



Students and Commuters Discuss the War

... On The Peace Ferry

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For 20 hrs. on Dec. 24 about 40,000 commuters and Christmas shoppers who traveled on the Staten Island ferries were exposed to members of the vocal minority who actively protest the war. They were handed a brochure with a blue cover entitled "Vietnam, Why We Protest," at the terminals which contained a very strong argument for an immediate withdrawal of American forces from Vietnam. Many became engaged in discussions with the peace people which usually centered around the implications of the concept of immediate withdrawal.

Discussion was impossible during the 6-9 a.m. rush hour in which a seemingly never ending mob of 25,000 commuters made the distribution of the pamphlets a herculean task. The reception of the Staten Islanders was expectedly unfriendly towards what we were doing. Some displayed their animosity by hearing the usual you Fucking hippie communist etc. remarks. Others ripped up or through the pamphlets in our face. The majority, however, received it with some degree of interest and proceeded to read it on the ferry. Not a single individual was hurt or arrested but many heated incidents occurred. The most dramatic involved a drunk on the Manhattan side at about 2:00 p.m. who felt his masculinity in danger when handed an anti-war pamphlet from a long haired student.

Frustrated in his attempt to hit the student his raging cries reached into the bar located on that side of terminal. Two more pseudo-patriots attacked the peace people and some scuffling ensued. The police saved the day by protecting the drunks and ordering the anti-

war people to leave the terminal immediately. Their organizer, myself, complied with this order, despite the justified feelings of many in the group who wanted to stay and call the bluff of the 20 policemen. If there had been time to discuss the situation among ourselves and if a sizable number of our group wished to take the risk I would have agreed to support those who wanted to stay. I feel the decision to go was the only one possible though under the circumstances.

We went to the less uptight S.I. side (we returned, later to Manhattan) and continued uninterrupted on both sides till the 20 hrs. was completed

It was the first time an event of this scope had been attempted by the Staten Island Peace Coalition. That it came about at all is a tribute to the thousands of Staten Islanders who have begun to carefully examine the actions of their government and have concluded that we are not fighting to preserve democracy in Vietnam but are engaging in imperialism, a practice history has proved to be the most destructive in which a nation can participate.