many hours, and it was now 3 AM. And they were furious at the student protestors – for protesting the war, for having long hair, for sex and drugs and rock and roll, and for being cadet members of the elite. McCaughey quotes one officer as having told a reporter he “was now glad that his kids had not had the chance to go to a college like Columbia.”



Anyway the police charged onto the south campus, clubbing every student they could reach. The students tried to retreat but they couldn't, because the gates were locked; the only way out was by College Walk and the police were between them and escape. So they piled up against Butler Library and Ferris Booth and Furnald Halls, and the police waded into them. Some students fled into Furnald, so the police entered Furnald, took the elevators to the upper floors, and ran down the corridors clubbing students. There was no possible justification for this. The police were *not* overcoming resistance, because there was no resistance – they were just lashing out at anyone they could. I was standing on College Walk near the

Sundial and *personally saw this happen* – it is a moment I will never forget. This was the event later called The Bust. It was a police riot, and it destroyed whatever legitimacy the administration's action in forcibly clearing the buildings might have had.¹⁸

Immediately the cry went up from the appalled spectators: STRIKE! STRIKE! STRIKE! I was one of those shouting this very cry. Up until then the occupiers had had only minority support. There were probably more counter-demonstrators than demonstrators. Probably a majority of students were sympathetic to the demonstrators on the issues, but ambivalent about occupying buildings. I myself was rooting for the

¹⁸ For over 40 years now I have been correcting every mention I hear of the “Columbia student riots.” It was *not* a student riot – it was a *police* riot. This definition is from Wikipedia: “The term *police riot* is used to categorize a confrontation between police (or similar military or security force) and civilians, where police used wrongful, disproportionate, unlawful, and/or illegitimate force against those civilians; in plain language, the act of police attacking innocent civilians.” That describes the Columbia case exactly.

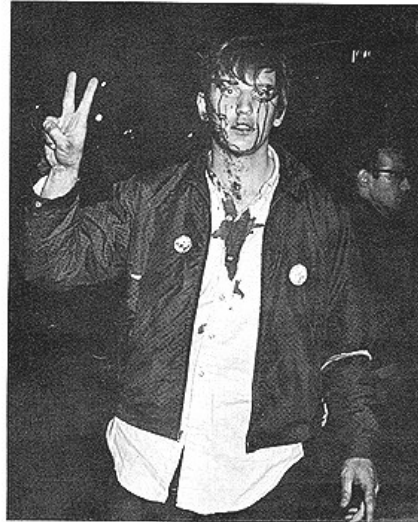
demonstrators, but after the first night had not been not an occupier. The faculty was deeply divided. But once The Bust happened, moderate opinion turned against the administration.

It was a shock to see that despite its rhetoric, the university was willing to use force against its students. Now I realize there was a lot of justification on their side. It was untenable to allow a rabble to paralyze the university and occupy five buildings – for how long? How many more would be occupied tomorrow? President Kingman Brewster of Yale told Mayor Lindsay that the future of the university system depended on ending the occupations. Whatever the damage from using force, the damage from letting this situation continue indefinitely might have been greater.

But after the buildings were cleared and the occupiers arrested, the police should have stopped fighting, and when they didn't, the university was felt to share the blame for their excesses. A sign was put on the statue of Alma Mater on the Low Library steps saying "Raped by the Cops." There was still a tradition, inherited from English universities, that the university did not call in the city police. If there was a problem with a drunken student or something like that, the University Proctor and a few campus policemen would handle it. The Proctor had explained this to us during freshman orientation. Now the university administration had not only called in the police, it had turned them loose to attack us indiscriminately. It was a disaster for the administration. Strike! Strike! Up against the wall!

What The Bust taught us was the stark and useful lesson that every structure in society rests on the threat of force. As described in Chapter 7, I had learned this early from the power dynamics of my own family, and the lesson had been brutally reinforced by the events described in Chapter 8. This was the same lesson writ larger, and hundreds of us learned it all at once. It was probably the most educational single experience of all my years there. I had been studying government in the classroom – now here was the lab course.¹⁹

WHY WE STRIKE



PUBLISHED BY THE COLUMBIA STRIKE COMMITTEE Price: 25 cents

¹⁹ It had been explained to us before – for example in Max Weber's essay "Politics as a Vocation" (1919) – but that's why there are lab courses. Theory is one thing, and a live demonstration is something else, and more powerfully instructive.

There were other factors too which disillusioned us. As described in the Vietnam section above, we were just getting used to the idea that the government was lying to us about Vietnam. And now strange things were happening here too. Arthur Ochs (“Punch”) Sulzberger, Class of 1951, publisher of the *New York Times*, had joined the Trustees in 1967 in succession to his father Arthur Hays Sulzberger, Class of 1913. At the height of the raids it *appeared* that things were being reported in the *Times* which had not quite yet happened. Also the Manhattan District Attorney, Frank Hogan, was a trustee, and we thought the arrests were directed by him (McCaughey reports that actually Hogan argued against mass arrests). There was one regrettable incident involving the trashing of Professor Orest Ranum’s office and the destruction of many of his files. This was an isolated incident and revolted everybody – there was no support whatever in any quarter for this kind of thing.²⁰ But the popular press reported that the library was in flames. Whatever the truth of these matters, we no longer trusted anyone.

A strike meant shutting down the university and boycotting classes. The administration tried to pre-empt this by canceling a few days of classes, but the Strike now had a momentum of its own beyond the provocations of the SDS action faction. Classes did not resume in any organized way for the rest of the semester. Some “liberation classes” were taught on the lawns, some by the faculty and some by others – anyone who wanted to could teach anything. A red and black flag (communism and anarchy?) was raised on the Phi Epsilon Pi fraternity on 114th Street, across the street from Butler Library. Endless negotiations continued between the administration and the faculty about what to do to get this foundering institution upright and stable again. The Strike Committee (which had been an SDS operation) expanded, and the word went out that anyone who could gather 50 nominating signatures could have a seat on the new Strike Coordinating Committee.

I decided to be elected to the Strike Coordinating Committee. This was easily accomplished – between the student volunteers at my Student Draft Information Center and the large number of COs and others I had counseled it was no problem at all to get 50 names supporting me as a candidate. The *ad hoc* organization was called The Dodge Hall Group, because that was where the SDIC offices were; we had done a little work for non-violence during the crisis even before The Bust. The group’s statement, which I wrote, appears as Document 12-3. I was promptly elected and went to Ferris Booth Hall, where the Strike Committee was meeting in almost continuous session in the CCC office SDS had commandeered as a command post during the occupations.

²⁰ Mark Rudd recently revealed (in an interview reported by John Castellucci in the *Journal of Higher Education*, February 10, 2010) that John Jacobs, known as J.J., a madman colleague of Rudd’s in SDS, set this fire himself, casually but intentionally. He told Rudd he was going to do it and Rudd said “OK, go ahead.” Jacobs died in 1997. See <http://chronicle.com/article/The-Night-They-Burned-Ranums/64115>.

It turned out, though, that the Strike Committee was a charade. The Columbia student government had been abolished by referendum some years earlier, and its expected replacement with a new student government never happened. So while the SDS was on one side, and the Jocks' Majority Coalition was on the other side, there was no institutional voice for moderate students. SDS called for elected members to give the appearance of a broader front, but actually the enlarged Strike Committee was deliberately made into a mere talking shop (like the Russian Duma in the Leninist model SDS was consciously following), with the moderates cast as hapless Social Democrats. SDS, and especially Tony Papert, a Progressive Labor (i.e., Maoist) agitator, kept us talking and debating and going over ethical issues, while really a cabal of SDS insiders led by Mark Rudd decided what would be done.

Rudd thought he was leading a Bolshevik-style cadre and starting to tip over the American power structure. For a brief moment, when the student uprising in France happened during the first week of May, it seemed like he might have been onto something.



But actually he wasn't. Gradually the air went out of the whole thing. Spring Semester wound down and by vote of the faculty everyone passing at the time the crisis started got a grade of pass. The University left IDA. The gym project was called off. Attempts to re-ignite demonstrations (the so-called "neighborhood bust" and an abortive reoccupation of Hamilton Hall) did not attract much support. The pro-demonstration students split – SDS keeping the left, and the so-called Students for a Restructured University taking the center.

Kirk resigned in August – he was dead meat anyway from the moment of The Bust. Truman resigned and left to become President of Mount Holyoke College. Professor Archibald Cox (1912-2004), formerly Kennedy's Solicitor General and later to be Watergate Special Prosecutor, was called down from Harvard Law School to lead an investigation, with hearings at which people could testify. The faculty was building complicated arrangements for restructuring university governance. Women were allowed

into the dormitories. And over the summer, things settled down. Mark Rudd went underground to be a Weatherman – I saw him next in 1988 at the 20th reunion of the Strike, held at Earl Hall and organized by Rev. William Starr, then still Counselor to Protestant Students.

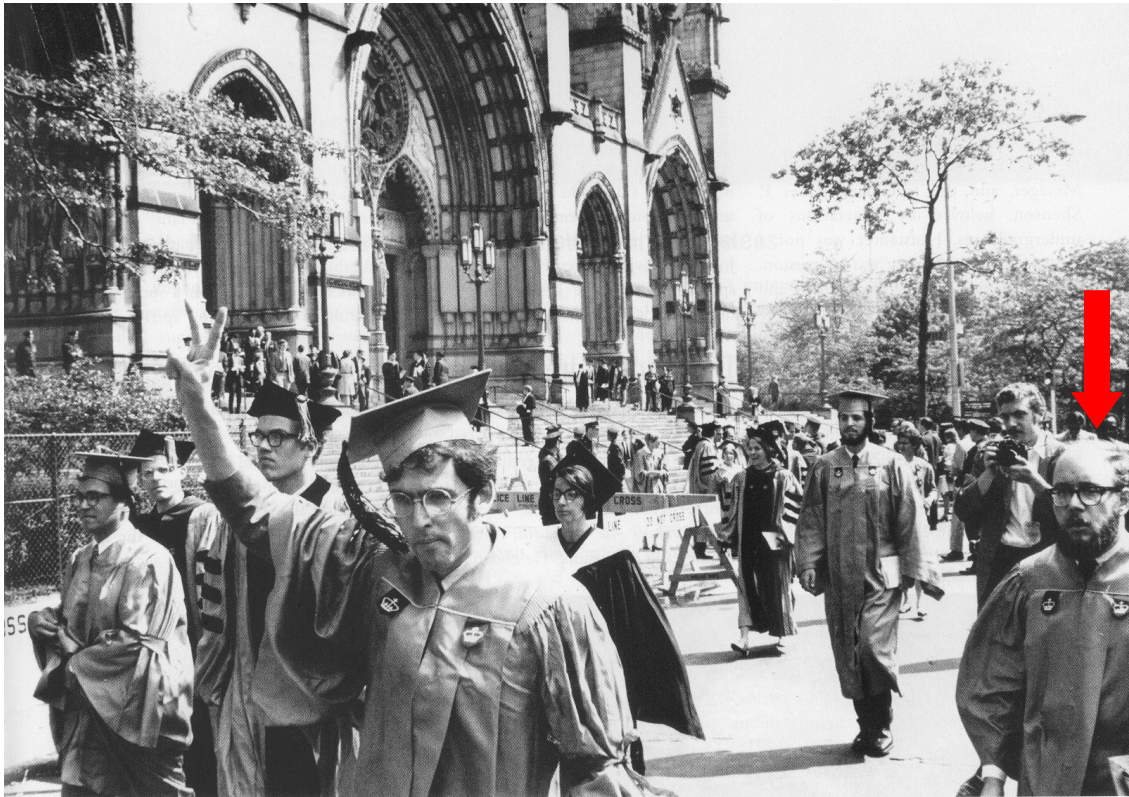
Although I enjoyed the first night's romp in Hamilton, as noted I didn't occupy any other buildings. For one thing I was now set on becoming a lawyer and didn't want to be arrested. Joel Solkoff, however, was one of the occupiers of Low Library and ended up getting arrested for riot, one of the few students to have serious charges laid against him. I remember going, with Joel's grandmother, down to the old Tombs Prison on Leonard Street, near the County Courthouse, and bailing him out. I recommended that he engage the noted lefty lawyer William Kunstler (1919-1995) to defend him. Eventually the charges against him were dropped.

I describe in Chapter 11 the tapering off of my final days at Columbia College. Because of the Strike the semester never started up again, and I got passes in all my courses (except Physical Education) and finally became a Bachelor of Arts. As noted in Chapter 11, I couldn't leave town that summer because my degree was still being held hostage by the Phys Ed department, so I was able to see a lot of the post-crisis posturing. I had some kind of local summer gig, either with Students for a Restructured University, or advising the Interchurch Center on draft counseling, or both – I forget just what it was. When it was all over I moved to Philadelphia for law school (see Chapter 14).

One event I do remember, though, was the Counter-Commencement on June 4. Usually the Columbia Commencement is held on campus, with the speakers' dais on the Low Library plaza and the graduates and the audience spread across the plaza, College Walk and the south campus. It was decided for security reasons to hold the 1968 commencement in the Cathedral of St. John the Divine on Amsterdam Avenue at 112th Street instead. This was probably a wise idea – I had a plan, for example, never realized, to put red dye in the fountains and switch the sound system over to a repeating tape of Kirk or Truman saying something unsympathetic.

The word among the lefties was that when Professor Richard Hofstadter rose to give the commencement address, that would be the signal for us to walk out of the cathedral, in our blue commencement robes, and proceed up Amsterdam Avenue to the campus where a Counter-Commencement would be held. We had nothing against Hofstadter – we just needed a signal. Everything went according to plan and we walked up Amsterdam Avenue in our commencement drag, with crowds cheering us on both sides. If you have never paraded up an avenue in a uniform, being cheered by crowds, I recommend it – that was one of the peak experiences of my life. On campus there were lots of chairs and left-wing speakers, and a good time was had by all.

When Dr. Maxine Greene, a friend of my mother's and a distinguished professor at Columbia's Teachers' College, heard that I had gone to the Counter-Commencement, she said "counter-congratulations," which sort of summed it up. In Fall 2005 *Columbia* magazine published an article on Hofstadter with a picture of the students leaving the Cathedral – there I am in the picture below, on the far right (!) in my beard and my robe.



While Hofstadter delivered the commencement address to the class of 1968 inside the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, some graduates walked out in protest and staged a "countercommencement."

For years I have kept in the blue packet with my diploma, along the translation of the diploma and my transcript, a page from the April 12, 1969 *New Yorker*. It has a cartoon by Charles Saxon (Class of 1940). The scene is the Columbia University Club. On a couch sit two portly middle-aged men. Two young men with scruffy beards and tight jeans are just entering. One middle-aged man turns to the other and says "Good Lord! Have they started to *graduate* them?" I am now about the age of the older of the two middle-aged men. The cartoon is attached as Document 12-4.



Tailpiece: Caricature of President Johnson by David Levine (1966). An outline of Vietnam replaces the scar from his gall bladder operation, which he had shown off to White House photographers.

DOCUMENT 12-1: Student Draft Information Center

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THE STUDENT DRAFT INFORMATION CENTER

The Student Draft Information Center: in a sense we are misnamed. Neither our staff nor our practice is exclusively student. Our informational role is only one of a number of functions we perform. And our centrality is far from absolute: we draw on the expertise of many other agencies, and are contributing to the development of others still.

The basic purpose of the Student Draft Information Center is to provide the students of Columbia University with accurate, thorough, and up-to-date information on the Draft, and to make expert advice and assistance available to anyone requiring it in any aspect of his dealings with the Selective Service System

Publicly, we seek to accomplish this through the publication of bulletins, memoranda, and occasional papers, through fora and the sponsorship of visiting speakers, and in other ways, such as the participation of our counselors in the Moratorium. Privately, we are prepared to help any Columbia student evaluate his situation vis-a-vis the Draft, to advise him of the options available to him and the consequences of each, and to assist him in negotiating the intricate and archaic channels of Selective Service toward what he wants. We also are ready to help anyone considering conscientious objection to refine and order his thinking on war and, if he wishes, to help him prepare a CO claim which accurately reflects his beliefs.

We serve other purposes, too. We maintain a reasonably comprehensive library of Selective Service (and related) materials. We train counselors for other groups in the New York community, and offer ourselves as a technical and organizational resource wherever we are needed and can help. We provide information on request to the campus press, various University offices, and anyone else who asks us. And the scope of our activities is broadening.

[document continues →]

Having been formed largely to check the gallop of misinformation, we realize that an incompetent counselor is worse than useless. He is dangerous, and consequently the SDIC recognized no priority above keeping the quality of its counseling consistently high. Our training program is the most comprehensive and exacting presently being offered anywhere. Based originally on materials and methods developed by the American Friends Service Committee, the SDIC Counselor Training Program has expanded considerably in the past six months. No one is permitted to counsel with the SDIC unless he is committed to total objectivity in counseling, and until he has completed all of a sixteen hour course of lectures, discussion, and role-playing, supplemented by extensive reading and written work. After that he must himself be counseled, and complete a two-stage apprenticeship, before we feel he is ready to begin on his own. He is expected to remain familiar with the SDIC library, and to use the local and national sources of specialized and general information with which the SDIC maintains close contact. There are now about two dozen SDIC counselors; their backgrounds range from non-cooperator to veteran. So far they have assisted close to five hundred men; by our first anniversary that figure is expected at the least to quadruple.

We do not advocate any position. Our job is not to persuade but to assist, and we believe that neither will be done well if confounded with the other. No information given any SDIC counselor will ever be released to any authority of the University, of the Selective Service System, or of the law FOR ANY REASON WHATEVER.

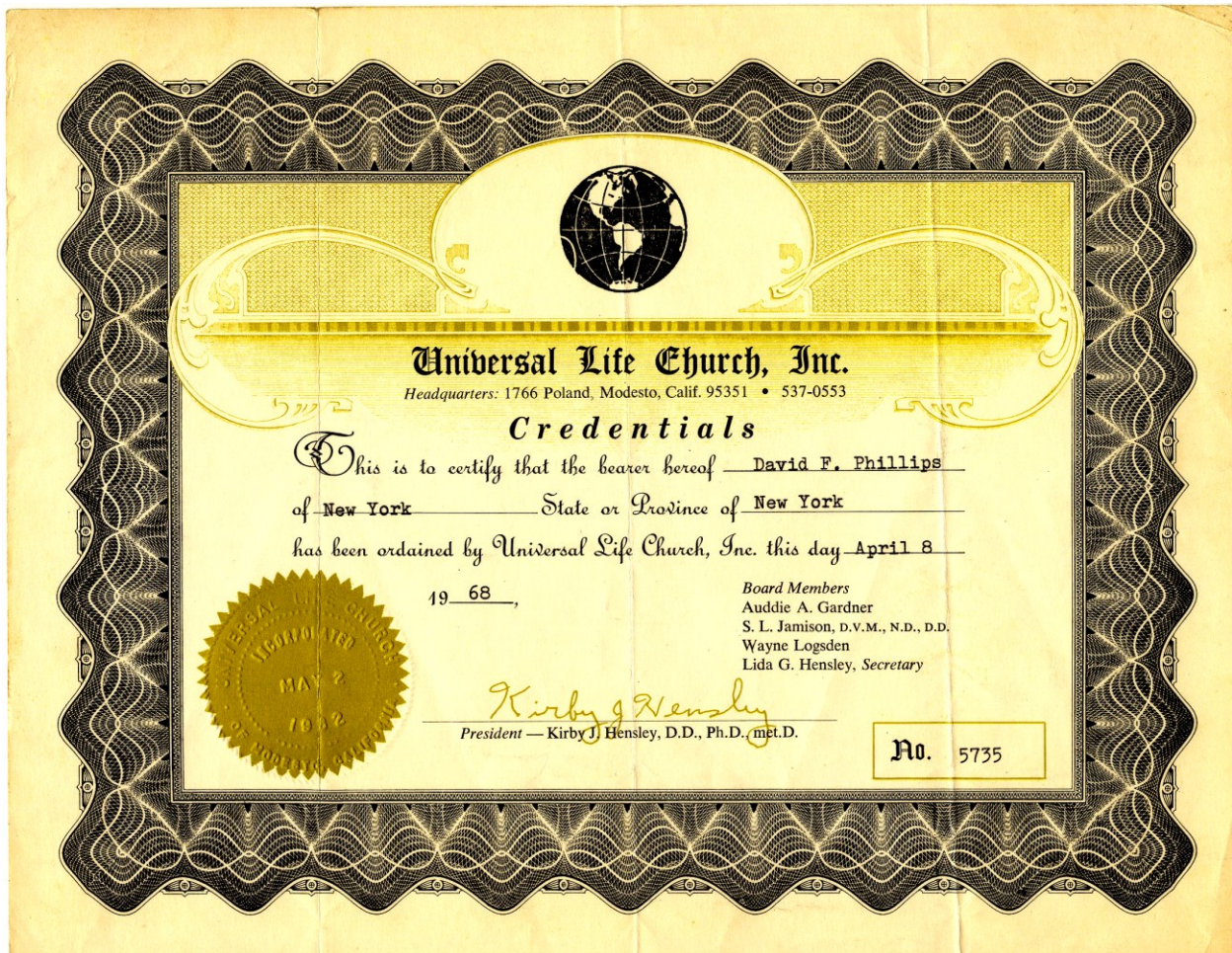
Today is March 13. The Moratorium Committee has urged that students set today aside to inform themselves about the Draft, to learn what options are available to them and to plan, in detail and with competent assistance, precisely what action they intend to take. We are pleased to help any student seeking information advice, or assistance, and through the day we will be available for this purpose in the Dodge Room on the second floor of Parris Booth Hall.

Tomorrow is March 14. The Moratorium will be over. But the Selective Service System will still be here, and so (perhaps) will you. And so will we.

STUDENT DRAFT INFORMATION CENTER
108 St. Paul's Chapel 280-3578

Hours: 10 AM to 8:30 PM
and by appointment.

DOCUMENT 12-2: Universal Life Church ordination certificate



DOCUMENT 12-3: The Dodge Hall Group

THE DODGE HALL GROUP

THE DODGE HALL GROUP grew out of the Student Draft Information Center but has, by this time, grown far beyond the original core of counsellors and counselees. It was formed before the Bust, to keep the demonstrations and counter-demonstrations non-violent. The idea was to attempt to do things which it could reasonably be expected were possible to do, and it was fairly successful in specific crises.

After the Bust, the group reconstituted itself. Its platform included but did not emphasize the six demands as a negotiating position. Its primary concerns were the following:

(1) The fact that, with all the talk of reconstitution of the University, no one seemed to be planning anything like a practical model for the form it would take. Seeking to move into this void, as before The Bust, we moved into potentially violent situations, we have been:

- (a) working on a bicameral model of the reconstituted University, and
- (b) urging the Strike Steering Committee to address itself to this crucial issue before time runs out.

(2) The preservation of existing contacts between the students and the faculty and the creation of new areas of communication between them. It is our belief that it is impossible to gain control of Columbia without the support of the faculty and unwise to attempt to govern it without them. The University belongs not only to students but to faculty as well.

(3) Return of the University to its essential educational role of providing students for teachers and teachers for students. The function of the Administration, we believe, is to administer our University for us so that we may attend to other things.

If you back this position, feel it represents you, and wish to join us (with a possible eye to increasing representation on the Strike Steering Committee). your support is requested.

If the Strike Steering Committee can focus on the possible and the relevant, WE CAN WIN.

~~XXXXXXXXXX~~

David F. Phillips, 68C, Representative

Student Coordinator, Student Draft
Information Center

Chairman, Program on Conscience and the
Draft, American Friends Service Comm.

Constituency Meetings: 2 pm, seven days a week

Fair Weather: lawn in front of Lewisohn Hall

Foul Weather: downstairs lobby of Earl Hall

THE ROBERT H. ROTH COLLECTION

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DOCUMENT 12-4: 1969 Cartoon by Charles Saxon

