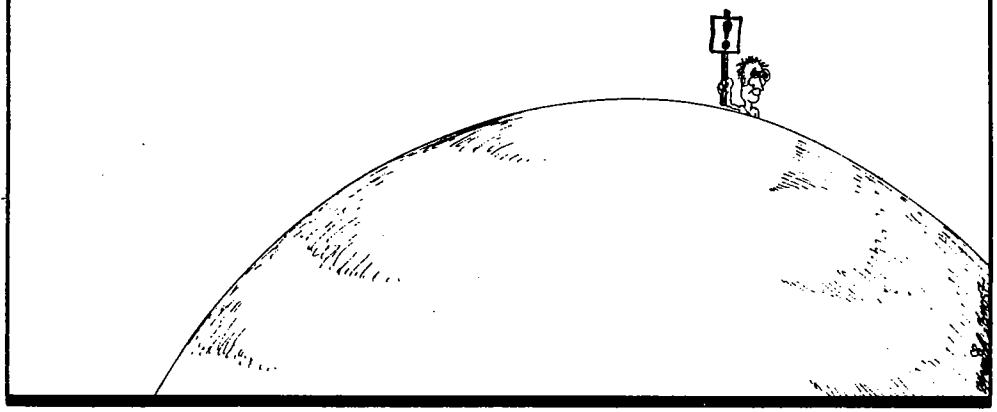


People Soup

social actions



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Obstructing the Sidewalk

(The Adventures of 3 Draft Protesters) By Fred Peck

"Okay, get out of the car. Let's see some identification."

This was the beginning of our first dialogue with the San Diego Police.

Friday, August first, 1980--it was a beautiful, warm day in southern California. The sun made us wish that there were no problems in the world, and that there was nothing more important to do than sit on the beach and melt into the sand. This day was to be different.

It was the last day of Selective Service registration. The three of us, Mitch, Ahura, and myself, had come up with the plan of dedicating the whole day to informing the public of the dangers of registering for a draft.

We were in Mitch's convertible, which we had covered with leaflets and signs and had labeled "The Anti-Draft Mobile". We were representing San Diego Students for Peace (primarily consisting of students from the University of California and San Diego State University)--the most active anti-draft group in the area.

This was the last day of our two week campaign to get people to consider the alternatives to the other two week campaign that was going on. On the first Friday we had staged an act of civil disobedience by blocking the entrance to the downtown San Diego Post Office. This had attracted considerable attention without violence or threat of arrest.

In contrast, on the second Friday, our plan was to have a demonstration/celebration in honor of the end of registration and the low compliance rates in San Diego County (compliance rates were between forty and sixty percent). On this last Friday we were planning to travel through the downtown area and the low income sections of the city; leafletting about the draft and militarism and also advertising our celebration. After being almost ignored in the previous demonstration, the last thing we expected was police harassment.

We first saw the flashing lights downtown at sixth and Broadway. This brings me back to my introduction...Two police cars pulled us over and we were confronted by officers Parga and Borojquez. As Mitch was told he was guilty of eight simultaneous violations, Ahura was recording badge numbers and the dialogue which followed. I made the best of an ideal situation. I had a pile of leaflets and was surrounded by a curious crowd. I passed out papers, discussing and arguing until I was out of the literature I was carrying. Then I was able to listen in on the rest of the conversation between Mitch and the two policemen.

Apparently Mitch was guilty of horrendous crimes such as "Excessive use of the horn; Harboring unlawfully riding passengers; Having a partially concealed license plate" and "driving without a left rear view mirror" among other things. Needless to say, Mitch was a bit skeptical of these accusations, and hinted that the officer might be selectively enforcing the law because he didn't particularly like what we were doing. Mitch was asked to give his address, which happened to be a box number. The officer asked what his real address was. Mitch told him that that was his only address. He was then accused of being a contortionist! Through the infinite justice of the U.S. law enforcement system, we got off the hook with a ticket for three violations, because the officers couldn't find the other five in their book.

We paused to get a snapshot of our two new friends, and then headed for a gas station. We refueled, made renovations (including revealing the rest of the front license plate and securing the rear view mirror) and set out again.

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