PROTECTION OF AUTHOR’S COPYRIGHT

This copy has been supplied by the Library of the University of Otago on the understanding that the following conditions will be observed:

1. To comply with s56 of the Copyright Act 1994 [NZ], this thesis copy must only be used for the purposes of research or private study.

2. The author's permission must be obtained before any material in the thesis is reproduced, unless such reproduction falls within the fair dealing guidelines of the Copyright Act 1994. Due acknowledgement must be made to the author in any citation.

3. No further copies may be made without the permission of the Librarian of the University of Otago.
Author's name: Peter Brook Bell
Title of thesis: The Protest Movement in Dunedin Against the Vietnam War 1965 - 1973
Degree: BA (Hons.)
Department: History

I agree that this thesis may be consulted for research and study purposes and that reasonable quotation may be made from it, provided that proper acknowledgement of its use is made. I expect that my permission will be obtained before any material is published.

I consent to this thesis being copied in part or in whole for

i) a library

ii) an individual

at the discretion of the Librarian of the University of Otago.

Or

I wish to modify the above conditions as follows:

Signature: Peter Brook Bell
Date: 20/10/89.
The Protest Movement in Dunedin
Against the Vietnam War 1965-1973

Peter Brook Bell

A Dissertation Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment for the Degree
of History B.A. (Hons)
at University of Otago,
Dunedin, New Zealand.

October 1989
The Gunner's Lament

A Maori gunner lay dying
In a paddy field north of Saigon,
And he said to his pakeha cobber,
'I reckon I've had it, man!

'And if I could fly like a bird
To my old granny's whare
A truck and a winch would never drag
Me back to the Army.

'A coat and a cap and a well-paid job
Looked better than shovelling metal,
And they told me that Te Rauparaha
Would have fought in the Vietnam battle.

'On my last leave the town swung round
Like a bucket full of eels.
The girls liked the uniform
And I liked the girls.

'Like a bullock to the abattoirs
In the name of liberty
They flew me with a hangover
Across the Tasman Sea,

'And what I found in Vietnam
Was mud and blood and fire,
With the Yanks and the Reds taking turns
At murdering the poor,

'And I saw the reason for it
In a Viet Cong's blazing eyes
We fought for the crops of kumara
And they are fighting for rice.

'So go and tell my sweetheart
To get another boy
Who'll cuddle her and marry her
And laugh when the bugles blow,

'And tell my youngest brother
He can have my shotgun
To fire at the ducks on the big lagoon,
But not to aim it at a man,

'And tell my granny to wear black
And carry willow leaf,
Because the kid she kept from the cold
Has eaten a dead man's loaf

'And go and tell Keith Holyoake
Sitting in Wellington,
However long he scrubs his hands
He'll never get them clean

- James K. Baxter
## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acknowledgements</td>
<td>i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviations</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: The Establishment and Organisation of the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: The Committee on Vietnam and the Wider Community</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: Conflict and Consequences</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of my supervisor Roberto Rabel, who initiated my interest in the subject and was helpful and positive throughout. I am also indebted to Islay Little for helping me to locate people involved in the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam; and to Linden Cowell for allowing me to use his private papers on the Committee. I would like to thank all the people that were willing to relate their experiences of the protest movement to me. Thanks are due to the staff of the Hocken Library, and in particular David McDonald. I also wish to thank Sam Elworthy for the use of his research material. Special thanks to Mark Brooke for instructing me in the use of the English language. Finally thank to Claudia, and Judy, Ian and Michael.
Abbreviations

C.O.V. Committee on Vietnam.
D.C.C. Dunedin City Council.
F.O.L. Federation of Labour.
N.L.F. National Liberation Front.
S.A.L. Student Action League.
S.I.S. Secret Intelligence Service.
V.O.W Voice of Women.
V.Y.A.C. Vietnam Youth Action Committee.
Introduction

The Vietnam war stimulated one of the great protest movements of the 1960s, not only in the United States, but also in New Zealand and Australia. This study of the protest movement in Dunedin examines one aspect of the impact of the Vietnam war on New Zealand society. The Committee on Vietnam (C.O.V.) in Dunedin, like many similar bodies around New Zealand, was formed for the purpose of attempting to dissuade the government of New Zealand from committing military personnel to the war in Vietnam. After the decision was made in May 1965 to send a military force, the local C.O.V. became the central focus in Dunedin for protest against the Western military presence in Vietnam. This study seeks to examine the origins and character of the Committee on Vietnam in Dunedin, and the ways in which it attempted to influence policy makers and the public to its cause.

While most of the people involved in the C.O.V. can be loosely termed as being on the "left" of the political spectrum, the C.O.V. was still a politically diverse group. The C.O.V. was able for the whole duration of New Zealand's military involvement in Vietnam to be the central focus for protest activities in Dunedin, while protest groups in other regions experienced factional feuding among left-wing activists which often stifled action and even split or destroyed protest committees and groups. A fundamental question examined in this study is why the Dunedin C.O.V. was able to avoid any major internal division.

The obvious target for a group seeking to alter a nation's political policy is the government of the day. The government defended its decision to send troops to Vietnam to the point where it attempt to discredit its opponents, including the Committees on Vietnam. As a consequence the Dunedin C.O.V. and its counterparts in other regions began to use more unconventional political activities to inform people of their views and to gain public support. These activities included petitions, street marches, car parades and teach-ins. In these activities the C.O.V. targeted certain groups which it believed would be more sympathetic to its cause than the public in general, such as peace

---

1 In this study the term Committee on Vietnam (C.O.V.) refers to the Committee in Dunedin. I will indicate when another Committee or protest group is being referred to (e.g. The Wellington Committee on Vietnam). When referring to all the protest groups as a collective I shall call them the New Zealand Committees on Vietnam, for convenience, even though they went under many different names.
groups, trade union leaders and members, church clergy and laity, and university staff and students.

The C.O.V. thus attempted to set itself up as an alternative source of opinion and information on the subject of the war to the government and the local daily press, both of which supported the New Zealand military involvement in Vietnam.

The Committees on Vietnam developed a network for the flow of information and funds which facilitated the dissemination of political information and propaganda generated in New Zealand and overseas. This cooperation also enabled the Committees on Vietnam to contribute collectively to bring overseas speakers to New Zealand to speak on behalf of the protest movement. The Committees on Vietnam were, however, not able to maintain a national organisation for long. The Dunedin C.O.V. was determined that it would maintain its own separate identity and control over the anti-war activities in Dunedin, rather than submit control to a national organisation or any other Committee on Vietnam. The Wellington C.O.V., to a certain extent, acted as a national body, in that it was responsible for producing the protest movements major publication, *Quote*, (later known as *Vietnam: Quote and Comment*). The links between the Dunedin C.O.V. and other Committees will be examined in the first chapter of this study.

Chapter Two examines the attitudes and activities of certain groups and institutions in Dunedin in relation to both the C.O.V. and the whole issue of New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam war. Those studied include churches, trade unions, the *Otago Daily Times*, political parties, and several peace groups. The interaction between the C.O.V. and the institutions of government, such as the police, the Security Intelligence Service and the local City Council, is also surveyed.

The role of Otago University and the Dunedin Teachers College in the protest movement is investigated in more detail. The University in particular was the workplace for many of the political activists in the C.O.V. which made communication among many members of the Executive Committee of the C.O.V. very easy. The C.O.V. was able to draw on academic knowledge to counter government arguments and also relied on the student population to participate in protest activities. The University later became the focus for more radical protest against the war as the level of student political activism grew in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The third chapter examines the large mobilisations of 1971 and 1972, in which the protest movement was able to attract
much larger numbers of people to march against New Zealand involvement in the war than was previously the case. With this widening of support the C.O.V. to some extent lost its control over the protest movement in Dunedin. This chapter will also look at anti-protest attitudes in Dunedin and the associated phenomenon of the "red smear", whereby the protest movement and the C.O.V. were portrayed as being led and inspired by communists. This smear tactic was used in an attempt to belittle the protests and gain support for the decision to fight in Vietnam. This final chapter will also examine other issues that the Vietnam protest movement in Dunedin brought to public attention, including the questioning of New Zealand's foreign policy, New Zealand's role as an "Asian" country, conscription, and the process of politicisation of people involved in the protest movement.

Chapter Three also examines the successes and failures of the movement in Dunedin, and includes comments made by members of the executive of the C.O.V. Success is of course difficult to define, let alone measure, which makes the personal perceptions of those involved important. Finally there is a brief commentary on protest movements in Dunedin since the Vietnam War.

There have been two major works written to date about the protest movement against New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War. One by Antony Haas examines the Wellington C.O.V. from its inception on 1st May 1965 up to March 1967. The second is a study of the various Auckland protest groups by P.R.H. Jackman which covers the whole period of New Zealand's military involvement in Vietnam from 1965 to 1972. These two theses will be used for comparative purposes in assessing the experience of the Dunedin protest movement against New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam conflict.
1 The Establishment and Organisation of the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam.

Origins

The involvement of American, Australian and New Zealand military forces in Vietnam triggered the rise of a large protest movement opposed to this involvement. The protest movement grew rapidly in 1965 when the American government increased the level of its military commitment to the regime in South Vietnam, with the landing of the first American marines.¹ By the end of 1965 the number of American military personnel in Vietnam had risen to 184,000.² Escalation of the war would continue until 1968 when American troop numbers reached over half a million, and the United States would not withdraw from Vietnam until 1973.

New Zealand's role in the Vietnam conflict before 1965 was very limited. In 1962 a civilian surgical team was sent to Vietnam, but New Zealand did not follow Australia's lead at that time and send military advisors.³ After repeated requests for military aid from the South Vietnamese government, New Zealand sent a team of engineers to Vietnam in 1964.⁴ Thus the number of New Zealand personnel in Vietnam before 1965 was very small, and all were working in a non-combatant capacity.

In April 1965 President Johnson's envoy, Henry Cabot Lodge, addressed the New Zealand cabinet in an attempt to gain a pledge of military support for South Vietnam. The call to battle was primarily founded on the premise that the democratic government of South Vietnam was being attacked by the communist government of North Vietnam.

Henry Cabot Lodge's visit brought the first sign of public protest against New Zealand military involvement in Vietnam. Some people, who suspected that Lodge's visit was to gain a New Zealand military commitment and opposed such involvement in

¹Malcolm McKinnon, (editor), The American Connection, p.146.
²John Lewis Gaddis, Strategies of Containment, p.248.
³Malcolm McKinnon, (editor), The American Connection, p.146.
⁴ibid, p.146.
Vietnam, protested at the Wellington Airport, and then outside the hotel where Lodge was staying. In the wake of Lodge's visit the Wellington Committee on Vietnam was formed on 1 May 1965 to actively oppose military involvement in Vietnam by New Zealand. The name "Committee on Vietnam" was chosen to "symbolize the broad range of opinions that were gathered within it." 

The exact date of the formation of the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam is unknown. It was formed sometime in early May 1965 at a meeting in the home of Peter Sutton. The name "Committee on Vietnam" was consciously adopted from the Wellington C.O.V.

The first priority of the Dunedin C.O.V. was to lobby the government against sending military personnel to Vietnam. The C.O.V.'s first actions were to send a letter to the prime minister, Keith Holyoake, outlining the C.O.V.'s opposition; and to take out two newspaper advertisements publicising the Committee's message to the prime minister. The C.O.V. listed six reasons why it opposed the sending of troops to Vietnam:

(1) New Zealand's military commitments and national defence requirements do not demand the sending of troops to Vietnam.
(2) New Zealand's national security is best served by a peace settlement in Vietnam.
(3) The move would alienate our neighbours in Asia.
(4) The possibility of a nuclear war beginning from the conflict.
(5) There is no need to add New Zealand lives to the number already killed.
(6) The Geneva Agreements insist on no foreign troops

Despite this action and the lobbying of the Committees on

---

7 ibid, p.10.
8 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
9 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
Vietnam and others the government announced on 27th May 1965 that New Zealand was to send an artillery battery to Vietnam.\(^{12}\)

Little is known about the members of the C.O.V. except for the people on the executive of the Committee. Almost all the original members of the C.O.V.'s executive had been involved in political activities previously. Some were trade union activists, some members of political parties, and some were involved in peace groups such as the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (C.N.D.).

The personal motivation and skills of a few people soon became apparent in the C.O.V.'s activities. Ex-members praised the "real organizational spark"\(^{13}\), and "boundless enthusiasm"\(^{14}\) of Peter Sutton, the C.O.V.'s first chairman, in aiding the running of the Committee. Indeed the momentum of the C.O.V. often relied on the work of a very few people. Val Maxwell, the C.O.V. Chairman (1969/1970) later commented: "It was very much a child of one or two enthusiasts, Peter Sutton...John Childs...Rodger Smitheram...and they were the group who were keeping it going, and the pacifists".\(^{15}\)

This strong personal commitment did have its costs. Explaining his resignation from the position of chairman after three years Peter Sutton wrote: "I have been in the hot seat for three years now and it is time for someone else to take over - the strain is having effects on all members of my family".\(^{16}\)

The creation of the Dunedin C.O.V. was the coming together of people representing a coalition of left-wing activists, from communists through to social democrats, academics to industrial union leaders. Islay Little of the C.O.V. recalled: "Mostly people already had the connections and they just worked through those groups...and just friends".\(^{17}\)

Thus the C.O.V. was an organisation that drew on the membership of other pre-existing groups. Because of its narrow focus on one issue it did not make any of these concerned groups redundant. This process was similar to the one which saw the Wellington C.O.V. evolve. Haas wrote:


\(^{13}\)Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.

\(^{14}\)Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.

\(^{15}\)Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.


\(^{17}\)Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
The climate from which it (Wellington C.O.V.) emerged also embraced many of these other groups, and the history of the C.O.V. was largely a history of a new process and combination of interactions among them.\textsuperscript{18}

The Wellington and Dunedin C.O.V.s reflected the heterogeneous nature of the peace movement in general and the anti-Vietnam movement in particular. In contrast, the first group formed in Auckland to oppose New Zealand's military involvement was far less diverse. The Auckland Peace for Vietnam Committee was strongly representative of political groups with a "working class socialist and pacifist political tradition".\textsuperscript{19} In its approach to Vietnam it came into conflict with moderates, which limited the extent of its appeal. This Committee stressed that money spent on the war had a detrimental affect on the conditions and wages of New Zealand workers, and also pledged support for the N.L.F. The Dunedin C.O.V. never adopted these stands.

Motivations

The motivations people had for opposing the war were, of course, numerous and varied. Six of the reasons for opposing the sending of troops to Vietnam have already been seen in the C.O.V.'s letter to the Prime Minister. One argument which was frequently brought up was that this form of participation would disqualify New Zealand from playing a mediating role in a peace settlement. A further reason for opposing military support for South Vietnam was the conduct of the regime in power there. While the New Zealand government labelled communist North Vietnam as the aggressors, the government of the South, which New Zealand was aiding, was attacked by protest groups because of its undemocratic nature and its apparent mistreatment of political opponents. Many in the protest movement believed that the Vietnam situation was a civil matter for the Vietnamese and that all foreign governments should remain out of the conflict militarily, as demanded in the Geneva Accords. Here the role of America was definitely in question. To many the war became a

\textsuperscript{18}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.4.

"symbol of American imperialism"20. The anti-American feeling within the protest movement contained two features. The first was opposition to America's role in the world and the second was encompassed in a rejection of American society itself. Islay Little recalled: "I think there was a fairly strong anti-American feeling at the time, that the (N.Z.) economy was being taken over, the general lifestyle was changing".21

The changes in society that some people objected to included the growth of commercialism and the loss of relaxation time and a distinctly New Zealand way of life. Whether these changes were occurring is impossible to tell, but the perceptions of change and the reaction to it appear to have aided the protest movement to some degree. One correspondent to the *Otago Daily Times* suggested that the United States was morally corrupt and thus was not fit to inflect its morality upon the world as it appeared to be doing in Vietnam.22 This anti-American strand was also found in the Auckland and Wellington protest movements. In Auckland opposition "came from people who prior to the war, had already developed a highly critical view of America's world-wide influence and role"23. In the Wellington C.O.V., "there were people who disdained the American values they identified in the ratrace, the superficiality, the speed..."24

There is no doubt that as the chief sponsor of the side that New Zealand was fighting on, the United States was an obvious target for protest. After all, New Zealand had been asked to fight in Vietnam by the United States, and if the United States withdrew militarily, it was certain that New Zealand would do likewise. Thus the protest movement used the visits of American government representatives as occasions to protest on a nationwide level against the war in Vietnam.25 Ironically, although there was this anti-American strand running through the Dunedin C.O.V., and other protest groups in New Zealand, it was the American protest movement which became the source for much of the C.O.V.'s written material against the war, and a source of inspiration, as suggested in a C.O.V. newsletter of 1965:

20Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
21Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
22*Otago Daily Times*, 7 January 1966, p.4.
25ibid, p.69.
"Although we feel discouraged at times by our failure to prevent the dispatch of troops and the build up of U.S. forces in Vietnam... (opposition is growing)... especially in the U.S. itself".26 People opposed to war in general, and from already existing pacifist groups, held many of the positions on the Executive Committee of C.O.V. One had been a conscientious objector during World War Two. Sometimes these attitudes to war had arisen from experiences of the Second World War. One executive member explained that the horror of World War Two had made many people anti-war.27 She recalled her fear of the Vietnam war: "Most of it was just a sinister feeling, that we were going to get wrapped up in a war again, that in this case did not have the great fans of empire behind it".28 One person involved in the C.O.V., Eric Herd, said that he turned down a teaching position in Australia because his sons were of military age and conscription was in operation in that country.29

As the horror of the Vietnam War became more widely publicised, especially through the medium of television, support for the anti-war movement grew. Charles Brasch complained in a letter to the Otago Daily Times in 1967 that the government was "committing us to support these atrocities more fully at the very moment when the evidence about them has been made public".30 The C.O.V. tried to capitalize on the use of new weapons of destruction such as napalm and defoliants by American forces to gain sympathy and support for its anti-war cause.

Finally the Communists involved in the protest movement probably opposed Western military intervention because they supported the forces fighting to remove the regime in power in South Vietnam, and because of the destruction being inflicted on communist North Vietnam. The charge that the C.O.V. was pro-communist was often made in an attempt to discredit it in the eyes of the Dunedin public. This tactic known as "smearing" will be discussed in more detail later. It is important to note here that the C.O.V. was not made up totally, or even dominated, by people who opposed the war because of communist beliefs.

26 Dunedin C.O.V. newsletter, November 1965, NMB, +D, Hocken Library.
27 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
28 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
29 Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
Although there were many causes for the opposition to the Vietnam War, and New Zealand's involvement in it, the C.O.V. was able to maintain all sections of dissent under a broad coalition which stayed remarkably united for the whole history of the protest and the war.

**Aims**

The major aim of the C.O.V. was to bring New Zealand's military involvement in Vietnam to an end as soon as possible. Because the government was firmly resolute in its decision to participate in the Vietnam War the C.O.V. had to be diverse in its activities in order that it gained wider support for its cause. Linden Cowell of the C.O.V. explained that each single issues was viewed as "the exacerbating factor which would tip people over the edge",\(^{31}\) and lead them to support the C.O.V.

The C.O.V., like other protest groups, acted as a promotional group rather than a pressure group. "Promotional groups espouse causes rather than press vested interests".\(^{32}\) The C.O.V. was also unsure of who in the community it was representing, apart from those who were actually members. It sought to represent all those opposed to the war, even if they were not involved with the C.O.V. for any reason.

One of the major aims of the C.O.V. was to make the Vietnam war a major political issue, while the government sought to make it a non-issue.\(^{33}\) Haas noted that "the determination with which the government pursued its Vietnam policy also limited the ability of the C.O.V. to alter it".\(^{34}\) The strong government opposition to the C.O.V. limited the impact the C.O.V. could have on New Zealand decision-makers. This meant that the role of the C.O.V. was largely one of attempting to win public support locally for its cause. Many members of the C.O.V.'s Executive Committee were involved in the field of education, and there was a strong belief among this group that with education about the causes of the Vietnam conflict and New Zealand's role in it, the public would come to support the C.O.V.

Combined with this aim of educating people was an attempt to

---

\(^{31}\)Interview Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.


\(^{33}\)Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.

\(^{34}\)Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.9.
target certain individuals and groups whom the C.O.V.'s Executive Committee believed would be more likely to be persuaded to support its cause. This tactic of targeting groups did have its disadvantages as to some extent it limited the people coming into contact with the C.O.V. In 1969 the C.O.V. declined the offer of a similar protest group in Christchurch to send literature to Otago University staff and clergy, stating: "We feel, however, that such limited distribution in most cases is only feeding information to those who are (relatively speaking) well informed; we hope to reach some of the others".35

The C.O.V. followed the recommendation of the Wellington C.O.V. to send literature to "prominent people locally...what the Americans would call opinion makers".36 This tactic, borrowed from the American protest movement, was presumably intended to convince public figures of the C.O.V.'s cause, thus giving the cause more legitimacy and respectability in the hope that more of the public in general would adopt the same outlook on the issue.

Specific aims and messages changed during the war in relation to the pattern of policy being followed by the government. The C.O.V. did, however, maintain a permanent mechanism for lobbying and did not just become active when certain events gave the Vietnam issue greater prominence.

As early as 1965 the C.O.V. acknowledged that the aims that it had set for itself were not likely to be achieved in the near future. The government seemed firmly committed to maintaining a military force in Vietnam, and the United States did not appear to be near removing its military presence from there. One member of the C.O.V. executive suggested that a Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation be formed to replace the C.O.V. "as it would be of a more permanent nature than the ad hoc committee, and it would seem that the struggle is likely to be a fairly protracted one".37 A public opinion poll published in September 1965 (the only one located for the period) showed that 70% of New Zealanders favoured the governments' decision to send a military force to Vietnam.38 Furthermore this 70% of New Zealanders included 29% of people who said that the government should have gone further and given more military aid to South Vietnam.

38Otago Daily Times, 15 September 1965, p.5.
Given that there was little way of knowing what level of public support the C.O.V. enjoyed in the community, and because they appeared to be in the minority in their attitudes to Vietnam, the committee followed a policy also found in Wellington "signified by its stress in having the right answer to the war problem, rather than asserting that it represented what most people thought". A Critic article on the origins of the Dunedin C.O.V. argued that even though the C.O.V. and its supporters were numerically a minority in the Dunedin community, the C.O.V. had fulfilled its aim of serving "notice on the Government that a large body of opinion is very strongly opposed to its policy on Vietnam".

The final role which the C.O.V. fulfilled, whether its members were conscious or unconscious of the fact, was to give its members a personal involvement in protesting against something that they felt was important. Jackman wrote that the act of protesting "changes the relationship of people personally to participate in the political process". He also argued that involvement in protest groups makes participants feel far less powerless in the political process, and less alienated from political power. Therefore protesters believe that their protest action can have some effect, be it large or small, on the political system or on society in general. People involved in protest activities are therefore more willing than the general population to participate in further protest groups. Firm in the belief of the efficacy of their protest actions, people who were involved in the C.O.V. later became involved in other protest issues such as the Omega spy base and the South African rugby tours.

Methods

The C.O.V. had little opportunity to directly influence the decision on New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam. Haas noted...
that the centralised cabinet government made it difficult for the Wellington C.O.V. to influence the decision-making process,\textsuperscript{44} and since the government was the focus of constant media attention it held "the power to determine when and how a significant portion of the debate and decision making on Vietnam was to be made".\textsuperscript{45} With the government and the C.O.V. diametrically opposed in their outlooks on Vietnam, and because the C.O.V. was limited in its access to power via Parliament and the media, it turned to the use of less orthodox forms of political activities to gain political influence. These activities included marches, demonstrations and mass appeals. Val Maxwell, the C.O.V. Chairman for 1969/1970, commented that the C.O.V. "tried to do everything".\textsuperscript{46} The limited finances available to the C.O.V. also helped to define the methods that it used; and one of the major functions of the C.O.V. was raising money for it to continue its activities. The C.O.V., like its counterparts in Wellington and Auckland, maintained a local membership list. Formal membership subscriptions were called for annually and then "we simply called for donations".\textsuperscript{47} These were solicited for specific purposes, such as bringing a guest speaker to Dunedin, or for civilian aid for Vietnam. Collections were also held at meetings and demonstrations to help cover the cost of the event and to raise money. Val Maxwell also recalled that John Childs, chairman of the C.O.V. 1968/1969, "put enormous sums of money into the Committee", from the proceeds from books he had written.\textsuperscript{48}

At meetings, the C.O.V. attempted to enlarge its membership by asking people to join the C.O.V. officially. However people were not discouraged from attending meetings because they were not formal members. It served the C.O.V. better not to define people formally as belonging or not, because every person attending a meeting or demonstration was taken as an indication of support for the C.O.V. Therefore, loose association, especially on public marches was encouraged, even if this was the only political act a person engaged in.\textsuperscript{49}

One of the most effective ways of raising public awareness of the C.O.V. and the Vietnam issue was by holding public marches,

\textsuperscript{44}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.16.
\textsuperscript{45}ibid, p.18.
\textsuperscript{46}Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{47}Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{48}Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{49}Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.
vigils, and demonstrations. These were held to attract media attention, and were used for the duration of the protest activity.

The first public protest was a vigil held by C.O.V. members in the Octagon on 21 May 1965, before the decision on military involvement was announced by the government. This gave the C.O.V. an opportunity to state its position in the local daily press and to advertise a public meeting the it was organising.50

Public marches became a feature of the C.O.V.'s activities, generally occurring once or twice a year. These marches were held on Friday nights, and began from the Otago Museum. The marchers made their way through town to the Octagon, with people holding protest placards and chanting slogans. In the Octagon three or four speakers would address the crowd for about ten minutes each, before the demonstration disbanded. Sometimes these marches were held to coincide with those being held in other centres and/or the visit of representatives of the American or South Vietnamese governments.

The process of organising a march involved the C.O.V. obtaining a permit from the Dunedin City Council, (which was refused once in 1969), consulting with the police and providing marshals to direct the crowd. The Executive Committee of the C.O.V. opposed any violent forms of protest; and the police told the C.O.V. that they were less worried about the possible actions of the procession than they were about the possible actions of public onlookers who disagreed with the C.O.V. over the Vietnam issue.51 Before the larger mobilisations of the early 1970s these marches involved about 300 to 500 people.52 In the 1970s, large marches, called mobilisations, were held in Dunedin and other centres. However, while these mobilisations attracted more people to protest than the marches of the 1960s they also caused conflict between elements in the Dunedin protest movement, the implications of which will be discussed in more detail later.

On several occasions a procession of cars was used for publicity, as Lawrence Jones explained:

A few times, when something came up quickly, there would be a kind of Friday night car cavalcade just with signs and things, honking horns, just to make people aware that something had happened.53

50Otago Daily Times, 22 May 1965, p.4.
51Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
53Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
These mobile processions were given coverage in the press, although often not to the extent that the C.O.V. believed they merited.54

Public meetings were another regular feature of protest against the Vietnam War, in Dunedin. The first such meeting was organised by the C.O.V., prior to the government decision to send a military force was made and, according to the Otago Daily Times, featured heated debate, and showed that there were many different opinions in Dunedin on the subject of Vietnam.55

The Federation of Labour (F.O.L.), in conjunction with the New Zealand Labour Party, organised a public meeting in June 1965, held at the concert chambers of the Dunedin Town Hall.56 Sir Walter Nash, Professor Eric Herd, and a C.O.V. representative Mr. J. Anderson addressed the meeting. The meeting, attended by about 350 people, passed a resolution demanding a reversal of the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam.57

This meeting marked the only time that labour organisations and the Labour Party organised a protest against Vietnam themselves. Their initial enthusiasm for protest was followed by little action, and the protest movement became more firmly led and directed by more energetic people in the C.O.V. Those F.O.L. and Labour Party people who were vehemently opposed to military involvement in Vietnam were to be found in the C.O.V., because of the focus that this organisation gave to the issue, which could not be found in these other more general organisations. This falling off in interest from traditional left-wing groups was also found by Jackman in Auckland.58

The majority of meetings held in Dunedin concerning Vietnam were organised wholly or in conjunction with the C.O.V. The aims of these meetings were to stimulate interest in the issue of the Vietnam War, and inform people of the C.O.V.'s views on the issue. Meetings often featured a panel of people who would speak on different aspects of the issue, and then receive questions from

56Otago Daily Times, 12 June 1965.
the floor. Specific meetings were also arranged for visiting speakers. Through cooperation with other protest groups and C.O.V.'s, many overseas speakers addressed Dunedin audiences on Vietnam. These speakers included an American general, General Hester, in 1967, Max Teichmann and Felix Greene in 1968, and world famous pediatrician Dr. Benjamin Spock in 1971. The Dunedin C.O.V. also capitalised on its strong links with Otago University to obtain speakers academically qualified to comment on certain aspects of the war. Professor Jim Flynn, of the Political Studies Department, would often give a summary of the American political position in regard to the Vietnam War, at the opening of C.O.V. meetings.59 For a meeting which focused on the use of defoliants in Vietnam, two biochemists from the university spoke.

There were some problems with these meetings. When meetings were held at the university this limited the audience, as Lawrence Jones recalled:

It helped to be able to have meetings away from the university, because there were people that just felt that they didn't want to come on to the campus, that that wasn't their territory.60

The Society of Friends meeting house was often used because it was seen as "neutral".61

A major crisis erupted for the whole anti-Vietnam War movement in New Zealand when the government refused to release overseas funds which were to pay for overseas guests who were to attend the "Peace Power and Politics in Asia" conference in Wellington and then travel the country on speaking tours. An Otago Daily Times article explained the governments' position:

Mr Muldoon said that he would be failing to support New Zealand's troops who were fighting communism in Vietnam if he condoned the use of New Zealand's scarce overseas funds to bring people here to undermine them.62

C.O.V. spokesperson Peter Sutton stated that: "The issue is basically one of freedom of speech here in New Zealand".63 A

60Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
61Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
62Otago Daily Times, 16 March 1968, p.3.
petition against this government action was circulated by student protest leader, Ian Frazer, and twenty-nine University staff sent a telegram of protest to Mr. Muldoon. The government, however, refused to reverse its decision on the release of the funds. The C.O.V. appealed to the public for overseas funds, and Lawrence Jones, an expatriate American and member of the C.O.V. Executive Committee, gave the C.O.V. the use of funds he still had in the United States. The protest movement raised enough funds nationally to be able to bring all the intended guests to New Zealand.

"Teach-ins" were another feature of the C.O.V.'s activities. These had the aim of educating people on issues relating to the war. They were organised by university staff in the C.O.V., and were copied from the "teach-ins" developed at American universities in the early 1960s. The "teach-ins" were seminars on certain topics which generally lasted several days. Guest speakers were invited and the Otago University Student Association was asked to provide a room and financial assistance on at least one occasion.

Protest groups throughout the country encouraged their members to write letters to the editors of newspapers outlining their arguments against military involvement in Vietnam. The "Letters to the Editor" section of the Otago Daily Times frequently contained correspondence on Vietnam for the duration of the war. Newspapers were also used to advertise messages of protest, meetings, and marches, and, the C.O.V. also released press statements concerned with the war.

The C.O.V. distributed literature opposing Western military intervention in Vietnam to its members and at meetings either at no charge or with a small charge to cover the costs of printing. Originally much of the literature came from the Wellington C.O.V. Later much of the literature was reprinted from items distributed by the American Friends Service Committee, the political wing of the Society of Friends in the United States, and from other protest groups from the United States. American criticism of American policy was popular for use as propaganda by the New Zealand protest movement.

63 Otago Daily Times, 16 March 1968, p.3.
64 Otago Daily Times, 16 March 1968, p.3.
65 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
66 Minutes C.O.V. meeting, 10 July 1972, C.O.V./Hoc.
67 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
present in the C.O.V., its use of American literature is somewhat ironic. Much of the literature was also written by C.O.V. members themselves.

In response to the lack of sympathy from New Zealand daily newspapers, and as a way of contact with all members of the protest movement, the Wellington C.O.V. began its own publication, *Quote*. This was originally distributed by the Dunedin C.O.V. to its members, but from early 1966 was mailed directly from Wellington. The newspaper was occasionally printed by groups other than the Wellington C.O.V., and the March 1968 issue was compiled by the Dunedin C.O.V.69

Linden Cowell of the C.O.V. created the figure of Kiwi Joe, a small caricature who portrayed "an ordinary bloke with ordinary standards of behavior and morality".70 Kiwi Joe was designed to give the protest movement "an easily identifiable symbol to use on its publications, its posters, its banners, and its advertisements",71 and served as a counter to the nationalist, "Kiwi Keith", image of the Prime Minister Keith Holyoake. A Kiwi Joe column appeared in the Otago University student magazine, *Critic*, in 1967.

The C.O.V. used other methods to get its message across to the public, including distributing pamphlets to households, and by showing films on the war to interested groups or at public meetings. The C.O.V. would also provide a speaker with these films, and often the projector.72 The C.O.V. offered, and was asked to provide speakers to address various meetings of church groups, unions, and schools.73

One member of the C.O.V. stated that he believed that the C.O.V.'s attempts to educate and persuade people were unsuccessful. "I thought our propaganda was too involved, too intellectual", although he stated, "On the other hand people wanted to do it that way, said well look you've got to present reasoned arguments. If you're just going to present catch words your just doing what the other side are doing".74 However,
having a reasoned argument which one believed was correct was not enough to ensure a group's success. In Auckland a university-based protest group, the Committee on South East Asian Affairs, published a criticism of the government's White Paper on Vietnam, and having won the argument in its own mind, lost impetus and faded away. Thus the Dunedin C.O.V. was wise to stress not only that its interpretation of events concerning Vietnam was correct, but also to encourage people to participate in protest activities. Handouts encouraged people to sign petitions, debate the question with their friends, join the C.O.V., donate money and advise their M.P.'s of their views. The C.O.V. also tried to recruit new activists by pointing out that many of its members "have never been before directly involved in any public political debate". Despite these efforts, a C.O.V. newsletter in February 1967 complained that "for too long the burden of the Vietnam protest has been carried by a small group of people. The proportion of those opposed to the war who have been really active is small". The number of donations also dried up by the end of the 1960s, from $348 in 1967-68 to only $3 in 1968-69. The chairman's report for the 1968-1969 period began "There is not much to report". This decline in growth was also evident in the Auckland protest movement. Jackman attributed this to a fall off in public interest in the war from 1967 to May 1970, which was revived when the U.S.A. invaded Cambodia and Laos.

One incident which gave the anti-war movement more prominence in Dunedin and elsewhere was the cancellation, by the New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation, of a radio talk by Professor Eric Herd, entitled "Looking at Ourselves". Herd, a lecturer at Otago University, expressed strong views against sending troops to Vietnam, and the cancellation of the talk produced a wave of protest. The C.O.V. complained: "This action, we consider, is a denial of the right of freedom of speech, and is an insult both to the integrity of the speaker and to the ability of

74 Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
77 C.O.V. handout, N.M.B., +D, Hocken Library.
78 C.O.V. newsletter, 12 February 1967, N.M.B., +D, Hocken Library.
79 C.O.V. Chairman's report, 16 April 1969, C.O.V./Linden Cowell.
the listener to judge for himself".81 The talk was eventually played on the radio with a government representative replying to Herd's comments immediately following it. The effect of the controversy, according to Herd, was to give the talk much greater prominence.82 Herd was then asked to join the C.O.V., and subsequently became a regular speaker at C.O.V. meetings. This incident illustrates the government's attitude and reaction to opposition to its Vietnam policy in 1965. It also shows the way in which the government, gave the protest movement more public prominence by reacting to it.

Unity and Division

Internal division among anti-war groups was a major problem for the Committees on Vietnam, and there were committee splits in Auckland and Christchurch, which diffused the efforts and energy of the protest movement.83 All attempts at a broad coalition of anti-war groups failed in Auckland before the mobilisations in 1971.84 There were often splits and divisions over the political alignment of groups and the methods of protest to be employed, such as the use of law-breaking tactics. The Progressive Youth Movement (P.Y.M.) in Auckland, for instance "aroused hostility not only from the state, the press and the public but also from within the opposition to the war", because of their protest tactics.85 Jackman found that the Peace For Vietnam Committee, in Auckland, "never had its energy diffused by ideological splits of feuding",86 but also that this group remained small with little power or influence.

While the Wellington C.O.V. remained in existence for the whole of the Vietnam war it did experience internal conflict between moderates and an activist wing called the "Action Faction".87 The latter used tactics such as chaining themselves to

81Open letter to N.Z.B.C., C.O.V./Linden Cowell.
82Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
84ibid, p.70.
85ibid, p.107.
86ibid, p.25, 26, 27.
the pillars of Parliament. The main objection of the moderates was that any action by a member of the C.O.V. would be identified as the action of the group as a whole by the public.\textsuperscript{88}

Given these divisions between groups and among groups in other centres, their absence from Dunedin and from the Dunedin C.O.V. was a noticeable feature. As one member recalled:

The first thing that struck me was that the internecine warfare between the Communists and the Trotskyists, which was particularly bad in Wellington and Auckland ...was all missing from here.\textsuperscript{89}

This absence of conflict was not due to any uniformity of ideological viewpoint, for there was certainly a wide range of political opinion in the C.O.V. as in other centres. Larry Jones recalled:

The spectrum of opinion might have been all the way from those who would say that we ought to be on good terms with America, but not buy this policy because it's a bad one, to people who said we really ought to be aligned with China.\textsuperscript{90}

Yet the only divisions apparent in the C.O.V., were over organizational matters and financial prudence, neither of which was very divisive.\textsuperscript{91}

The role of the communist elements in the C.O.V. was an important key to its stability and unity. Communists were seen as public liabilities to some in the protest movement, because of public hostility towards them. One Wellington C.O.V. organiser who collected lists of names for C.O.V. advertising for the \textit{Listener} "consciously avoided putting the names of communists on".\textsuperscript{92} After one stormy meeting which pitted the communists against others, there was pressure on the Chairman of the Wellington C.O.V., Barry Mitcalfe, to expel the communists.\textsuperscript{93} A major controversy erupted when communist executive member Ray Nunes wrote an article about the protest movement claiming that, "The reason why the campaign quickly assumed an

\textsuperscript{88}ibid, p.14.
\textsuperscript{89}Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{90}Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{91}Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989, Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{92}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.31.
\textsuperscript{93}ibid, p.30.
organised mass character was due primarily to the active leadership role of the party". This claim caused the temporary expulsion of the communists from the Wellington C.O.V.

In contrast, in Dunedin members of the Communist Party, and the Socialist Unity Party worked within the C.O.V. with little conflict resulting. The Dunedin branch of the Communist party wrote to the C.O.V. in 1965 expressing "willingness to assist without public recognition", which would have limited the opposition from those who thought that the communists' involvement would attract the "red smear". Members of the Executive Committee of the C.O.V. offered many reasons why there was less political conflict in Dunedin. The small number of communist supporters in Dunedin gave them a limited power base, but they still had the potential to disrupt the "moderates". One person stated that the communists "were obviously used to working with social democrats", because of cooperation in previous political activities and protest. The personalities of those communists involved were important. They were more pragmatic, and wanted to achieve something through working in unity rather than being totally ideological in outlook, which could have threatened unity. Val Maxwell reported that he believed that members of the Communist Party and the Socialist Unity Party in the C.O.V. "were acting in direct controvention at times to their party policy up north". The non-communists in the C.O.V., who were in the majority, either were tolerant of differing political viewpoints, or may have felt that because of their small numbers the communists posed no threat to the C.O.V. Certainly no communist ever became leader of the C.O.V.

The isolation of Dunedin from the central government may have also contributed to the C.O.V.'s unity, as Val Maxwell recalled, "You felt more remote and ineffective, so that you want to work to make anything. You're not prepared to dissipate your energy".

The leadership of the C.O.V. also encouraged pragmatism and rejected dogmatic political viewpoints as the most effective way to protest. C.O.V. chairmen Peter Sutton, John Childs, and Val Maxwell were noted for their organizational skills and enthusiasm

94_Otago Daily Times, 2 May 1966, p.4.
96_Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
97_Interview Val Maxwell, 23 August 1989.
rather than any ideological political vision that they may have possessed. Jackman found that in Auckland, although political viewpoints could be divisive, those leaders who possessed a Marxist view of politics and history made the most effective leaders, and had more commitment to the protest cause than non-Marxist leaders. The Dunedin group's success in remaining united relied on the absence of communist ideological commitment among its leaders. Their enthusiasm and energy was not fuelled by any deepset belief in the correctness of communist prediction of history.

Contact with other Committees

Contact and communication among the different Committees on Vietnam in New Zealand was important for the effective coordination of events and the flow of information. The Dunedin C.O.V. maintained regular correspondence with the Wellington C.O.V. and contacted other groups on an ad hoc basis. The focus on the Wellington C.O.V. was probably as a result of the splits in Auckland and Christchurch, and because the Wellington C.O.V. acted as if it were a national executive for the protest movement. Marches were sometimes organised to occur on the same day nationally. Committees worked together and collected names of prominent people to place in anti-war advertisements in local newspapers and the Listener, a national weekly magazine. The flow of money was also an important feature of the protest network. It has already been seen how overseas funds were raised in 1968; and money was frequently sent from the Dunedin C.O.V. to the Wellington C.O.V. to help pay for Quote, advertisements and political literature. The Vietnam Defence Fund also appealed to Committees for money to help pay the legal costs of those arrested during protest action. The Dunedin C.O.V. was also asked to send speakers to rallies and "teach-ins" organised by other Committees.

101 Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
The literature which the Wellington C.O.V. produced or reproduced, and to which the Dunedin C.O.V. contributed financially, gave the latter a say in what would be published. There were often differences between what the two groups believed was the most effective way to present their message. In 1966 the Dunedin C.O.V. returned a draft copy of a pamphlet to Wellington questioning the factual basis of its content, and criticising it for being too anti-American and for being poorly compiled, concluding: "We would however be able to approach sympathisers with more certainty if the pamphlet was more positive and effective in approach".104 The Wellington C.O.V. replied that the amended pamphlet which the Dunedin C.O.V. sent was "going to press on Friday almost exactly as you sent it".105 Although the Dunedin C.O.V. did ask for some changes it did not state that its changes had to be agreed to before it would distribute the pamphlet in Dunedin. This was again probably due to the C.O.V. not adhering to any inflexible ideological beliefs. In contrast the Peace for Vietnam Committee in Auckland refused to distribute a Wellington-produced pamphlet because it was too conservative.106

These actions and other conflicts illustrate the independence of the various Committees on Vietnam. The Dunedin C.O.V. protested to the Wellington C.O.V. over the sending of a letter to Ho Chi Minh in which "accusations are made that his government has refused to consider proposals for negotiation";107 and the Dunedin C.O.V. also refused to participate in circulating a petition distributed by the Auckland Council on Vietnam, explaining that "our energies are already committed to other matters".108

The relationship with the Wellington C.O.V. soured after controversy concerning the financial handling of the Peace Power and Politics in Asia conference held in 1968. Peter Sutton wrote to the Wellington C.O.V.: "In the circumstances it seems rather presumptuous for the Wellington committee to expect much in the way of future co-operation from other centres".109

Thus the C.O.V. was willing to assert its own independence and

identity from the other protest groups. Only in 1971 did the C.O.V. concede to a demand from other protest groups, when it decided to reverse its decision not to organise a second mobilisation.

The cooperation among protest groups was closely linked to the attempts to create a national organisation. Here again the Dunedin C.O.V.'s determination to remain an autonomous body was clear, as Lawrence Jones recalled, "right from the start there was the kind of determination not to be taken over by a national organisation".110

In 1965 there were autonomous Vietnam protest groups in approximately eighteen centres in New Zealand, some of which were very active, and some not.111 Haas found that the Wellington C.O.V. "attempted to benefit from the so-called Committees on Vietnam throughout the country";112 and while other Committees, such as the one in Dunedin did remain independent, the public perception may have been one that identified the Wellington C.O.V. as the mouthpiece for the whole protest movement nationally. Some in the Dunedin C.O.V. stated that the Wellington Committee did act at times as if it was national leader, but that in the protest movement itself "nobody bought it".113

National meetings were organised to enhance liaison among the various Committees on Vietnam, establish information networks, discuss tactics and provide the protest movement with a public image of unity and strength. The Dunedin C.O.V. had problems sending representatives to many of these meetings because they were invariably held in the North Island. At Easter in 1967 a national meeting was held and attended by two members of the Dunedin C.O.V. The C.O.V. wrote to Wellington:

We regard it as an exchange of views and suggestions between kindred but independent committees and not a national conference of branches of a single organisation. In other words decisions made by the conference will be in the nature of recommendations to local committees not binding instructions from a central authority.114

110 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
111 Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.73.
112 Ibid., p.12.
113 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
After that conference the Wellington C.O.V. sent the Dunedin C.O.V. and the other Committees a copy of its proposed rules for a national body called New Zealand Committee on Vietnam (Incorporated). The Dunedin C.O.V. rejected these as unsuitable because of the lack of protection given to the autonomy of local committees and because it proposed a Wellington-based executive, which the C.O.V. felt would give too much power to the Wellington region. Some members of the Dunedin C.O.V. had belonged to other groups centred in Wellington, and many disliked this central control.

The forms of coordination which created the least conflict were those that involved little interpretation of the actual war situation in Vietnam. As one C.O.V. member stated, "because I suppose we all shared a clearly defined purpose it wasn't too difficult to occasionally coordinate activities". Thus it was relatively easy to coordinate such things as street marches. The problems of splits and infighting in various centres, such as Auckland, made the creation of a permanent national body very difficult, as did the fact that some of the protest groups held rigid ideological views on the war and the protest.

In Dunedin independence and autonomy were core priorities for the C.O.V. The C.O.V. did, however, seek and maintain contact with other protest groups, and in particular with the Wellington Committee. These contacts created permanent information networks to the benefit of the C.O.V. Cooperation with other groups was entered into by the C.O.V. up to the point where it felt that its autonomy would be seriously undermined. The protest movement was unable to establish a long-term national body, due to problems of distance, political differences, and the desire of groups such as the Dunedin C.O.V. to remain as independent autonomous organisations, accountable only to their members.

117 Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
2 The Committee on Vietnam and the Wider Community.

The C.O.V. was constantly trying to stimulate debate on the Vietnam issue, and gain support for its cause by targeting its activities towards certain groups in the community. It met with mixed success in achieving these goals. The issue of New Zealand involvement in Vietnam, and the activities of the C.O.V. sparked much debate among groups in Dunedin. However the C.O.V. had only a limited impact on some sections of Dunedin society. It failed to elicit broad support from the community, but in some cases the C.O.V. was able to attract the support of groups and people who had not been involved in protest activities previously.

Otago University and Dunedin Teachers College

Many activists were staff or students at Otago University and Dunedin Teachers College. Lawrence Jones of the C.O.V. executive recalled, "it was, if not university dominated, it at least had a strong university core to it".1 There were four chairmen of the C.O.V. during its existence. John Childs was on the university staff and Val Maxwell worked at the Teachers College. The other chairmen were Peter Sutton who also worked in the education field, for the Department of Education, and the Rev. Brian Walker.

Some of the academics involved in the protest movement were authorities on Asia or on some other aspect of the issue, such as New Zealand or American foreign policy. The C.O.V. sought to utilise their expertise to enhance the public credibility of its arguments. In Chapter One it was seen that holding C.O.V. meetings on campus limited their attendance. The approach to the Vietnam issue which sought to convert people to the C.O.V. by educating them did not endear some people to the protest movement in Dunedin. As one correspondent wrote to the Otago Daily Times: "University intellectuals whose ivy covered walls are protected from militant communism by the youth of America are often too simple to be taken seriously".2

A feature of the university involvement in the protest

1 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
movement was the predominance of Arts Faculty members involved as C.O.V. activists. Eric Herd, an arts professor and C.O.V. member, stated that he believed that "budding lawyers, commerce students, dentists, medicos, by and large would tend not to join any opposition groups".\(^3\) and that the students and staff in these faculties were predominantly in favour of military involvement.

University students made up many of the people in the protest movement, and were relied on heavily by the C.O.V. to participate in marches and demonstrations.\(^4\) Erik Olssen of the C.O.V. stated: "Students probably constituted most of the demonstrators".\(^5\) The period of the Vietnam War marked a rise in the level of student activism in New Zealand. One commentator noted that "middle class students" took up the issue rather than working class and union activists.\(^6\) The concentration of people in a large institution, such as a university, no doubt enhanced the spread of ideas and information about the issue.\(^7\)

By mid 1965 the Vietnam War was getting much coverage in \textit{Critic}, the newspaper of the Otago University Student Association, as the country debated the pros and cons of sending New Zealand military personnel to Vietnam. In reply to a government spokesman's description of the protest at the visit of Henry Cabot Lodge, \textit{Critic} wrote:

\begin{quote}
It is a sad day in New Zealand's history when some of her population are too cowardly to welcome dying in the jungles of South Vietnam in support of American fascism, sorry democracy.\(^8\)
\end{quote}

This statement set the general tone for the attitude of \textit{Critic} to the war, which was anti-American, and very anti-intervention. Only on one occasion did the \textit{Critic} editorial support the involvement of Western military forces in Vietnam. An editorial in June 1965, supported American intervention in Vietnam as a way of halting communist aggression, although it did oppose New Zealand's involvement.\(^9\) The editorial control of the newspaper

\(^{3}\) Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
\(^{4}\) Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
\(^{5}\) Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
\(^{6}\) Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
\(^{7}\) Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.58.
\(^{8}\) \textit{Critic}, 6 May 1965, p.2.
obviously influenced its content, and it is difficult to say to what extent it reflected the opinions of the students at Otago University.

**Critic** printed articles about C.O.V. meetings and demonstrations, as well as articles written by members of the C.O.V. **Critic** articles attacked the secrecy which surrounded the making of the decision to send troops, and the politicians who defended the decision. The next **Critic** editorial concerned with the Vietnam War, written in 1966, was strongly opposed to New Zealand involvement, and asked its readers; "Does New Zealand have to be completely dependent on the U.S.A. for its foreign policy?".\(^\text{10}\) Conflicting student opinions on the war can be found in letters to the editor in **Critic**, and in articles which sought to present both sides of the debate. After one such article printed in 1965, **Critic** declared: "Take your choice, somebody is right and someone else is lying".\(^\text{11}\) In 1967 a column written by C.O.V. members, entitled "Kiwi Joe", became a regular feature in **Critic**. This gave the protest movement a way of influencing student readers, and also served to increase debate on the issue, as the **Critic** editor had desired.\(^\text{12}\)

Student council meetings reflected the conflict among students on the issue of Vietnam. In July 1965 the Otago University Student Council passed three motions opposing government actions over Vietnam. These motions criticised the way the decision to send troops was made, the smear campaign against university staff and students, and the decision to send troops itself.\(^\text{13}\) **Critic** also noted that the Canterbury Students Association became the first to endorse the sending of troops around this time.\(^\text{14}\) A similar motion of criticism was passed narrowly by the Student Council again in 1968, 49 votes to 43.\(^\text{15}\) In that year Canterbury University changed its stance and became the last student association to oppose the government decision to send troops to Vietnam.\(^\text{16}\)

There was fierce debate over the Vietnam issue among

---

\(^{9}\)**Critic**, 10 June 1965, p.2.

\(^{10}\)**Critic**, 8 July 1966, p.2.

\(^{11}\)**Critic**, 10 June 1965, p.3.

\(^{12}\)**Critic**, 1 August 1967, p.6.

\(^{13}\)**Critic**, 9 July 1965, p.1, p.3.

\(^{14}\)**Critic**, 9 July 1965, p.3.

\(^{15}\)**Critic**, 30 May 1968, p.6.

Dunedin students during the 1960s. Letters supporting the government position were sent to *Critic*, as were others protesting the fact that the decisions made by the Student Council were representations of all student opinion.\(^{17}\) One correspondent attacked the *Critic* editor for having a policy of "presenting New Zealand's participation in the Vietnam War only in derogatory terms".\(^{18}\) A petition which supported the government's stance on Vietnam was circulated in June 1965, and defaced; another one was circulated by Murray Deaker and Brian Scott in 1968. Both were reported to have collected 300 signatures.\(^{19}\)

During the 1960s, *Critic* featured many articles about events on campuses around the world, including the opposition to the Vietnam War found in American Universities. New Zealand students who opposed the actions of their government in Vietnam probably gained inspiration from the protests in the U.S.A. The growth of student activism worldwide was noted in *Critic* in 1965: "University students are throwing off the apathy of the fifties".\(^{20}\) In 1967 *Critic*, however, did complain that students at Otago University were politically apathetic over the Vietnam issue.\(^{21}\)

The protest against the war in Vietnam spawned a student protest group on campus in October 1967, called the Vietnam Youth Action Committee (V.Y.A.C.). *Critic* outlined the purpose of the V.Y.A.C.

This provided for activity encouraging young men to refuse to do military service if balloted, as a protest against the government's Vietnam policy, and for investigation of conscription and pacifism generally.\(^{22}\)

The V.Y.A.C. was nearly destroyed at its inaugural meeting when a group of pro-government supporters attempted to have one of their number elected as president.\(^{23}\) The V.Y.A.C. was in contact with the Dunedin C.O.V., the P.Y.M. in Auckland, and other pacifist

---

\(^{17}\) *Critic*, 23 July 1965, p.4

\(^{18}\) *Critic*, 1 September 1968, p.3.


\(^{20}\) *Critic*, 9 July 1965, p.2.

\(^{21}\) *Critic*, 2 May 1967, p.7.

\(^{22}\) *Critic*, 22 April 1970, p.6.

groups. The V.Y.A.C. held seminars on conscientious objection in 1968. Over the summer of 1969/1970 a peace group called the Committee of Youth for Peace was formed from the V.Y.A.C. This new group's activities included distributing anti-cadet leaflets at Otago Boys High School. The constant mobility and change of students probably made the establishment of a permanent durable group against the war difficult to maintain.

In 1969 Critic's criticism of government politicians and their arguments for involvement turned to ridicule. After Jack Marshall had spoken on campus Critic wrote that "the old Vietnam arguments were big laughgetters". By 1970 the range of political issues which Critic examined had grown to include Manipouri, mental health, and race issues in South Africa and New Zealand.

The Vietnam War remained a student issue during the 1970s, but the conflict that marked the period up to 1970 declined. If some students were still in favour of New Zealand's military involvement in Vietnam from 1970 they were either not declaring so in public forums, such as Critic, or their letters were being ignored.

There was much protest on campus in 1970 with an anti-American theme. America's staunch anti-communism and its bombing of North Vietnam were attacked in Critic. In May 1970 an effigy of President Nixon was burned outside the Otago University Union building, "in protest against American military intervention in Cambodia". The New Zealand University Student Association disassociated itself from United States State Department student leader travel grants in 1970, because "it considers the scheme is just an instrument of American foreign policy".

Given that the nature of a university institution enhances the flow of ideas, then student activism was important for the spread of opposition to the war among other students. This in turn creates what Jackman described as "a predisposition for street demonstrations and in general non-traditional political activism". Since university-educated people now make up

---

25 Critic, 29 April 1969, p.3.
28 Critic, 7 April 1970, p.3.
29 Jackman, "The Auckland Opposition to New Zealand's Involvement in the
more of the political elite in New Zealand, student activism probably had a much greater effect on their political development than on earlier generations.

The Dunedin Press: Otago Daily Times

A major way of influencing public opinion is through the media. The United States government, for instance, targeted its propaganda during the war on the New Zealand press. The protest movement also sought to have their message publicised. The Otago Daily Times is used here as a case study of the relationship of the Dunedin popular press to the Vietnam issue and to the C.O.V.

The Otago Daily Times, like many daily newspapers, supported the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam, and accepted the government's arguments about the necessity for this action. This immediately placed the newspaper at odds with the C.O.V., whose primary objective was to reverse this decision. For most of the war the Otago Daily Times did not question the actions of the United States government in Vietnam. A feature of the Otago Daily Times was the stress that the editorials placed on the defence policy of New Zealand, and the support given to moves which would increase New Zealand's military capability.

The initial period of debate, which occurred prior to the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam, produced the most balanced approach to the war issue in the Otago Daily Times. An editorial in March 1965 supported the notion that the U.S.A. could not win a war in Vietnam against guerillas by using ships and aerial bombing. In April 1965 the newspaper attacked the regime in South Vietnam for being undemocratic. However the paper also noted that the "broader issue of fighting communism" justified western intervention. The argument that New Zealand was aiding a holding action against the spread of communism became a frequent theme in the Otago Daily Times editorials. A cartoon in 1965 ridiculed Sir Walter Nash for

30Johnstone, "Vietnam: The New Zealand Story".
32Otago Daily Times, 1 April 1965, p.4.
questioning New Zealand's right to use South Vietnam to fight communism, and depicted Sir Walter laying down his coat for communists to walk over.\textsuperscript{34} The newspaper also supported the government's contention that the action was a forward defence measure, and that it was required by a defence commitment to S.E.A.T.O.

The \textit{Otago Daily Times} labelled the leader of the Labour Party as naive for favouring civilian aid before military aid for Vietnam.\textsuperscript{35} The \textit{Otago Daily Times}, it appears, had a strong conviction that problems could be solved to New Zealand's satisfaction through the use of military force.

It was necessary for the C.O.V. to attempt to use the \textit{Otago Daily Times} to gain publicity, because while the protest movement had its own newspaper, \textit{Quote}, the \textit{Otago Daily Times} reached a much greater number of people not already exposed to the C.O.V.'s ideas. The problem for the C.O.V. was that its stance on the Vietnam issue placed it, for most of the war, against the \textit{Otago Daily Times}'s declared support for military involvement. This meant that the paper was unsympathetic to the C.O.V.'s cause.

One way in which the C.O.V. used the \textit{Otago Daily Times} was to advertise its position against the war. The C.O.V. had no problems in doing this, unlike groups in some other centres. The \textit{Dominion}, and the \textit{Christchurch Press} refused to print advertisements placed by the protest movement to coincide with the visit of President Johnson to New Zealand in 1966;\textsuperscript{36} and the \textit{Herald} refused to print advertisements publicising protest meetings.\textsuperscript{37}

The C.O.V. also wrote letters to the editor "to keep people aware of the issue".\textsuperscript{38} The "Letters to the Editor" section provided a forum for those who wished to criticise the government's actions and those who wished to support the government's actions and criticise the C.O.V. However, there were problems here for the C.O.V., as members discovered that the \textit{Otago Daily Times} would sometimes close off correspondence on the issue, or substantially edit their letters. Conflict reached its peak with the

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Otago Daily Times}, 15 July 1965, p.4.


\textsuperscript{36}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.44.


\textsuperscript{38}Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
Sir Walter—Really!


U.S. EMBASSY

OUT-OF-BOUNDS TO ALL RANKS
NO ADMITTANCE EXCEPT ON BUSINESS.
EVERYONE, REPEAT EVERYONE,
INCLUDING VIET CONG, MUST
SHOW THEIR PASS.

THIS IS A TOP SECURITY PLACE

'They tell me it's becoming known as the American Embarrassy!'

Cartoon, Otago Daily Times, 6 February 1968.
*Otago Daily Times* when Peter Sutton suggested that difficulties the C.O.V. had in getting their letters printed were "the result of either political bias or the share capital owned by a senior National Party Minister".\(^{39}\) The reply by the *Otago Daily Times* read: "To correspondent P.J. Sutton - Beneath contempt".\(^{40}\) Sutton achieved satisfaction after threatening a defamation action against the newspaper. The editor, according to Sutton, "agreed to accept and publish a letter of complaint from me with a footnote which amounted to a withdrawal and apology".\(^{41}\) Haas found in Wellington that: "Political conservatism and editorial identification with the National party also cautioned the media away from protest against a National party decision".\(^{42}\)

In Auckland a group from the Peace for Vietnam Committee held a demonstration in November 1965 at the offices of the *Herald*, protesting the "lack of anti-war letters published" by the paper.\(^{43}\) In Wellington a delegation made up of representatives from the Labour party, the F.O.L, and the Wellington C.O.V. visited the editor of the *Dominion* in an attempt to modify the behavior of that newspaper in ignoring the objections to the war in their coverage of events.\(^{44}\) The Dunedin C.O.V. never organised an official delegation to visit the editor of the *Otago Daily Times* to air their grievances about the way the paper treated the protest movement's letters. Even though the C.O.V. believed that it was discriminated against over their letters, many appeared over the period written by members of the Executive Committee of the C.O.V. and other anti-war correspondents.

The C.O.V. sought to become a spokes piece for all anti-war feeling in Dunedin by releasing statements designed to be printed in the local press. However the *Otago Daily Times* either did not accept the legitimacy of this or simply did not seek views which it did not agree with editorially. Often the *Otago Daily Times* simply ignored the C.O.V.'s press statements. However a sympathetic reporter at the paper helped C.O.V. members get some of their press statements printed by telling them which were the best times to attempt to get their statements printed.

---


\(^{40}\)Otago Daily Times, 4 October 1966, p.4.


\(^{44}\)Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.42.
This was dependent on which sub-editor was on duty. The central aim of the C.O.V. here was to keep the public aware of the Vietnam issue, as the following motion passed at one C.O.V. meeting reveals. "L. Jones's press statement on the My Lai massacre which was not used by the newspaper be sent as 'letter to the editor". Another way to attract media attention was by holding street marches through the city to the Octagon. Here again the C.O.V. found the *Otago Daily Times* seemingly opposed to their cause. Val Maxwell explained that despite the C.O.V. having several marshals who did a head count of the number attending marches, and then relayed the figure to reporters, "the press continually underwrote the number taking part in marches". This was believed to be a deliberate policy of the newspaper. Eric Herd stated: "I think it was one way of sort of trying to belittle the Vietnam movement". The style of reporting was also believed to be a subtle form of depreciating the efforts of the C.O.V., as this account of a C.O.V. protest, in the *Otago Daily Times*, illustrates. "A touch of irony came when people appeared to be more interested in another demonstration in a store a few yards from the Octagon, for food mixers".

Therefore, the C.O.V. found much editorial opposition to its political position, and had much difficulty in using the press as it had hoped to. Despite noting in 1965 that "the situation in Vietnam is the subject of political controversy in this country", the *Otago Daily Times* gave little coverage to the protest movement's side of the debate, although the C.O.V. did receive coverage of its meetings when its guests were prominent public figures. C.O.V. members felt that the newspaper was thoroughly biased against them in the coverage of the Vietnam War issue. John Childs wrote an article in *Critic* in 1971 stating: "What surprised and depressed me the most about the New Zealand press coverage has been the notable absence of any informed reporting comment or interpretation of the war".

48 Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
49 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
51 *Otago Daily Times*, 1 May 1965, p.4.
The *Otago Daily Times*'s support for the war also meant that it had a favourable interpretation of American action there. This did, however, change towards the end of the war. In 1972 a cartoon mocked the United States policy of Vietnamization as a "white elephant".53 Furthermore, an editorial attacked the U.S.A. decision to mine North Vietnamese ports and the way that the U.S.A. was capable of major policy reversals.54 The modification of the *Otago Daily Times*'s attitude to the war was illustrated most clearly in December 1972, when it declared that the New Zealand government should join others in the world "in telling Mr. Nixon to stop this senseless bombing offensive".55

Ultimately, for most of the war the protest movement in Dunedin had similar experiences in relation to the press as Haas found for the Wellington C.O.V.: "publication of more intricate arguments on Vietnam were more readily obtained in the radical and university magazines".56 *Critic* attacked the coverage that the mainstream press gave the issue, because of the bias apparent in the reporting.57 The *Quote* newspaper provided argument on the C.O.V. side, and the *Otago Daily Times* for the most gave the other side. *Critic*, while generally opposed to military intervention, did at least attempt to offer a forum for both sides in the debate by featuring articles for and against the war.

**Politicians and Political Parties**

The protest movement in New Zealand, and the C.O.V. in Dunedin targeted politicians and political parties in an endeavor both to gauge their attitudes towards the Vietnam War issue, and also to influence these attitudes. The C.O.V. wrote to politicians, and would visit local politicians and inform them of the C.O.V.'s opinion on the war.58 Letters were sent to Prime Minister Holyoake, stating the C.O.V.'s position, and the replies predictably rejected the C.O.V.'s interpretation of events, and explained the

52 *Critic*, 13 July 1971, p.4.
53 *Otago Daily Times*, 27 April 1972, p.4.
55 *Otago Daily Times*, 29 December 1972, p.4.
government's position on the issue. Yet, despite the National party holding office, much of the C.O.V.'s efforts were directed at getting the opposition Labour party to endorse the policy of removing New Zealand's military forces from Vietnam. The major motivation for this was not only that Labour had a chance of becoming the government, but also a calculation, which proved correct, that the Labour party was more likely to support the C.O.V.'s cause.

In December 1965 the C.O.V. asked two local Labour Members of Parliament, W. Frazer and Brian McDonald, what the Labour party policy on Vietnam was. Both M.P.s replied that this was up to the Labour Party Policy Committee, and neither expressed personal views on the issue.59 Thus the Labour party appeared somewhat unsure of its position on the issue. Erik Olssen, C.O.V. member, and member of the Castle Street branch of the Labour party stated that there was a feeling that Labour were worried that a political policy against military intervention may be an electoral liability.60 Haas found that the Labour party was careful to distance itself from the Committees on Vietnam: "One of the concerns Mr. Nordmeyer mentioned to the author was that it (Labour party) be made the target of the Red Smear".61

In 1966 the protest movement resorted to manipulation by threatening to run candidates against the Labour party in marginal electorates.62 This was not carried out. If this threat had been carried out, ironically it would have only served the interests of the National party, whose policy the C.O.V. was opposed to.

In 1967 the C.O.V. was able to get firm evidence of Labour's opposition to the National government's policy on Vietnam in a letter from Norman Kirk, the Labour leader. The letter stated: "We are totally opposed to the commitment of New Zealand’s army units which Mr. Holyoake's administration has made in Vietnam".63

As the 1969 election approached, the level of cooperation between the C.O.V. and the Labour party in Dunedin increased.

60 Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
Labour sent letters to the C.O.V. advertising its meetings, and asking for support because of the firm position that the party had taken on Vietnam.\textsuperscript{64} The Castle Street branch of the Labour party, formally invited C.O.V. members to "give practical support to the Labour party during the General Election Campaign".\textsuperscript{65} The C.O.V.'s attitude to the National party had hardened by 1969. Peter Sutton attacked National's Dunedin city candidates in a letter to the \textit{Otago Daily Times}, stating that he was appalled at their "ignorance and naivety"\textsuperscript{66} over the Vietnam issue. The C.O.V. also released a pamphlet entitled "OUT NATIONAL", which explained why people should not vote for the government. This pamphlet gives a strong insight into the C.O.V.'s general views of the government, for, of the six reasons listed, only three specifically referred to Vietnam. These three were:

1. National has dragged our country into a futile war in Vietnam.
2. National has surrendered New Zealand's independence to America over Vietnam.
3. National has used taxpayers money for party propaganda on the Vietnam issue.

The other three reasons did not directly relate to the government's Vietnam policy, and reflected other grievances held against the National government.

4. National restricted freedom of speech by suppressing policies critical of the National policy.
6. National (through its security service) spies on New Zealand citizens, in schools, universities, and unions.\textsuperscript{67}

The Vietnam issue steadily increased political polarisation in New Zealand, and the issue grew from being purely a foreign policy debate to the point where the protest movement was critical of the National party's whole style of government. The growing frustration of the protest movement at their inability to alter government policy, and attacks by National party politicians

\textsuperscript{64}Labour party to C.O.V., 28 August 1969, C.O.V./Hoc.
\textsuperscript{65}Minutes C.O.V. meeting, 31 July 1969, C.O.V./Hoc.
on the protest movement, no doubt contributed to this polarisation.

The National party won the election in 1969 despite the C.O.V.'s efforts. When Labour won the general election in 1972 Norman Kirk ordered the small remaining New Zealand military force there be removed. The C.O.V.'s central aim had finally been achieved. The C.O.V. wrote to Kirk:

It is simply wonderful to have a government taking actions of which one can feel proud, instead of being ashamed of our country's foreign policy, as we have been for so long, under the National party.68

C.O.V. contact with the Social Credit League was minimal. The League was questioned about their Vietnam policy by the C.O.V., prior to the 1969 election. Social Credit M.P. Mr. V.P. Cracknell stated that New Zealand's military forces should remain while attempts at a negotiated peace failed.69 Haas found that in Wellington Social Credit "never received official attention from the C.O.V. - it seemed too unimportant to warrant it".70 Thus the Social Credit League's relationship to the C.O.V. in Dunedin was similar to its relationship to the Wellington C.O.V.

The National party appeared sufficiently united on the issue of military involvement in Vietnam that the C.O.V. did not seriously expect it to alter its party's policy. The C.O.V.'s efforts at politically influencing the National party were unsuccessful. The Labour party generally had more sympathy for the C.O.V.'s position, however Labour's policy on Vietnam was unclear up to 1967. Norman Kirk's pledge to remove the New Zealand military force from Vietnam led to the C.O.V. aiding Labour in its election campaigns, and attempted to have the National party removed from power.

**Dunedin City Council**

The Dunedin City Council (D.C.C.) did have some measure of power over the protest activities of the C.O.V. in regard to the issuing of permits for street marches. The C.O.V.'s relationship

70Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.32.
with the Council was generally purely bureaucratic. The C.O.V. would ask for a permit, and the Council would grant one, noting the conditions that applied. The C.O.V. even asked the Mayor to chair at least one of its public meetings.\(^\text{71}\)

On one occasion, without explanation, the D.C.C. refused to issue the C.O.V. with a permit for the date that the C.O.V. specified. This action produced its own protest in the Octagon under the banner "City Image Before Citizen's Rights".\(^\text{72}\) This, however, was the only point of conflict between the two bodies during the life of the protest movement. Even after a march in July 1971 which produced confrontation between police and protesters the council still issued permits, despite the call from some Dunedinites that marches should be banned.

The C.O.V. was also refused a permit to hold an open air meeting in Mosgiel in 1969. The Mosgiel Borough Council stated that it was "concerned at the possible disturbances which could arise from such activities being conducted in a public place".\(^\text{73}\) This produced a letter from the C.O.V. criticising the decision, and a sandwich-board protest by the C.O.V. in Mosgiel itself.\(^\text{74}\) These impromptu protests illustrate that the C.O.V. believed that it had the right to protest where and when it wished, and that the C.O.V. defended this right when it felt that it was being challenged. While the C.O.V. was against the use of violent protest, it was willing to break the law through civil disobedience, such as holding unauthorised protests.\(^\text{75}\) As a protest group in a democracy, the ability to protest was vital to the C.O.V.'s functioning. With few resources available to it, relatively cheap activities which gained publicity, such as protest marches, were a necessary part of C.O.V. activities.

**Police and the Security Intelligence Service**

The protest movement in Dunedin only came into contact with the police during public marches and demonstrations. At an official level the C.O.V. liaised with the police to ensure the smooth running of its street marches. Since the C.O.V. was made up of

---

\(^{71}\text{C.O.V. to Dunedin City Council, 12 March 1968, C.O.V./Hoc.}\)

\(^{72}\text{Otago Daily Times, 9 August 1969, p.1.}\)

\(^{73}\text{Mosgiel Borough Council to C.O.V., 28 November 1969, C.O.V./Hoc.}\)

\(^{74}\text{Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.}\)

\(^{75}\text{Interview Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.}\)
many people with pacifist convictions, and because the C.O.V. sought to maintain an image of respectability, violent tactics were rejected. Thus the C.O.V. warranted little police interest. In contrast, the Auckland P.Y.M., a more radical group in the protest movement, had its headquarters raided by the police. Dunedin also lacked targets such as an American consulate or embassy or Parliament buildings, which attracted more radical forms of protest in Wellington and Auckland.

The law gave the police much discretion in dealing with protesters, and in 1967 the Police Minister "urged them to have more care in dealing with civil rights demonstrators". In Auckland, Jackman found, that the level of violence the police used against protesters shocked the protest movement, and "caused them to have much less faith in New Zealand as a free democratic society". In January 1970 the Dunedin C.O.V. joined groups from Auckland and elsewhere, in calling for a judicial inquiry into the conduct of the police after the police allegedly violently attacked people protesting the visit of U.S. Vice-President Spiro Agnew. The inquiry was refused by the Minister of Police.

The only alleged misuse of police power in Dunedin occurred at a National party meeting. Critic reported that the police punched anti-Vietnam protesters at the meeting, and that this excessive use of force had the effect of radicalising moderate demonstrators who were present.

The level of interest that the Security Intelligence Service (S.I.S) had in the C.O.V. is largely unknown. Linden Cowell stated that one man revealed to him that he was an S.I.S. agent, and that the man's story was plausible in the light of knowledge he had of Cowell's past political activities in America. Cowell was advised not to "blow" the man's cover by a person that belonged to the

---

81 Critic, 21 April 1970, p.4.
C.O.V. and the Communist party, because it was better to know who the agent was rather than have him replaced. Peter Sutton also told Linden Cowell that he believed his phone was tapped, and that a friend of Sutton's who worked in the Post Office confirmed this. Linden Cowell also recalled that overseas mail sent to him was opened. Another C.O.V. member stated, in regard to S.I.S. agents, that "we were aware that they were around, as a kind of joke". Any interest that the S.I.S. did have in the C.O.V. does not appear to have affected the functioning of the committee; but the interest of the S.I.S. indicated that the state did believe that the protest movement posed a possible threat to New Zealand security.

**Churches**

The contact between Dunedin church members and groups worked at many levels. Churches were a major target identified by the C.O.V. for potential support of the anti-war cause, and at the same time the C.O.V. donated money to the National Council of Churches for civilian aid for Vietnam.

Members of the Society of Friends, and the Christian Pacifist Society were attracted to the C.O.V. because of the anti-war theme that it espoused. Both groups lent their names to advertisements that the C.O.V. sponsored against the war, and the Society of Friends made their meeting house available for C.O.V. meetings. The C.O.V. provided a focus for members of the Society of Friends who wished to work to end military involvement in Vietnam, without offending those members of the Society who believed that "the church really shouldn't be involved in politics". The Society of Friends and the Christian Pacifist Society combined to organise a silent vigil for peace in Vietnam in 1966. This protest illustrated the changing role of these churches. The organisers stressed to participants the importance of secular matters to churches, or, as the organisers wrote, "deeds as well as creeds". The growth of church interest

84 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
85 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
86 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
in secular matters is also illustrated by the National Council of Churches move to form a Church Commission on International Affairs in 1964.\textsuperscript{89} Vietnam was the first subject that the Commission addressed.

The relationship between the C.O.V. and other church groups in Dunedin was not as close. The C.O.V. sent notices to churches advertising its meetings and offered speakers to address church groups. The reaction was not always positive. As Lawrence Jones recalled: "It was clear that there were lots of people in the church, lots of ministers, who did not agree, or did not want to be involved, or have anything to do with it".\textsuperscript{90}

Some church groups however did invite C.O.V. speakers to address church meetings, and requested information about the war. On one occasion the C.O.V. was asked by a group from First Church how to organise a "teach-in".\textsuperscript{91}

The C.O.V. organised a meeting in 1966 specifically for churches, "to enable the speakers to give their views as Christians on the conflict",\textsuperscript{92} and also "to have a cross section of opinion on the war - from support of New Zealand intervention to condemnation of the use of our troops".\textsuperscript{93} Lawrence Jones reported that it was difficult to find a church leader in Dunedin in favour of intervention, but that finally a Baptist minister Rev. L.J. Armstrong was found.

A feature of attitudes in churches to the Vietnam War was the difference between the clergy and their congregations. In 1965 the Anglican Synod voted on a motion calling for the government to withdraw troops from Vietnam. "A majority of the clergy supported the motion, while the laity voted heavily against it".\textsuperscript{94} In his contact with churches Lawrence Jones reported that: "I got the sense that in probably both the Presbyterians and the Anglicans, that the clergy was more for us than the congregation as a whole were".\textsuperscript{95}

Another feature of C.O.V.-church contact was that while meetings organised at non-church venues usually attracted a

\textsuperscript{89} Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.60.
\textsuperscript{90} Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{91} Senior Youth Fellows of First Church to C.O.V., 5 July 1966, C.O.V./Hoc.
\textsuperscript{92} Otago Daily Times, 23 April 1966, p.5.
\textsuperscript{93} C.O.V. to Sir John Walsh, 5 April 1966, C.O.V./Hoc.
\textsuperscript{94} Otago Daily Times, 14 October 1965, p.1.
\textsuperscript{95} Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
largely sympathetic audience, meetings held at individual churches produced more divided audiences and fiercer debate.96

Some people were driven by their religious beliefs to participate in the C.O.V., and for some their religious beliefs would have been secondary to other motivations. The C.O.V. served to illustrate the vastly different opinions on the Vietnam issue that were held in different churches. In some churches the clergy and laity were divided on the issue, which limited the participation of these churches as a group, in protests. However many individuals from Dunedin churches were active in the protest movement. The C.O.V. was chaired by a church leader, Rev. Brian Walker, from July 1970 to its close in 1973.

Trade Unions

The union movement in Dunedin was another major target for the Committee on Vietnam. There was some overlap in membership of unions and the C.O.V., but the C.O.V. was never able to obtain the level of union support that it desired or expected.

The C.O.V. sought union contact in order to gain a wider base of support. Unions often provided speakers for C.O.V. meetings and marches, and provided a platform for C.O.V. spokespeople. Haas suggested that the Wellington C.O.V. sought union allegiance because of the influence that unions had in the Labour party.97 The Dunedin C.O.V. also sought recruits and donations from unions, and union premises were used for C.O.V. meetings.98

The C.O.V. singled out industrial unions in its attempt to influence the union movement, while ignoring white collar unions. The C.O.V. may have identified the latter with support for the National government. Support from the industrial unions was, however, disappointing. Although union representatives frequently spoke at C.O.V. rallies, there were few unionists on the Executive Committee of the C.O.V., and few unionists turned out on C.O.V. marches. In 1967 the C.O.V. attempted to "improve communication" with the unions by accepting union nominees on to the Executive Committee.99 However this had no impact on the

96 Interview Lawreace Jones, 24 August 1989.
composition of that committee. Thus the C.O.V. leadership maintained its strong middle class intellectual base. One C.O.V. member suggested that the limited contact between the groups may have been caused by the suspicion industrial unionists had of middle class socialists in the C.O.V.\textsuperscript{100}

The C.O.V. also found that the rank and file members of these unions did not take to the streets in large numbers to participate in C.O.V. marches. Erik Olssen of the C.O.V. stated:

Looking back, we were thinking in terms of the old politics ...if you were thinking of protest or causes involving justice et cetera you just thought of the unions as being the sort of militant backbone of the Labour party.\textsuperscript{101}

Thus the C.O.V. remained: "Basically middle class, very few working class militants".\textsuperscript{102} After the F.O.L. organised a meeting in Dunedin in conjunction with the Labour party in 1965, there is no evidence of protest activities in Dunedin solely organised on the initiative of unions. Given that the main raison d'etre of unions is to protect their members' working rights and forward their demands, and that Vietnam appeared to represent little direct threat to union members, it is not surprising that other issues would have been greater priorities on union agendas.

**The Joint Coordinating Committee**

In 1967 the C.O.V. attempted to organise a Joint Coordinating Committee in Dunedin. It notified the Wellington C.O.V. that, "we want a way to draw the trade unions, peace groups, and a few church groups into activities and financial support without surrendering the individual character of the C.O.V."\textsuperscript{103}

The aims of this Joint Coordination Committee were to issue press statements, arrange prominent speakers, and publish literature on Vietnam.\textsuperscript{104} The committee was also designed to attract greater union support for the C.O.V., as a C.O.V. letter illustrates: "The unions are very wary about cooperating directly

\textsuperscript{100}Interview Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{101}Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{102}Interview Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.
\textsuperscript{104}C.O.V. to Various groups, 11 April 1967, C.O.V./Linden Cowell.
with the C.O.V. and might feel happier with an organisation which they will form the majority of.\textsuperscript{105}

Although the C.O.V. was just to be another group involved on this committee, the Joint Coordinating Committee did appear to be designed solely to serve the C.O.V.'s purposes; and while spreading the anti-war message it allowed for the spreading of the costs, and enhanced the C.O.V.'s image as a broad-based protest group. It has been shown that the C.O.V. fiercely maintained its independence from other Committees on Vietnam, and from a national body. Thus there was a strong likelihood that the C.O.V. would have wanted to maintain a high level of control over the activities of the Joint Coordinating Committee, which was at odds with its aim for broad-based support. However the Joint Coordinating Committee failed to survive past one meeting since it attracted few organisations not already heavily involved in the protest movement.

\textbf{Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament}

The Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (C.N.D.) was a group with concerns similar to the C.O.V., and many people belonged to both organisations. Haas stated that the creation of the C.O.V. in Wellington weakened the C.N.D there, as many of its members concentrated their energies on C.O.V. activities.\textsuperscript{106} The Dunedin C.N.D. was divided over the issue of Vietnam, which weakened its response to the issue. A person who belonged to both the C.N.D. and the C.O.V. wrote in 1965:

\begin{quote}
The local branch of C.N.D. has not itself taken an active part in this issue mainly because of the attitude of some of the members who consider we should not take action except where nuclear weapons are involved.\textsuperscript{107}
\end{quote}

For those involved in the C.N.D. because of their pacifist convictions, there would have been no question of support for the C.O.V. In 1966 the C.N.D. passed a motion 63 to 10 that the war in Vietnam be a major concern of C.N.D.\textsuperscript{108} This initial division in the

\textsuperscript{106}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.50.
\textsuperscript{107}C.O.V. to R.G. Phillips, 1 August 1965, C.O.V./Hoc.
C.N.D. meant that it was unable to take any major initiatives over the Vietnam War protests. Also since the Vietnam War issue was more immediate than the question of nuclear disarmament, the C.O.V. was able to attract many C.N.D. protesters to their cause.

Voice of Women

The Voice of Women (V.O.W.) was the only women's group with direct links to the C.O.V. The group had several people involved in the creation and the running of the C.O.V. The V.O.W. was also a pacifist organisation. While seeking to advance the political role of women through participation in the C.O.V., the V.O.W. did not seek more influential positions for women in the C.O.V. heirarchy. Islay Little, a member of both organisations suggested two possible reasons for this. As the V.O.W. was the major focus of political activity for the women involved they were not concerned about their positions in other groups; and secondly Islay Little stated: "Although it sort of appals me a bit now, I think most of that group still had the old theory that you should have a male at your head, because it gave a sort of respectability to it."109

Medical Aid

The issue of medical and civilian aid to Vietnam involved the C.O.V., and the wider community. The C.O.V. constantly sought to contribute as much of its funds as it could as donations to aid organisations working in Vietnam. Peter Sutton even enquired into the viability of sending blood donations from Dunedin to Vietnam, but the Director-General of Health stated that this was not possible.110 The Otago Daily Times stated that medical assistance was necessary to the region, but that: "The issues for and against New Zealand participation in the war with military forces are quite distinct".111 When the war in Vietnam ended, the C.O.V. was to turn its attention to raising money for aid to the war torn country. In 1973 the C.O.V. launched its largest appeal for

109 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
aid donations. By the end of January 1973, $1000 had been raised for medical aid for North Vietnam. The C.O.V. also sought to discover the policies of the new Labour government on aid to North Vietnam. Prime Minister Kirk replied: "North Vietnam will receive some of the $10 million in reconstruction for Indo-China when the ceasefire has been signed." The C.O.V. targeted the same groups for aid as it had done for political support, and added the medical profession, and "selected" professional people. When the C.O.V. disbanded, its remaining funds were transferred to the medical aid appeal.

Other Groups

The C.O.V. had minimal contact with other protest groups. Contact with overseas peace groups was mainly through the distribution of literature. While Islay Little was living in Europe in 1968, she represented the C.O.V. and the V.O.W. at an international conference on Vietnam, held in Stockholm. Little official contact was maintained between the C.O.V. and overseas groups.

Schools were another group that the C.O.V. came into contact with. The C.O.V. offered speakers and films to schools, and in return some schools identified the C.O.V. as a source of information on the war. The amount of C.O.V. contact with a school often depended on the political outlook of those running the school.

The artistic community in Dunedin was closely aligned to the anti-war cause. Islay Little recalled: "The generally arty group was extremely sympathetic." Plays were produced concerning the Vietnam issue, and artists sold their wares to raise money for the C.O.V. and aid. Art was also produced which had an anti-war theme. The most prominent figure in this scene was the poet James K. Baxter. Baxter spoke at many of the C.O.V.'s rallies and

117 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
118 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
meetings, and also wrote poetry critical of the New Zealand and American involvement in Vietnam. During the C.O.V.'s lifetime it also came into contact with the New Zealand Council for Civil Liberties, the Omega Committee, and the United Nations.

The C.O.V.'s activities in Dunedin made many people, groups, and institutions question their stance on the Vietnam issue. Some groups in the community, such as pacifist organisations were attracted to the C.O.V., while the local daily press identified the C.O.V. as its political opponent. A group's response to the issue was largely dependant on the level of consensus on the issue, and the level of relevance the issue appeared to have to their group. Despite much effort the C.O.V. was unable to gain strong support from rank and file union members, and church laity. There were many members of the Otago University staff on the C.O.V.'s executive, and large numbers of students supported the protest movement. It was the increased participation of students in the protest movement which made the mobilisation marches in the 1970s the largest the C.O.V. had ever held.
3 Conflict and Consequences

There were two main conflicts that threatened the protest movement in Dunedin. The first was attacks by people opposed to the C.O.V. One of the main tactics used to discredit the protest movement was the "red smear", which portrayed C.O.V. members as communists or communist sympathisers. The second threat was an internal conflict between the C.O.V. and more radical student protesters over the protest tactics to be used during the mobilisation marches of the early 1970s.

Anti-Protest Elements

Throughout the duration of the war there was an anti-protest element in Dunedin which targeted the C.O.V. and other protest groups for criticism. These anti-protest elements were not only critical of the protest movements' interpretation of events in Vietnam, but also critical of the methods of protest used by the C.O.V. and the integrity of those involved in the protest movement. Following complaints from the protest movement in the local press about a speech Prime Minister Holyoake gave in America, one correspondent wrote to the Otago Daily Times: "Those objecting to his remarks I would characterise as a noisy minority of sentimentalists."1 The "John Halifax" column in the Evening Star was particularly reactionary in its view of Vietnam protesters, as this extract illustrates.

Don't prattle to me about the sincerity of their deep concern for suffering humanity. That is nonsense. These giggling, raucous, long-haired, outlandishly attired, banner-flaunting exhibitionists were out to show that they have no respect for the society that gives them their freedom.2

At Otago University this feeling was reflected in pamphlets that were distributed which encouraged people to bash protesters.3 In Dunedin, there was no evidence of any organisation established specifically to counter the C.O.V.'s stance

1Otago Daily Times, 22 October 1968, p.4.
2Evening Star, 4 August 1971, p.3.
3Critic, 25 July 1972, p.3.
on Vietnam. In contrast, in Wellington, the Democratic Society (an essentially right-wing anti-communist group), was formed to counter the Wellington C.O.V.⁴

Closely linked to attacks on the protest movement was the "red smear" phenomenon, whereby groups and individuals opposed to the government's Vietnam policy were portrayed as being dominated and led by communists.⁵ The unpopularity of communists in New Zealand was thus used to discredit the protest movement. Opposition to the government on the one issue of Vietnam, was portrayed as opposition to the whole political system in New Zealand.⁶ As has already been shown however the C.O.V. was never led or influenced to any great extent by the communist elements contained within it.

The issue of smearing became a whole political debate in itself. The most prominent case in Dunedin was the attempted smear of Eric Herd by the government minister Jack Marshall. Marshall stated that the public might like to know that Herd had been the Chairman of the New Zealand-U.S.S.R. Society. Herd stated:

> The fact that he should have isolated my membership of the Russian Society, and the positioning of it between his remarks on communists, lead me to believe still that he was making the inference.⁷

The protest movement identified the government and the local daily press as the main culprits in the attempt to represent the C.O.V. and its supporters as communist. In 1965 Critic attacked the tactic of smearing, comparing it to American anti-communism.

> Overnight critics have become "communist infiltrated", "beardies and weirdies" and more recently "fleas on a dog". Responsible cabinet ministers have suddenly sounded like neo-McCarthy Goldwaterites.⁸

This letter printed in the Otago Daily Times in 1965 clearly illustrates the way in which some anti-protest elements linked the policies of Communist governments to the protest movement.

---

⁷Otago Daily Times, 23 June 1965, p.5.
⁸Critic, 9 September 1965, p.2.
There are obviously only a handful of them, but they make enough crackle and noise hoping to mislead the public into thinking that they have great strength. Much of what they write and say can be heard over Moscow and Peking Radio any day.9

The people involved in the C.O.V. were conscious of their opponents using smear tactics, as Eric Herd recalled: "The people in the Committee on Vietnam were branded as, if not traitors, at least blind to the dangers of communism".10 One C.O.V. member stated that "you became suspicious characters in your own community".11 Lawrence Jones recalled that an employee of his was dissuaded from participating in a protest by her husband, who told her that the Security Intelligence Service would be "taking everyone’s name down".12 The impact of smearing on the general public’s perception of the protest movement, however, is difficult to ascertain.

Mobilisations

The early years of the 1970s saw the protest movement in New Zealand hold huge street marches, called mobilisations, as the anti-war movement briefly captured the imagination of a large number of New Zealanders.13 In Dunedin the mobilisations organised by the C.O.V. marked a high point in the number of people participating in protest action. Yet while these mobilisations attracted more people, this meant that the C.O.V. was at risk of losing its control over what tactics would be used by the protest movement, and its dominant position as the leader of the protest movement in Dunedin.

Before analysing the mobilisations in Dunedin, a brief description of the way that the Auckland mobilisations were organised is necessary, to serve as a comparison. The problems of factionalism and internal conflict in the Auckland protest

---

10 Interview Eric Herd, 23 August 1989.
11 Interview Islay Little, 23 August 1989.
12 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
movement have already been noted. The mobilisations in Auckland, which were organised by the Socialist Action League (S.A.L.), were as much an attempt to collect all the anti-war elements together, as they were an attempt to bring in people not previously involved in the protest movement. This collecting together of different elements was another idea that was consciously borrowed from the American protest movement. The process involved a "non-exclusion" policy, whereby no group was prohibited from participating, and the S.A.L. mediated between groups to accommodate them all. The slogan "Out Now" was adopted, because it stated the general aim of the marchers without causing conflict between groups for being too anti-American or pro-communist. The Auckland Mobilisation Committee was formed by the S.A.L., originally to be a coalition of anti-war groups. However it became itself "a qualitatively new anti-war force". Jackman found that the protest movement in Auckland changed in the early 1970s: "As in the U.S. opposition to the war became centred on the universities and among young people with a new and dramatic militancy".

At Auckland University it was the students rather than the staff that were active in this new wave of anti-war sentiment. Although there was a down-playing of the ideological component in these protests, the S.A.L. were still inspired by communist beliefs, as this excerpt from one of their pamphlets illustrates.

Mass mobilisations also educate the participants about their own independent power, and set the precedent and normalise in people's minds the idea of mass dissent ... the mass action approach is also central to the socialist revolution.

Therefore, the mobilisations were a tactic to aid the achievement of a communist revolution, which ironically demanded playing down the belief in the righteousness of the inevitability of the Marxist prediction for history. The Auckland mobilisations attracted large numbers of people, and reached a peak in 30 April 1971, when between 10,000 and 15,000 people marched against the war. Jackman found three main causes for

---

14ibid, p.121.
15ibid, p.121.
16ibid, p.123.
18ibid, p.138,139.
the success of these mobilisations: The spread of anti-war sentiment stimulated by the invasion of Cambodia; the "development of young people as a force in politics"; and the skilled leadership of the S.A.L., which was inspired by a communist belief system. It should be noted that while the mobilisations in Auckland were successful in attracting people to march, they were criticised there because they failed to maintain a sustained effort to lobby, and because they did not attempt to educate people on the issue.

The Dunedin protest movement was markedly different from the one that operated in Auckland. The differences in internal conflict and ideological outlook between the two centres have already been illustrated. The Auckland Mobilisation Committee was the first group in Auckland to appeal for broad-based support. The Dunedin C.O.V. had been attempting to achieve this sort of protest movement from its inception, and while the C.O.V. did remain strongly based among academics at Otago University and the Dunedin Teachers College, it did accommodate a broad spectrum of political opinion.

In Dunedin the C.O.V. leadership lacked the Marxist view of historical processes that Jackman identified as a key element in giving Auckland mobilisation leaders "commitment and energy". The success of the mobilisations in Dunedin in bringing large numbers of people out to protest was not caused by the ideological beliefs of the C.O.V.'s leaders, nor was it due to any new protest strategy of the C.O.V. The two driving forces in Dunedin were ones that Jackman located in Auckland. There was a growth in anti-war sentiment in Dunedin, and there was increased participation by young people, in particular students.

The major reason for the growth of anti-war sentiment would appear to be the American escalation of the war into Cambodia, and the major American bombing campaigns in North Vietnam. These had the effect of increasing anti-American feeling in Dunedin, to a point that even the *Otago Daily Times* criticised American policies in Indo-China, after having been a staunch supporter of the U.S.A. The C.O.V. focused on criticism of the U.S.A. in its political activities. The C.O.V. sent a telegram to the American Ambassador to New Zealand:

---

19 ibid, p.130.
20 ibid, p.152.
21 ibid, p.148.
22 ibid, p.152.
The chasm between your actions and your claims has yet further destroyed our faith in the honour and integrity of your nation, in your capacity to achieve the ideals of the declaration of independence by wise and restrained leadership. We no longer believe your leaders. Only prompt and total withdrawal can restore America her once proud position.23

The growth of anti-American feeling at Otago University was reflected in Critic. The student newspaper, which was far more radical than either the Otago Daily Times or the C.O.V., began supporting the forces that were attempting to defeat the U.S.A. and South Vietnam. When North Vietnam invaded the South in 1972 a Critic article stated that: "the North Vietnamese tactic has been beautifully timed, catching the Americans and their puppets completely off balance".24

In addition Critic applauded the New Zealand University Student Association, in 1972, when it "came out strongly on the side of the N.F.L. in its drive towards total victory".25 However it must be noted that the O.U.S.A. abstained from voting on this motion.26 The apparent dishonesty of the American government, which was noted in the C.O.V. telegram above, was a constant theme in Critic's anti-American stance. Critic wrote: "Nixon's troop withdrawals were only a subterfuge for carrying on the war by other means".27

The developments in the war had a great effect on the students in Dunedin. This section of the community, which traditionally had been a strong element in the protest movement, were thus radicalized and politicised to a point where the student turnout at the mobilisations were "enormous".28 The activities of the C.O.V. and university based protest groups kept the university population well informed on the Vietnam issue. However since there was no change in the C.O.V.'s approach to protest, the increase in protesters seems largely due to causes other than anything that the C.O.V. itself did. The increase seems to be

24Critic, 11 April 1972, p.2.
25Critic, 30 May 1972, p.3.
26Critic, 30 May 1972, p.3.
27Critic, 11 April 1972, p.2.
largely attributable to developments in the war.

Even once New Zealand's military forces had been withdrawn from Vietnam, the C.O.V. continued to campaign against the American bombing of North Vietnam. The C.O.V. urged the F.O.L. to boycott U.S. trade, and asked Prime Minister Kirk to suspend diplomatic relations with the U.S.A. and expel U.S. military personnel from New Zealand.29

The protest movement nationwide organised two mobilisations in 1971. In Dunedin these mobilisations were organised by the C.O.V. The first mobilisation, held on 30 April, brought more protesters onto the streets than had been previously experienced in New Zealand. A C.O.V. newsletter reported:

The Dunedin Committee on Vietnam was encouraged beyond all expectation by the support given to the Dunedin march and rally last Friday night. The 1500 people who marched, swelling to 2000 for the Octagon rally, more than trebled the numbers for any previous such occasion in Dunedin.30

The focus on the central issue of New Zealand withdrawal, as illustrated by the "Out Now" slogan in Auckland, was also important in Dunedin. Val Maxwell recalled:

There were people that wanted to raise peripheral issues, and I remember going to a group and inviting them to take their banners somewhere else. They weren't going to march with us.31

The protest march was the lead story in the Otago Daily Times the following day. Throughout the whole country the protest movement attracted large numbers of people. Another mobilisation was planned for July. The Dunedin C.O.V., however, did not want to hold another mobilisation so soon after the April one. Val Maxwell stated:

We had had a very successful April one, and we felt that there was little point served, that we were beginning to talk only to the converted, and that we really didn't have the numbers on the Committee to put the effort in.32

29Otago Daily Times, 30 December 1972, p.5.
30C.O.V. newsletter, 3 May 1971, NMB, +D, Hocken Library.
Peaceful Protest in the Octagon 30 April Mobilisation,

Confrontation at the Town Hall, 30 July Mobilisation,
*Critic*, 31 August 1971.
John Childs explained to the National Liaison Committee in Wellington that the C.O.V. felt "there have been no significant developments in the war",\(^{33}\) and that the C.O.V. wished to concentrate on educating schools, churches and youth groups and unions to achieve a larger rally later. However, it became evident that the C.O.V. was the only protest group in the country that did not want another mobilisation in July. The Wellington C.O.V. pressured the Dunedin C.O.V. to participate, arguing that the other Committees on Vietnam wanted another mobilisation in 1971 to capitalise on the success of April, and that to accommodate the large support from high schools and universities the protests had to occur before the third term of the academic year.\(^{34}\) The Dunedin C.O.V. was also at odds with the Student Mobilisation Committee at Otago University. A student protest leader addressed a C.O.V. meeting, and explained that student protesters were in favour of having a mobilisation in July. At this meeting the C.O.V. unanimously passed a motion of support for the mobilisation on 30th July.\(^{35}\) Thus, as a result of pressure nationally and locally the C.O.V. moved into line with the rest of the protest movement.

The C.O.V., however, continued to come into conflict with student protesters. Student groups wanted Tim Shadbolt to speak at the Octagon rally, but the C.O.V. rejected him.\(^{36}\) Furthermore student activists wanted to have a greater protest than just the usual march from the Otago Museum to the Octagon, by holding a protest outside the National party conference being held in the Dunedin Town Hall. The C.O.V. also rejected this tactic. \textit{Critic} stated that these student requests were rejected because the C.O.V. was "concerned with maintaining an image of respectability, in order to maintain the public support it had managed to accrue over the last year", and that Tim Shadbolt "has been known to publicly utter the odd obscenity".\(^{37}\)

This more radical protest element, centred among student activists, was too powerful by 1971, for the C.O.V. to assert total control over it. A C.O.V. member explained:

\(^{33}\)C.O.V. to National Liaison Committee, 8 June 1971, C.O.V./Hoc.
\(^{35}\)Minutes C.O.V. meeting, 2 July 1971, C.O.V./Hoc.
before it (July mobilisation) there were certainly a number of meetings, and I was at a number of them, where the pros and cons of adopting a more violent strategy were being discussed.38

The C.O.V. remained against the use of violence. One fear the C.O.V. had was that any disturbance would take media attention away from the march.39 An arrangement was thus made whereby the mobilisation march and rally would officially end with the speeches in the Octagon. "If the crowd harassed the Nats well so be it. It had nothing to do with the committee".40

After the speeches in the Octagon on 30 July, about 500 people from the 1500 who were assembled moved to protest outside the Town Hall. There they sat down and chanted anti-war slogans as delegates to the National party conference entered the Town Hall. The event that captured the headlines the next day occurred when Prime Minister Holyoake arrived at the conference. According to the Otago Daily Times, the Prime Minister was "forced against the building by surging mass".41 The C.O.V.'s attempt to maintain a public image of respectability for the protest movement in Dunedin was seriously undermined at the Town Hall protest, where there were several arrests. The C.O.V. publicly disassociated itself from the events outside the Town Hall, stating that its protest had ended earlier at the Octagon.42 This did not stop many correspondents writing to the local press demanding that the C.O.V. be denied any further permits to march in the future.43

In a report sent to the Wellington C.O.V., John Childs noted that there were less people at the July mobilisation than there had been in April, and that as the C.O.V. had feared, the Town Hall protest attracted more publicity than the march had.44 Critic was critical of the mainstream presses' coverage of events, writing: "Most obvious was the lack of reaction of the news media

38Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
40Interview Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
to the fact that approximately 35,000 people marched in protest against the Indo-China war".45

Although it had encouraged the Town Hall protest, Critic was also critical of the actions of some of the protesters, stating,

"taunts at the farmers delegates arriving at the hall like "hows your turnips, eh?" will only make them think "what stupid bastards" ...some may try to draw a distinction between being anti-Vietnam and anti-National".46

The fact that the C.O.V. organised the July mobilisation, and that 1000 of the protesters did not protest outside the Town Hall indicates that in Dunedin the protest movement was not led or dominated by student and youth activists, as it was in Auckland. These activists, however, were numerous enough and radical enough to be able to assert their independence from the C.O.V., and follow a different line of protest.

There was one more mobilisation held on 14 July 1972. This protest followed the pattern of earlier marches, and was without incident. The C.O.V. numbered the protesters at 2000, while the Otago Daily Times stated that there was 1000.47 The mobilisations in general were seen as a huge success by the protest movement in Dunedin because of the large numbers of people that participated.

Broader Implications of the Vietnam Protest

The C.O.V. concentrated in its protests, on the central theme of removing New Zealand troops from Vietnam, and was thus able to maintain a large amount of cohesiveness compared to protest groups in some other centres. There were, however, other issues related to the Vietnam War which were raised during the period, some of which the C.O.V. was willing to involve itself in.

The direction of New Zealand's foreign policy was one of the major issues which attracted attention during this period, largely as a result of the questioning of the government's Vietnam policy by the protest movement. In particular, debate focused on New Zealand's relationships with Asia and the U.S.A.

45Critic, 31 August 1971, p.7.
For many in the C.O.V. New Zealand's policy of military involvement in Vietnam was an indication that New Zealand's foreign policy was subordinate to American foreign policy perspectives. Therefore, they believed that New Zealand must assert itself as a totally independent actor on the world stage by rejecting American policy in Vietnam, and maintaining a foreign policy direction independent of American influence. At a foreign policy school held in Dunedin in 1969, Ann Parsonson warned of the "danger of being dragged into American ventures ...merely to ensure continued American friendship, this is the mistake we have made in Vietnam".48

In 1967 a "teach-in" on foreign policy was held at Otago University "as part of the moratorium and protest against the war in Indo-China".49 Various speakers addressed the topic of New Zealand foreign policy, and some offered alternatives to the present policies. Erik Olssen of the C.O.V. proposed that non-alignment was the "only logical course for New Zealand".50

Linden Cowell of the C.O.V. stated that New Zealand's dispute over A.N.Z.U.S. in the 1980s was an indication of New Zealand asserting a more independent foreign policy. He also suggested that this resulted from some of those in the Labour cabinet of 1984, such as Dr. Michael Bassett, having been involved in the Vietnam protest movement.51

The New Zealand involvement in Vietnam produced a growth in interest in Asia and New Zealand's relationship to it. Critic had reported in the late 1950s that New Zealand should shed its image as "a group of islands off the coast of Great Britain".52 In the late 1950s and early 1960s Critic reflected awareness among Otago University students, both of the geographic proximity of Asia to New Zealand, and of the cultures of Asian nations through the arrival of Asian students in Dunedin. During the Vietnam War Critic featured articles questioning the role that New Zealand should play in Asia. One of the major concerns voiced was the damage being done to relations with Asia through New Zealand military involvement in Vietnam. A Critic writer stated in 1969: "It seems to me that the involvement in Vietnam is only resulting in irreparable harm to our influence in the region".53

49Critic, 6 August 1969, p.6.
50Critic, 6 August 1969, p.7.
52Critic, 18 July 1957, p.3.
In 1970 an *Otago Daily Times* editorial noted that "New Zealand's part in Asian development has grown tremendously in the past decade." The majority of the *Otago Daily Times*’s editorial comments on Asia were made in reference to New Zealand’s security, and in particular New Zealand’s defence commitment to Malaysia, and the lowering of the British military commitment to Asia.

The C.O.V. itself believed that public education about the complexities of the problems facing Asia would ensure that "we don't get embroiled in any more Vietnams". Haas found that the Department of External Affairs believed that the activities of the Committees on Vietnam were "the first major expression on a foreign policy matter of this nature to have been voiced in New Zealand". Certainly it was the largest group formed to protest against a government foreign policy decision to that time.

The war in Vietnam also produced debate about the role of military training and conscription in New Zealand. The V.Y.A.C. organised a seminar entitled "Conscience and Conscription" as part of its anti-war activities. An article in *Critic* in 1967 declared that registering as a conscientious objector: "is a powerful method of protest, far more effective in large numbers than any street march". Since many of its readers were eligible for military service, and potential conscripts, *Critic* ran many articles about these issues. The main focus of these articles was the procedure for registering as a conscientious objector, and the problems that potential conscientious objectors would face.

**Results**

In assessing the C.O.V. and the protest movement as a whole in Dunedin, the question arises as to how successful the protest was. "Success", however, poses many problems. To begin with the term is a subjective judgement, especially given that there is little to

---

55 C.O.V. to Dargaville Committee on Indo-China, C.O.V./Hoc
57 *Critic*, 14 March 1968, p.5.
58 *Critic*, 7 June 1967, p.5.
measure the protest movement against, apart from itself, by examining the protest in other centres. Furthermore the notion of "success" involves causality, and here the causes of certain occurrences remain, to some extent open to speculation. For example while the C.O.V. held large mobilisation marches in the early 1970s, some C.O.V. members attributed the increase in the number of protesters to the development of the American protest movement, while others believed the increase was due to developments in the war.\textsuperscript{60} Despite the pitfalls of this type of analysis, the comments of those involved remain particularly important as a subjective view of political impact that the C.O.V. had on the political and social system.

In regard to the fundamental issue of achieving the withdrawal of New Zealand military personnel from Vietnam, the C.O.V. was unsuccessful. The C.O.V. and the protest movement nationally "were largely unable to influence foreign policy decisions".\textsuperscript{61}

McCraw described New Zealand as a "reluctant ally" in the Vietnam War,\textsuperscript{62} and there is a strong possibility that the actions of protesters limited New Zealand's military commitment to the Vietnam War, against pressure from the Australian and American governments. One C.O.V. member stated: "I do believe at one stage that Holyoake was quite grateful to us, that the protest movement actually prevented a greater involvement for New Zealand in the war".\textsuperscript{63}

The impact of the protest movement on government decision-makers would be a question for further study. As Jackman stated: "The question of the influence of the mobilisations on the government remains open".\textsuperscript{64}

The C.O.V. itself remained reliant on a few activists to maintain its functioning, which indicates that committed activists were few in numbers in Dunedin. The C.O.V. was successful in maintaining a sense of unity absent from the protest movement in the other three main centres. While it attempted to attract a broad base of

\textsuperscript{60}Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.; Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.

\textsuperscript{61}Haas, "A Study in Protest", p.5.


\textsuperscript{63}Interview Linden Cowell, 25 August 1989.

support, the core of the C.O.V.'s activists on the Executive Committee, remained university-based. A large number of students may have been persuaded to support the protest movement by this core of activists on campus. The C.O.V. was successful in giving the issue of Vietnam a prominence that it would not have had if the C.O.V. had not existed in Dunedin. Although the C.O.V. had a somewhat problematic relationship with the Otago Daily Times, stories about its activities were still printed, as were its advertisements and letters. Lawrence Jones stated that this enabled the C.O.V. to "kept the issue before peoples eyes a bit more, and it gave a kind of focus people could come to if they were unhappy at what was happening".65

By providing an alternative policy, the protest movement compelled the government to defend its decision to send troops to Vietnam, and also inspired the largest debate about New Zealand foreign policy to that time.66 This presentation of alternatives was noted in Critic in 1972.

Remember that the views of students have made a certain controversial impact on society and even if the bulk of the community do not agree, student opinions have presented an alternative to the prevailing political and social values which should help enrich a democracy.67

The presentation of alternatives must ultimately contribute to changes in society, even if these alternatives are not adopted wholesale. The growth of the protest movement was an illustration of social change in New Zealand.

The involvement of people in the protest movement affected the way in which they related to the political system and viewed themselves in it. One C.O.V. member stated that: "Many people who were quite naive about the political system and about power structures became educated in a very big way".68 There was, no doubt, a growth in the belief that protest was a legitimate and viable form of political activity, which did impact to some extent, on the decision-makers of the day. For example Critic stated: "If increased numbers of New Zealanders march in the streets and publicly protest at our Government's involvement, we can force the government to withdraw its troops".69

65 Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
The mobilisations of the 1970s were successful nationally in bringing out more people to protest against New Zealand's military involvement in Vietnam than had previously been the case. While the mobilisations may not have had any immediate effect on government policy, the partial withdrawal of troops, and the total withdrawal under the Labour government, may have been perceived by many in the protest movement as an indication of the success of their protests. This produced a climate in which other protest movements could develop.

The theme of protest produced experimentation in protest tactics. In Dunedin the Religious Society of Friends held a seminar on non-violent action before the mobilisations of 1971, while in Auckland the P.Y.M. explored more aggressive forms of protest action.

Many of those involved in the C.O.V. learnt the technique of protest, either from those involved on previous protest action, or through experimentation in the C.O.V. Communication was enhanced between groups in Dunedin, such as church members and union militants, and between people and groups in different parts of the country. This helped to foster the growth of further protest activities. When other protest issues arose many of these lines of communication were reactivated, thus providing an experienced base of potential activists. People involved in the C.O.V. were later involved in protest activities against the Omega base, South African rugby tours, and, most recently, in the anti-frigate lobby.

---

69Critic, 20 April 1971, p.11.
70C.O.V. newsletter, 1971, NMB, +D, Hocken Library.
72Interview Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.
Conclusion

The Dunedin Committee on Vietnam was one group that formed part of the protest movement in New Zealand against the Vietnam War. Comparison of the protest movement in Dunedin with those in Wellington and Auckland showed that there were different processes involved in the formation and running of Vietnam protest organisations. It was also evident that there were many different ideas as to the most effective way to protest against the government's decision to send troops to Vietnam. For example some groups preferred violent action while others favoured purely peaceful protest. Although C.O.V. executive members were totally opposed to the use of violence, the C.O.V. was willing to break the law by holding illegal demonstrations when it believed that its right to protest was threatened. It did not, however, attract the attention of the police in the way that more radical groups, such as the P.Y.M and the "Action Faction", did in other centres.

The Vietnam protest movement had a profound effect on the political development, both of individual people, and New Zealand society as a whole. It gave people experience in the ways in which to protest and effect change in society. When other issues arose many of the people involved in the C.O.V. brought their experience to help organise protest action. While the Vietnam protesters were often portrayed as radicals by their contemporaries, the protest movement helped develop a belief among the New Zealand population that street protests and outdoor rallies were useful and legitimate forms of political protest. In the 1980s street marches have been used by both conservative and liberal groups to publicise their cause and to influence New Zealand decision-makers.

From its inception to its end, the C.O.V. was a group dominated by middle class and academic activists. The number of C.O.V. executive members employed in the field of education meant that the C.O.V. stressed educating people as a way of gaining their support. Despite attempts by the C.O.V. to attract a wider base of support, it failed to attract large support from industrial trade unions in Dunedin. Support from churches was also limited to support from pacifist churches, and from individual church members. The bulk of the C.O.V.'s supporters on street marches were tertiary students. The increased politicisation of students in Dunedin ensured that the mobilisations of the 1970s were the
largest protests that the C.O.V. held in the city. The growth of student activism in Dunedin and New Zealand was part of a trend evident in many Western countries. These protests helped change the way that New Zealand's educated elite viewed the political system and their relationship to it.

The unity that the C.O.V. maintained throughout the Vietnam War was no small achievement when compared to the divisions which arose within other protest groups in New Zealand. The stress on common goals, and the down-playing of ideological differences were essential for the C.O.V. to be able to remain unified. The Student Action League successfully built a broad-based protest group for the Auckland mobilisations by using this more pragmatic approach to protest, and the success of this pragmatic to protest approach remains a lesson for organisers of protests in New Zealand today. This unity allowed the C.O.V. to direct all its energy towards achieving the goal of ending New Zealand's military presence in Vietnam.

The Vietnam War had a marked effect on New Zealand foreign policy. As one scholar noted: "In retrospect, the Vietnam War was probably the critical catalyst in leading New Zealanders away from the role of faithful and unthinking ally". This shift was due, to a large extent, to the protest movement questioning the government's decision to become involved in a war that appeared to be important to America, but to have little relevance to New Zealand's foreign policy objectives. The feeling of anti-Americanism, which was present in the Dunedin protest movement from its inception, and grew stronger in the 1970s, was important in changing New Zealanders' opinions about the United States.

Once the New Zealand troops had been withdrawn from Vietnam the main aim of the C.O.V. had been fulfilled. The Committee ran an aid appeal after the troops had returned, which raised much money for civilian aid to Vietnam. By then the impetus had gone out of its campaign. As Linden Cowell put it: "The Committee was winding down, we'd lost our motivation, particularly when they started pulling out the New Zealand troops. It ended with a whimper rather than a bang". On 11 December 1973 the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam voted to adjourn itself indefinitely. The balance of its funds were given

1 Ramesh Thakur, *In Defence of New Zealand*, p.103.
to the medical aid appeal, and its records were deposited at the Hocken Library.

While the C.O.V. was largely unsuccessful in convincing the government that New Zealand military forces should be removed from Vietnam, the protest movement and the experience of the Vietnam War did have a lasting impact on New Zealand society. As a writer in *Critic* observed presciently in 1965: "Our model society has cracked at the seams and the rift is going to remain long after New Zealand troops arrive in a small Asian country which few people could have named only two or three years ago". The work of the Dunedin Committee on Vietnam and the protest movement in general helped to stimulate political change in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and permanently altered New Zealand society.

---

4 *Critic*, 10 June 1965, p.2.
Appendix

WAR
WITHOUT HONOUR

In this war without honour a boy and his grandfather, blindfolded and with hands bound, become 'enemy suspects'.

Dunedin Committee on Vietnam handout 30 April 1971
Mobilisation

68
NATIONAL MOBILIZATION against the Vietnam war

Nationwide protests, rallies, marches and meetings will be held on 30 April.

The Dunedin Committee on Vietnam, in support of the national movement, will hold a march and public meeting on this day.

Assemble: Museum Reserve, 6.15 p.m. Friday, 30 April.

March: From Museum Reserve to Octagon.

Meeting: Octagon, 7 p.m.

SPEAKERS

Bishop W.W. Robinson.

Mr. Noel Hilliard.
(Burns Fellow, University of Otago)

Mr. Roger Smitheram,
(Trade Union Secretary)

DUNEDIN COMMITTEE ON VIETNAM
P.O.Box 1222 Dunedin. Phones. 65-103 36-238

THIS WAR HAS GONE ON FAR TOO LONG
YOUR PROTEST WILL HELP TO END IT

Join the March and Meeting.

In this war without honour a boy and his grandfather, blindfolded and with hands bound, become 'enemy suspects'.
WHY WE MUST STILL OPPOSE THE WAR

Our government has withdrawn some of our troops from South Vietnam and hints that it might withdraw more. With economic pressures on the government increasing, it is possible that New Zealand's token force in Vietnam may become a tiny token indeed, perhaps only a 25-man training group. Thus a Mobilisation against the war may seem unnecessary. However, there are at least four good reasons why we should increase the pressure on the government for an immediate unilateral withdrawal:

1. Human Suffering.
   A New Zealand military presence, however small, is still contributing to the continuation of one of the cruellest wars in history, a war for which My Lai has become a symbol, a war which still continues at the cost of terrible human suffering in Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam.

2. Corrupt Saigon Government.
   A New Zealand military presence symbolises support for the corrupt Thieu-Ky government in Saigon, a government which has jailed thousands of political prisoners, a government which lacks the support of most of the people it rules, and which uses foreign support to stay in power and block any possible peace settlement.

3. New Zealand – An American Satellite?
   A New Zealand military presence indicates to the United States that we support its policy of opposing any social changes in Southern Asia that might lessen American influence there. Our troops symbolize that we are ‘on call’ for the next American intervention on the side of the status quo – in Thailand, the Philippines, or Taiwan, or wherever American interests are threatened.

Racism and World Poverty.
A New Zealand military presence in Vietnam thus symbolizes to the poor and nonwhite of the world that we are aligned on the side of the rich and the white against them.

The antiwar movement in the United States, Australia, and New Zealand has accomplished much. The cessation of regular bombing in North Vietnam, the fall of the Johnson government, the Nixon troop withdrawals – these have all been in response to the antiwar movement. Without the movement, the war would now be much worse and New Zealand would probably be much more heavily involved in it. But we cannot stop at partial success. As long as the war continues and the New Zealand government supports it, we must continue our work.

THE APRIL 30TH MOBILISATION IS OUR CHANCE TO TELL OUR GOVERNMENT AGAIN –

PARTIAL WITHDRAWAL IS NOT ENOUGH!

WITHDRAW ALL NEW ZEALAND TROOPS FROM INDOCHINA NOW!
NEW ZEALAND'S INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

NEW ZEALAND'S INVOLVEMENT IN VIETNAM

A mother tries to comfort her body after the Ngaocs have ordered them out of a village.

PUBLIC MEETING

SUNDAY NEXT MAY 23

BURNS HALL 2.30 P.M.

"I am sure that the great American people, if they only knew the true facts and the background to the developments in South Vietnam, will agree with me that further bloodshed is unnecessary. As you know in times of war the first casualty is truth." ... U THANT.

WHAT IS THE TRUTH?

Issued by the Committee on Vietnam
Bibliography

Primary Sources

(A) Unpublished Primary Sources

Dunedin Committee on Vietnam archives, Hocken Library.

Dunedin Committee on Vietnam archives, Linden Cowell's private papers.

Dunedin Committee on Vietnam material, Hocken Library.

(B) Published Primary Sources


(C) Interviews


Lawrence Jones, 24 August 1989.

Islay Little, 23 August 1989.


Erik Olssen, 3 August 1989.
Secondary Sources

(A) Published


(B) Unpublished

