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"There is no place in our institutions for radicals"

The Vietnam War on South Dakota Campuses, 1965–1973

In the spring of 1967, a small group of University of South Dakota (USD) students angry about America's role in the Vietnam War organized a chapter of the radical Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) on the Vermillion campus. On 17 April, they set up a table in the student union where they handed out antiwar literature and collected signatures on a petition demanding an end to the conflict. The effort immediately met a barrage of criticism from students and administrators who supported the war. Members of the USD Veterans Club quickly set up their own table and within twenty minutes collected more than 540 signatures on a petition supporting the United States cause in Vietnam. As the Vets Club was gathering signatures, a Vietnam veteran and other students began shouting at the protesters. Some threw eggs and shredded SDS literature; one even struck an SDS member. As the violence erupted, campus police rushed to the scene and escorted the war protestors out of the union.[1] The Veterans Club issued a statement condemning the group, saying, "Today, when the newspapers contain accounts of mass anti-war demonstrations . . . [our] petition may serve well as a vote of confidence for our men in uniform. We know they will appreciate a positive response toward their situation."[2]

The torrent of criticism directed at the antiwar protestors continued over the next several weeks. In a letter to the editor of the school newspaper, one student wrote that the next time SDS members want-

1. Gary L. Olson, e-mail to author, 5 Apr. 2013; Edward Q. Moulton to Governor Nils Boe, 3 May 1967, File: Governor Boe, Box 5, Presidents Series, Edward Q. Moulton, USD Archives, Archives and Special Collections, University Libraries, University of South Dakota, Vermillion (hereafter cited as USD Archives); *Volante* (USD), 25 Apr., 2, 23 May 1967.

2. *Volante*, 25 Apr. 1967.

ed to stage a protest, they should think of the soldiers who were willing to die for their right to dissent. Another called members of the organization traitors and charged them with using free speech to "subvert the government of the United States and to advocate violence."[3] By the end of the 1966–1967 school year, the SDS and other antiwar proponents felt themselves under siege. "It isn't fun to come out and disagree with the majority," one protester explained. "I was told that I was 'All through,' in the town I live in because I didn't support the escalation of the war, and that I was now labeled as un-American."[4]

As this incident demonstrates, the Vietnam War was a point of contention on South Dakota campuses. Between 1965 and 1973, opponents of United States involvement in Vietnam organized "teach-ins," petition drives, and demonstrations that peaked in 1969–1970 with several antiwar actions that succeeded in capturing the attention of the entire state. In pushing for an end to the war, however, these campus protestors met significant opposition from students and administrators who supported the American cause in Southeast Asia. Their aggressive campaign to isolate the protestors and delegitimize dissent combined with the national policy of winding down the war to bring the antiwar effort in the state to an end.

America's involvement in Vietnam was rooted in the fight against communism. It expanded from an advisory role begun in the 1950s to aid South Vietnam in defending itself against communist North Vietnam to a full-fledged combat role beginning in 1965.[5] During the early years of the war, student opposition in South Dakota was highly unusual, given the traditional conservatism of most of the state's colleges. At the dawn of the Cold War in the early 1950s, most South Dakotans

3. Ibid.

4. Ibid., 23 May 1967.

5. Melvin Small, *At the Water's Edge: American Politics and the Vietnam War* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2005), pp. 5, 7–8, 10, 13–14. Between 1961 and 1963, the number of American advisors in South Vietnam increased from eight hundred to more than sixteen thousand. Following a North Vietnamese attack on an American surveillance vessel in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1964 and attacks on American air bases in South Vietnam, President Lyndon B. Johnson authorized the bombing of staging areas in North Vietnam. Regular United States combat units began to arrive the following year. Ibid., pp. 28, 43–44, 51.

saw the state's colleges and universities as bulwarks against communism, a "subtle and dangerous foe" that threatened civilization, as one USD student explained.[6] Another made the stakes clear when the Korean War broke out in 1950: "We know that the Communists under the guidance of the Kremlin will never be satisfied until they can reach their ultimate goal of world domination," he warned. "There is only one way to stop the threat of a third world war and that is to stand up to Communists and show them this nation means business."[7] Over the next few weeks, a host of South Dakota students showed that the nation did indeed mean business by enlisting in the military to help stop the spread of communism in Korea. Students who remained in college in the 1950s wrote editorials condemning communism, gladly signed oaths pledging their loyalty to America, and attended assemblies where they listened to warnings about the communist threat.[8]

The 1960s and 1970s brought a new era of student engagement to America's campuses. As the post-World War II "baby boom" generation came of age, the nation's college population swelled. In 1960, there were just 16.5 million eighteen-to-twenty-four-year-olds in the United States; by 1970, the college-age population had jumped to 24.7 million, and about one-third of these young people were attending institutions of higher learning. South Dakota's student population also boomed during the 1960s and 1970s. Enrollment at USD increased from 4,731 in 1960 to 5,318 in 1970, the student population at South Dakota State University (SDSU) in Brookings went from 5,098 to 6,256 over the same period, and enrollment at Northern State College (NSC) in Aberdeen grew from 1,600 students in 1960 to 3,410 in 1970.[9] Not only were more young people attending college than in the past, but many administrators observed that these students were different than those of previous generations. "Indeed the 'new breed' works and plays in

6. *Volante*, 29 Nov. 1951.

7. *South Dakota Collegian* (South Dakota State College), 6 Dec. 1950.

8. Ibid., 13 Dec. 1950; *Volante*, 9 Jan. 1951, 4 Nov. 1952, 2 Oct. 1956, 22 Mar. 1960.

9. James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945–1974* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 621; South Dakota, Board of Regents, *Thirty-sixth Biennial Report of the Regents of Education of the State of South Dakota* (1960), pp. 33, 76, 159, and *South Dakota Public Higher Education Facts, Fiscal Years 1986* (1986), p. 34.

the realities of the modern world," observed one college administrator in 1966. "The new student is concerned on a higher level."[10]

Across the country, this new breed of youth quickly become involved in politics, helping to lead the civil rights movement, advocating for student rights on campuses, and questioning America's approach to the Cold War. South Dakota's students became swept up in this era of protest, as well. In the early 1960s, they staged a handful of small demonstrations supporting the civil rights movement, and students at SDSU and USD demanded an end to mandatory Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC) training on their campuses.[11] As hints of protest emerged in the state, administrators worked to protect students from what they considered the corrupting influence of "radical" or "un-American" ideas. Throughout the decade, professors were fired for criticizing the country or espousing unpopular political beliefs. In 1967, the American Association of University Professors censured NSC for the firing of political science teacher Frank Kosik, who reportedly told a class that "there is nothing good in America" and made other unpatriotic comments.[12] The following year, SDSU did not renew the contract of philosophy professor Donald St. Clair for "presenting a dismal view of life" in the United States in an off-campus speech to students.[13]

As students were becoming politically active in the 1960s, President Lyndon B. Johnson began transforming the Vietnam conflict into an American war, and by the end of his presidency in 1969 there were more than five hundred thousand Americans fighting communist forces in Southeast Asia. When Johnson committed American combat troops to Vietnam in 1965, the antiwar movement emerged on the nation's campuses. In March, a series of antiwar seminars known as "teach-ins" were

10. *Volante*, 25 Oct. 1966.

11. Patterson, *Grand Expectations,* pp. 621–26; *Volante*, 22 Oct. 1963, 23 Mar. 1965; *South Dakota Collegian*, 1 Apr. 1965.

12. Mark C. Bartusis, ed., *Northern State University: The First Century, 1901–2000* (Aberdeen, S.Dak.: Northern State University Press, 2001), pp. 221. *See also* Frank Paul Kosik to Governor Nils A. Boe, 18 Oct. 1966, File: Board of Regents, Box 8, Nils Boe Papers, State Archives Collection, South Dakota State Historical Society, Pierre.

13. *South Dakota Collegian* (SDSU), 7 Feb. 1968.

held at the University of Michigan, and the following the month the SDS organized an antiwar demonstration in Washington, D.C., that drew more than twenty-five thousand people. Over the next two years, antiwar protests took place on campuses around the country, with demonstrations at institutions such as Harvard University, the University of California at Berkeley, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison generating most of the attention.[14]

Even as the antiwar movement began to gain momentum, most South Dakota students supported the war. A 1966 poll conducted by the SDSU chapter of Young Americans for Freedom, a conservative group, found that 72 percent of the 150 students surveyed supported President Johnson's Vietnam policy. The following year, a poll of 200 students conducted by the *Exponent*, the student newspaper at NSC, revealed that 69 percent of the students who responded identified themselves as "hawks," or supporters of the Vietnam War.[15] During the 1965–1966 school year, twenty Vietnam-related editorials and letters to the editor appeared in the student newspapers at USD, SDSU, and Augustana College in Sioux Falls. Of these, only five questioned United States involvement, and just two of those pieces were written by students. The others strongly supported United States policy. "The most important reason we are there [in Vietnam] is to contain the advance of Communist China," one student asserted. "Red China's expansionist policy has only one goal: world domination. Southeast Asia is only the first step. It is better to stop freedom's greatest threat in already war-torn Viet Nam than on the shores of Hawaii," he concluded.[16] These students were also concerned about American credibility should the United States withdraw from the region. "If Viet Nam is lost to the Communists, people will lose faith in us and turn toward them," another student argued.[17]

Supporters also vehemently condemned the antiwar protesters and draft resisters who began emerging in the mid-1960s. The SDSU

14. Small, *At the Water's Edge*, p. 58; Kenneth J. Heineman, *Put Your Bodies upon the Wheels: Student Revolt in the 1960s* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2001), pp. 110, 113–14, 118–19.

15. *South Dakota Collegian*, 28 Apr. 1966; *Exponent* (NSC), 21 Sept. 1967.

16. *South Dakota Collegian*, 13 May 1965.

17. *Mirror* (Augustana College), 17 Nov. 1966.

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Members of campus veterans clubs, like the one pictured here at Northern State College in 1972, were vocal supporters of United States policy for the duration of the Vietnam War.

Young Americans for Freedom poll showed that 93 percent of students surveyed opposed draft-card burning.[18] One student called protesters "nauseating,"[19] while another referred to them as "hoodlums," "punks," and "so-called Americans."[20] Yet another war supporter argued, "Ironically, the draft card burners are helping prolong the war they are pro-

18. *South Dakota Collegian*, 28 Apr. 1966. The selective service system, or "draft," called up an average of three hundred thousand men over the age of eighteen each year from 1965 through 1968. Those in college or graduate school received automatic deferments, which were tightened in 1968 in an attempt to reduce the burden on poor and working-class families. Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, pp. 598–99, 616, 631–32, 751.

19. *Volante*, 26 Oct. 1965.

20. Ibid., 19 Oct. 1965.

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testing. Their actions boost the morale of the enemy."[21] Some students went beyond merely talking about the war and demonstrated their support for the president and the troops by writing letters to soldiers on Veterans Day and sending Christmas packages to Vietnam servicemen.[22]

In January 1968, after President Johnson had repeatedly told the American people that the war was progressing well, the communist forces in Vietnam mounted the Tet Offensive. This campaign was initially successful, and the communist Vietcong temporarily occupied major cities, including Hue and, briefly, the American embassy in Saigon. While American and South Vietnamese forces were quick to retake these areas, the attacks shocked Americans and caused many to question the country's involvement in Southeast Asia.[23]

Among the war's skeptics were South Dakota college students and faculty who, over the next three years, organized a modest opposition. These "doves" opposed the war for a variety of reasons. Some condemned it as immoral and unethical and viewed the conflict as a civil war in which the United States was acting as an imperialist power attempting to impose its will on a small, underdeveloped nation. The United States "shouldn't play God with another nation's destiny," one opponent of the war argued.[24] These students rejected what they called the "myth of 'Communist aggression.'"[25] Others believed that Vietnam was not vital to the interests of the United States and that the country was supporting a corrupt regime that lacked the support of its own people. "To those who say that the U.S. should 'save' South Vietnam, the question must be put: What is there to save?" wrote one young USD professor. "Perhaps our cause is just; our course of action is still wrong. The U.S. cannot save, but only destroy [Vietnam]," he concluded.[26] In the view of another student, a "big gap exists between our

21. *South Dakota Collegian*, 11 Nov. 1965.

22. *Volante*, 9 Nov. 1965; *South Dakota Collegian*, 9 Dec. 1965.

23. Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, pp. 678–82.

24. *South Dakota Collegian*, 16 May 1967. *See also Volante*, 12 Dec. 1967, 26 Mar. 1968; *Exponent*, 11 May 1967.

25. *South Dakota Collegian*, 16 May 1967.

26. *Volante*, 5 Mar. 1968.

stated purpose to help the people of Vietnam and the implementation of that purpose." The strategies and tactics being used in Southeast Asia were harming the people of Vietnam and destroying the chance for victory, he explained.[27] These students advocated a negotiated settlement to the conflict in order to save United States credibility.

After the Tet Offensive, a wave of antiwar protests gripped the nation, and the doves on South Dakota campuses became more assertive in their efforts to change the minds of their classmates and the direction of national policy. This small but vocal group of antiwar students voiced their opposition in the pages of their college newspapers. During the 1967–1968 and 1968–1969 academic years, the number of articles, editorials, and letters to the editor that directly challenged America's role in Vietnam more than tripled over the two preceding school years.[28] The war's opponents also advanced their cause in a series of other venues. Students from USD and NSC organized chapters of the SDS, and the Augustana Young Democrats presented a plan for United States withdrawal from Vietnam. Several petition drives, forums, and teach-ins were held on the state's campuses. In addition, doves organized several small but highly visible protests. In March of 1968, twenty NSC students staged a walkout at the state Young Republican Convention, and later that spring eighteen SDSU students picketed the governor's official review of the university's ROTC cadets, known as Governor's Day. The following school year, one hundred USD students held a candlelight vigil to protest the war, and a small group of SDSU students interrupted the halftime ceremonies of an SDSU-Augustana football game when they marched around the field carrying antiwar signs.[29]

Each time doves voiced their opposition, war supporters aggressively countered them. In editorials and letters to the editor, student hawks defended the role of the United States in Vietnam, labeling the

27. Ibid., 26 Mar. 1968.

28. This calculation is based on a survey of the Augustana College *Mirror*, the University of South Dakota *Volante*, and the South Dakota State University *South Dakota Collegian* between 1965 and 1968.

29. *Volante*, 2, 23 May 1967, 13 May 1969; *Exponent*, 21, 28 Mar., 3 Oct. 1968; *Mirror*, 21 Mar., 10 Oct. 1968; *South Dakota Collegian*, 1 Mar. 1967, 15 May, 7 Nov. 1968; Gary L. Olson, e-mail to author, 5 Apr. 2013.

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The Tet Offensive of 1968 and mounting American casualties helped to galvanize antiwar protestors across the country, including these marchers from the University of South Dakota.

antiwar protesters "appeasers" and "draft dodgers."[30] Students from SDSU booed, hissed, and threw tomatoes and eggs at the antiwar protesters who demonstrated during the SDSU-Augustana football game, and the Young Americans for Freedom brought pro-war speakers to several campuses. College presidents and other administrators were the most aggressive in trying to mute dissent. Administrators did not want to attack the antiwar groups or ban them from campus out of fear of galvanizing disinterested students around freedom-of-speech issues, so they publically recognized the students' right to dissent while taking other steps to marginalize the opposition.[31] "Our policy shall remain one in which students can demonstrate if they see fit," SDSU

30. *Volante*, 14 Nov. 1967.
31. Ibid., 27 Feb. 1968, 29 Apr. 1969; *South Dakota Collegian*, 17 Mar. 1966, 2, 7 Nov. 1968.

President Hilton M. Briggs explained, "but they do not have the right to interfere with the rights and privileges of others, disrupt the normal functions of the University, nor destroy personal, state, or federal property."[32] Edward Q. Moulton, president of USD, agreed, adding that in the event that antiwar groups became disruptive "they should be immediately disbanded and removed physically from campus."[33]

Several administrators did remove "disruptive" individuals or punish them in other ways. South Dakota State University did not renew the contract of history instructor John Crangle, who led the Governor's Day and football game protests, and a student protester was fired from his campus job at NSC within days of the Young Republican convention walkout.[34] Al Silverstein, another demonstrator at the Young Republican convention, reported being harassed by NSC Athletic Director Clark Swisher. Silverstein stated that when he tried to join the track team, Swisher called him and the other demonstrators "kooks" and "cowards who didn't have the courage to save our country from the threat of Communism." The athletic director then informed Silverstein that he would have to renounce his antiwar philosophy in order to join the track team.[35] Silverstein later recalled that Swisher told the rest of the NSC faculty that he was a radical, leaving him feeling isolated on campus. "It was a lot of pressure," remembered Silverstein, who dropped out of school for a time.[36] The name of at least one USD student was turned over to the FBI, and he lost his spot in the Peace Corps due to his antiwar activity.[37] In July 1968, the South Dakota Board of Regents unanimously passed a resolution "fully support[ing] the College and University Presidents with respect to student behavior" and

32. *South Dakota Collegian*, 20 Sept. 1968.

33. Moulton to Governor Nils Boe, 3 May 1967.

34. Faculty Association Academic Freedom and Tenure Committee, "Document Concerning the Committee's Opinion Regarding John Crangle's Appeal," UA 50.2, File 8: General Correspondence, Box 2, Faculty Association Records, South Dakota State University Archives and Hilton M. Briggs Library Special Collections, South Dakota State University, Brookings (hereafter cited as SDSU Archives).

35. *Exponent*, 19 Apr. 1968. *See also* telephone interview with Jim Nelson, Timber Lake, S.Dak., 7 Feb. 2013.

36. Telephone interview with Al Silverstein, Easton, Md., 1 Feb. 2013.

37. Gary L. Olson, email to author, 5 Apr. 2013.

reminding students that they were subject to all federal, state, and local laws as well as campus rules and regulations.[38]

Even as administrators attempted to minimize the efforts of doves on South Dakota campuses, the antiwar movement was gaining momentum nationally, making the 1969–1970 school year the most volatile and tense in the state's history. In the fall of 1969, the Vietnam Moratorium Committee and other national antiwar groups called for a series of protests in October and November to pressure the administration of newly elected president Richard M. Nixon to end the war. The Vietnam Moratorium generated tremendous national attention, and campuses across the country began preparing for the event.[39] In South Dakota, students organized protests, not only on campuses that had a history of antiwar activity, such as USD, SDSU, and NSC, but also schools that had not yet put forth any significant antiwar effort, such as Dakota State College in Madison, Black Hills State College in Spearfish, and Dakota Wesleyan University in Mitchell. The NSC and SDSU student governments passed resolutions calling for support of the protest, and the USD moratorium organizer explained why a large turnout was so necessary. "I don't think President Nixon appreciates either the depth or the extent of the disgust with the Vietnam War in this country," he declared.[40]

Meanwhile, supporters of the war mounted an effort to defuse the protest and delegitimize dissenters. Parents encouraged their children not to attend moratorium events,[41] and the South Dakota commissioner of higher education ordered college presidents to "take all necessary precautions" to prevent campus disruptions. He went on to explain that both he and the State Board of Regents supported "a student's right to protest and/or demonstrate *peacefully*," but "if you should have a disturbance on your campus, you should do whatever you see fit and the Board of Regents and this office will support you fully."[42] College

38. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 18–19 July 1968, p. 826, SDSU Archives.

39. Melvin Small, *Antiwarriors: The Vietnam War and the Battle for America's Hearts and Minds* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 2002), pp. 107, 110–12.

40. *Volante*, 14 Oct. 1969. *See also Exponent*, 9 Oct. 1969; *SDSU Collegian*, 1 Oct. 1969.

41. *Mirror*, 9 Oct. 1969.

42. Richard D. Gibb, Commissioner of Higher Education, to Institutional Presidents,

presidents took this advice and continued to work to mute dissent without appearing to deny students the right to protest. South Dakota State University President Hilton Briggs urged doves to include war supporters in the moratorium, stating, "We can only hope there is courtesy shown to those that have differing points of view." Briggs further reminded faculty that they could not cancel classes in order to allow students to attend moratorium activities. Failure to hold classes, the president said, would demonstrate a lack of commitment both to students and the university.[43] The USD administration encouraged a "full and open discussion" as long as it did not interfere with regular campus activities. However, the administration went on to declare, it was not appropriate to "force such participation on members of the University who do not choose to be involved," underscoring that regular classes must be held.[44]

In mid-October and again a month later, hundreds of Vietnam Moratorium protests took place on campuses and in towns and cities across the country, drawing millions of people in one of the most successful antiwar demonstrations of the era. In South Dakota, the moratorium kicked off on 12 October 1969 with a march through downtown Sioux Falls that drew three hundred participants. Dominating the crowd were students from seven South Dakota colleges who chanted "Ho–Ho–Ho Chi Minh"[45] and "All we are saying [is] give peace a chance"[46] as they made their way to Lyon Park for a rally. There, protestors heard ten speakers urge the United States to withdraw from Vietnam, including protest organizer and SDSU student Steve Cormier, who told the crowd that if President Nixon wanted to continue the fight, Cormier would "be glad to arm him with an M16 and buy him a plane ticket."[47]

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memorandum, 12 Oct. 1969, File: War Moratorium, Box 13, Vice President of Academic Affairs Henry A. Cobb Papers, USD Archives.

43. *Brookings Register*, 11 Oct. 1969.

44. "Administrative Position on October 15 'War Moratorium,'" *Morning Report*, 9 Oct. 1969, File 34: Vietnam Moratorium, Box 12, Arts and Science Dean's Series, 1968–1972, USD Archives.

45. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 12 Oct. 1969.

46. *Madison Daily Leader*, 13 Oct. 1969.

47. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 12 Oct. 1969.

Three days later, more than fifteen hundred students on eleven South Dakota campuses observed the moratorium by attending protests and signing petitions demanding the president to withdraw United States troops. At these events, students took the lead in arguing their case. "We must leave [Vietnam] quickly and swiftly," a recent NSC graduate told those gathered in Aberdeen. "Thousands have died for nothing. . . . It is time to do something about it. We must work more extensively than ever before to inundate every level of society with word of Vietnam."[48] The October moratorium events in South Dakota concluded with a public rally at Halley Park in Rapid City, attended by 150 people who prayed silently for those who had died in the Vietnam War. A few weeks later, on a cold November day, a second observance began with another march through Sioux Falls and a rally at Lyon Park attended by more than two hundred people. Over 350 students attended demonstrations, teach-ins, and candlelight vigils on four campuses across the state.[49] The day's events also included a televised address by United States Senator George McGovern, a South Dakota Democrat and leading opponent of the war, who told protesters, "We are on a mistaken course in Vietnam and the sooner we get out the better."[50]

As doves pressed the Nixon administration to leave Southeast Asia, war supporters stepped up their efforts to counter the protests and marginalize dissent. The *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader* characterized the demonstrators as "pathetically stupid" and termed the moratorium demonstrations a "mob scene."[51] The *Rapid City Journal* described the moratorium as "counter-productive," calling it a "day of joy in the Communist world."[52] South Dakota's Republican United States senator, Karl E. Mundt, accused doves of advocating surrender and announced

48. *Exponent*, 23 Oct. 1969.

49. *Rapid City Journal*, 16 Oct. 1969; *Mitchell Daily Republic*, 15 Oct. 1969; *Volante*, 21 Oct. 1969; *SDSU Collegian*, 23 Oct., 19 Nov. 1969; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 14, 15 Nov. 1969; *Eastern* (Dakota State College), 17 Nov. 1969; *Madison Daily Leader*, 14 Nov. 1969.

50. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 14 Nov. 1969. *See also* ibid., 15 Nov. 1969; Daryl Webb, "Crusade: George McGovern's Opposition to the Vietnam War," *South Dakota History* 28 (Fall 1998): 161–90.

51. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 19 Oct. 1969.

52. *Rapid City Journal*, 12 Oct. 1969.

that Americans supported the president's Vietnam policy by a margin of fifty to one. A survey of 111 South Dakotans conducted by the *Aberdeen American-News*, *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, and *Watertown Public Opinion* found that 75 percent opposed the moratorium.[53] The South Dakota Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) passed a resolution opposing the moratorium, the commander complaining to the press, "Frankly, we are sick and tired of listening to a very vocal minority undermining the bargaining position of our President and in doing so endangering the lives of our men on the fighting front."[54]

War supporters on campus also mounted an aggressive effort to retake control of the Vietnam debate. The NSC Young Republicans passed a resolution in favor of Nixon's war policy; the ROTC commander at USD announced to the press that the protesters were aiding the enemy; and in a letter to the editor an Augustana student told protesters to stop demonstrating against the United States government and begin protesting the many misdeeds of North Vietnam, China, and Russia. Student hawks also organized counter-rallies. During the Vietnam Moratorium of 1969, the Black Hills State College Veterans Club demonstrated in support of the war, telling dissenters to love America or leave it.[55] On Veterans Day, 250 people including students from USD, SDSU, Sioux Falls College, and Augustana held a march and rally in Sioux Falls to allow "the 'silent' majority" to speak out in support of the president. Rally organizer and USD Student Association president Jim Dunn asserted that antiwar protests amounted to support for the enemy and described the antiwar protesters as "people you could more or less smell coming. You could see their attire, their costumes, their long hair. . . . The Moratorium people are usually . . . the left, the art department students."[56] Dunn then read a telegram from President Nixon thanking marchers for their support and "responsible participa-

53. *Aberdeen American-News*, 13 Nov. 1969; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 19 Nov. 1969.

54. *Brookings Register*, 15 Oct. 1969.

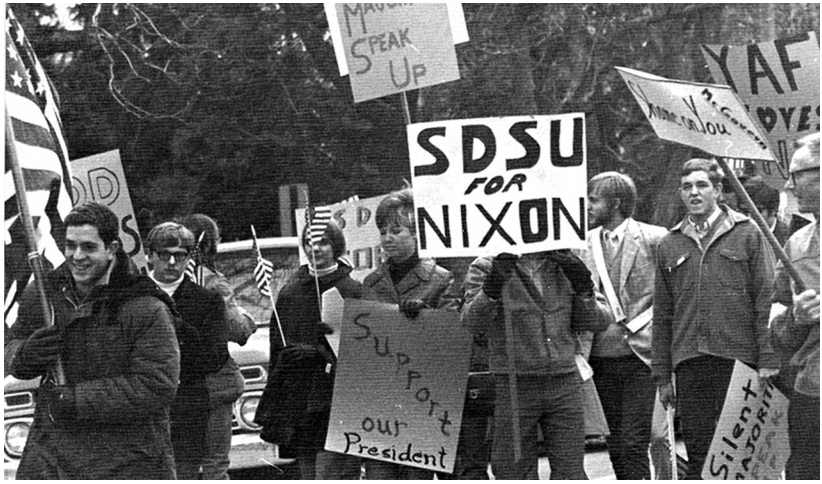
55. *Aberdeen American-News*, 13 Nov. 1969; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 16, 19 Oct. 1969; *Exponent*, 20 Nov. 1969; *SDSU Collegian*, 29 Oct., 10 Dec. 1969; *Volante*, 21 Oct. 1969; *Mirror*, 14 Nov. 1969; *Rapid City Journal*, 16 Oct. 1969.

56. *Volante*, 18 Nov. 1969.

tion" as citizens.[57] Feeling themselves under siege from the country's president, state officials, administrators, and fellow students, many doves on South Dakota campuses retreated from political activity. A Christmas antiwar boycott flopped, a spring peace fast found few participants, and plans to hold an April moratorium never got off the ground.[58]

It looked as though the peace effort in South Dakota had gone down in defeat until 30 April 1970, when President Nixon announced that the United States had been bombing Cambodia in secret. This revelation set off a wave of anger across the country, and in the days after the announcement the nation's campuses erupted with demonstrations, some of them violent. At Kent State University, Ohio National Guard troops fired on a crowd of protesters, killing four students and wounding four others. The Kent State killings and the expansion of the war significantly increased tensions and protests on the nation's campuses. In the weeks after the shootings, an estimated 4 million students

57. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 11 Nov. 1969. *See also* ibid., 12, 19 Nov. 1969.
58. *Mirror*, 18 Dec. 1969, 5 Mar. 1970; *SDSU Collegian*, 5 Mar., 7, 15 Apr. 1970.



Supporters of President Richard Nixon's Vietnam policy organized a Veterans Day rally in Sioux Falls to counter the Vietnam Moratorium protests of 1969.

at more than 1,350 colleges and universities attended demonstrations. At twenty-one of these schools, the National Guard was called in to maintain order. As elsewhere, the Kent State shootings revitalized the antiwar effort in South Dakota. In the following weeks, more than a dozen demonstrations on eight campuses drew over thirty-four hundred people to participate in marches and protests.[59]

More than simply reenergizing the doves, the expansion of the war and the Kent State shootings changed the South Dakota antiwar effort from lawful political protest to angry, confrontational, and sometimes unlawful action. A sense of fury was reflected in events that took place on the USD campus on 7 May 1970.[60] The day began with a rally of some over five hundred people where many expressed frustration, anger, and doubt over the efficacy of peaceful protest. "A month ago I hated violence, but now I don't know," one emotional student declared. "Please someone do something so I don't do something violent." Gervase Hittle, associate professor of English, angrily announced that "non-violence [isn't] worth a damn. . . . I no longer teach non-violence to anybody."[61]

The rhetoric turned next to the ROTC as the representative of the United States military on campus, and tensions rose dramatically. When one student speaker denounced the presence of the ROTC building at USD, a member of the crowd yelled, "Blow it up or something." The next student speaker told his colleagues that "the call today is not to [march], but to do." Yet another protester encouraged students to "rip up the armory." Assistant Art Professor Chip Simone told students, "You have to do what must be done. . . . I'll always be behind you." As the crowd grew more vocal and angry, the final speaker took the microphone and, pointing to the ROTC building, said, "There it is, that's

59. Heineman, *Put Your Bodies upon the Wheels*, p. 176; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 9, 17 May 1970; *Aberdeen American-News*, 8, 12 May 1970; *Volante*, 12 May 1970; *SDSU Collegian*, 20 May 1970.

60. For the university administration's official report on the events that culminated in the protests of 7 May 1970, *see* "Chronological Report of Pertinent Incidents, The University of South Dakota," May 1970, File 70: Student Conduct, Box 10, Vice President of Academic Affairs Henry Cobb Papers, USD Archives.

61. *Volante*, 12 May 1970.

the only symbol [of the military and the war] we have on this campus. I don't think it belongs on our campus. . . . It's up to you." An estimated 250 people then stormed the armory. As the students streamed in, one yelled "F . . . k Rotsee." Some wrote profanity on chalkboards, while others tore up ROTC brochures and tossed them about the building.[62]

Campus officials acted quickly to control the situation. As demonstrators marched into the armory, they were met by ROTC commander David Cromley who, like other ROTC commanders around the nation, had been warned that their programs were targets and had received training on how to respond. Earlier in the day, Cromley had taken precautions to ensure that weapons and ammunition were secure and that cadets would not "become involved in any fracas" with protesters.[63] Cromley greeted the demonstrators, saying, "Welcome to our home, gentlemen,"[64] and reminding them that because they were on United States government property, any damage would be a federal offense subject to prosecution. University of South Dakota President Richard L. Bowen also rushed to the armory to defuse the situation; when he arrived, he allowed the students to voice their views but stalled any action. After listening to demands for an end to the ROTC program at USD, Bowen told students that the occupation only hurt their cause. He concluded by urging them to circulate petitions requesting the change and to argue their case before the Board of Regents. The forty-five-minute discussion with Bowen reduced some of the tension, but the students decided to stay in the armory all night to emphasize their point.[65]

Upon leaving, Bowen quickly discussed the situation with top administrators, the student government president, and faculty. They determined that the best course was to take no action, fearing that any

62. Ibid. *See also* Charles Dorothy to author, 14 June 2013.

63. David Cromley to Richard Bowen, n.d., File 2: ROTC, Box 41, Presidents Series, Richard Bowen, USD Archives.

64. *Volante*, 12 May 1970.

65. "Chronological Report of Pertinent Incidents"; Michael S. Neiberg, *Making Citizen-Soldiers: ROTC and the Ideology of American Military Service* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), pp. 114–15.

attempt to remove the students would lead to violence. Bowen next announced that because demonstrators had not destroyed property or interfered with university activities, their presence in the armory was lawful. Students would be allowed to spend the night as long as members of the administration stayed with them, the building remained open, and no property was harmed. Bowen also met with leaders of the occupation, who wanted assurances that he would carry their concerns to the Board of Regents. Later that evening, seven hundred students gathered outside the armory for a candlelight vigil to honor the Kent State victims.[66] Father James Doyle from the university's Newman Center delivered a eulogy for the slain students and urged nonviolence. "We just have to search for every other possible alternative to violence," Doyle proclaimed, "saying 'no' to war; saying 'no' to violence; 'no' to militarism; 'yes' to love, especially of our enemies." While Doyle preached outside, inside the armory eighty to one hundred people continued the occupation. Some played basketball, others listened to a rock band that had volunteered to play, and still others talked. In the morning, the students cleaned the building and left without incident. After vacating the armory, one of the leaders reflected on the occupation: "Did we get anything done? No! But it's a start."[67]

The occupation of the USD armory was, indeed, just the start. As students left the building on 8 May, a wave of protest erupted on other South Dakota campuses. Two hundred Augustana and Sioux Falls College students held a memorial for the Kent State victims; five hundred SDSU protesters crammed Sylvan Theatre for a rally; and two hundred Dakota State College demonstrators furiously demanded the president to order that flags fly at half-staff in memory of the Kent State students.[68] In Aberdeen, four hundred NSC students boycotted classes and gathered on the campus green to hear one dove angrily proclaim,

66. "Chronological Report of Pertinent Incidents"; "University Senate Minutes," *USD Aviso* 4 (13 May 1970), Box 40: Regents, Presidents Series, Richard Bowen, USD Archives; Charles Dorothy to author, 14 June 2013; *Volante*, 12 May 1970.

67. *Volante*, 12 May 1970.

68. *Mirror*, 15 May 1970; *SDSU Collegian*, 11 May 1970; *Madison Daily Leader*, 6 May 1970; Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 21–22 May 1970, p. 285–86, SDSU Archives.

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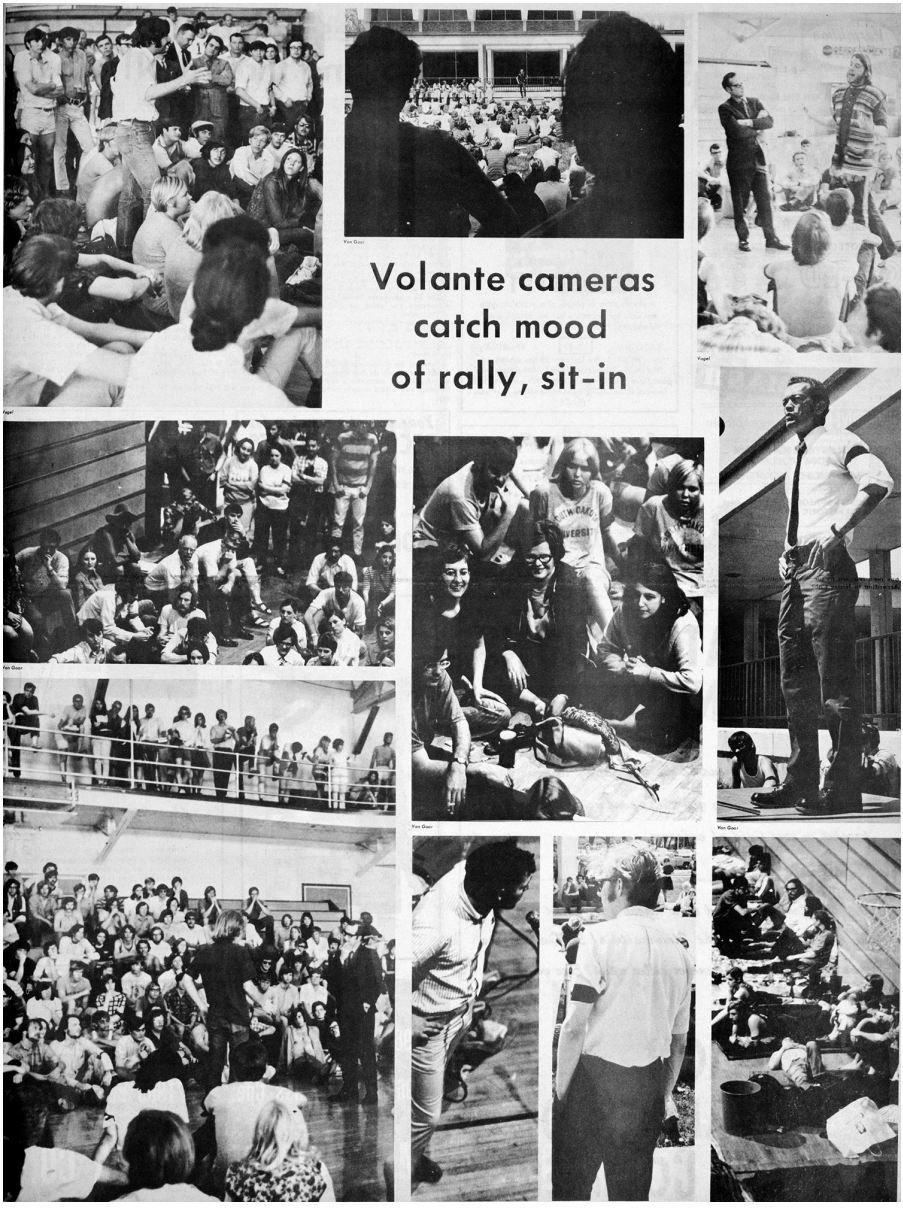

The *Volante*, the student newspaper at the University of South Dakota, featured a full-page collage of images from the armory takeover of May 1970.

"Some say we should fear communism. I say we should forget communism. When President Nixon does this to us, I say 'God help us.'"[69]

Over the next week, more than six hundred students attended four more demonstrations on South Dakota campuses; a peace march in Sioux Falls drew another 250 people; and one hundred young people demonstrated outside the capitol in Pierre carrying antiwar signs and singing peace songs. The most contentious of these events occurred on the SDSU campus. In Brookings, doves held a major demonstration on Governor's Day, when Governor Frank L. Farrar visited campus to inspect the ROTC cadets. As Farrar conducted his review on 15 May 1970, an estimated five hundred students from SDSU, USD, NSC, Black Hills State, and Augustana marched in front of the assembled cadets carrying a flag-draped mock coffin representing the war dead.[70] Other demonstrators carried white crosses and signs reading "In Memory of the SDSU War Dead," "All U.S. Troops Out of Indochina Now," and "End U.S. Imperialism."[71] Then, as Governor Farrar handed out awards, protesters chanted, "Stop the war. . . . Power to the people" and "All we are saying is give peace a chance." During the demonstration, some of the twelve-hundred ROTC cadets raised their hands and made the peace sign to protest the war. Twelve cadets broke ranks, left their formation, and joined the demonstrators.[72]

After the ceremony concluded, about two hundred demonstrators marched to the administration building and lowered the flag to half-staff to honor the slain Kent State protesters. As the demonstrators marched toward the ROTC building, a group of student veterans raised the flag back to full staff, prompting the protesters to return and engage in a heated verbal exchange with the veterans. When both sides agreed to put the issue before SDSU President Hilton Briggs, about eighty protesters marched into the president's office and waited for his return. Upon arriving, Briggs told the angry protestors that only the governor had the authority to lower the flag to half-staff but agreed to

69. *Aberdeen American-News*, 8 May 1970.

70. *Madison Daily Leader*, 10, 12 May 1970; *Aberdeen American-News*, 10, 12 May 1970; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 17 May 1970; *Rapid City Journal*, 11, 12 May 1970.

71. *Brookings Register*, 16 May 1970.

72. *SDSU Collegian*, 20 May 1970.

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Governor Frank L. Farrar (center) and South Dakota State University President Hilton M. Briggs (right) review ROTC cadets on Governor's Day in 1970.

Some of the cadets under review in 1970 broke ranks or signaled their support for the antiwar protesters who disrupted the Governor's Day ceremonies.

talk to them for five minutes. As the conversation became more heated, one demonstrator, former SDSU professor John Crangle, jumped into the president's chair and refused to move.[73] Briggs had dismissed Crangle after the professor led the 1968 antiwar protests, and the two disliked one another. When Crangle told Briggs to "sit on the floor like everybody else,"[74] the SDSU president shoved the chair, forcing the former professor to fall to the ground. Crangle jumped up and hit Briggs three times, dropping him to the floor. The fistfight proved too much for the other protesters, who quickly exited the office and scattered, ending the encounter.[75]

In the days after these heated protests, South Dakota administrators took steps to punish those involved. Whether the individuals who occupied the USD armory were punished is not known, but SDSU administrators did penalize those involved in the high-profile demonstrations on that campus. Within days of the altercation in the president's office, Crangle was charged with assault and battery and fired from his job at the National College of Business in Rapid City for conduct unbecoming a faculty member. The ROTC cadets who broke ranks were brought up before the disciplinary committee to be expelled, and Steve Cormier, one of the students who occupied Briggs's office, had his academic career disrupted. According to Cormier, his English professor refused to allow him to take a final examination because of his antiwar activity. As a result, he failed the course, postponing his graduation. Furthermore, the dean of the College of Arts and Sciences wrote a letter urging Wichita State University not to accept Cormier into its graduate program because he was a radical and a disruptive influence.[76]

Board of Regents President Richard H. Battey declared, "There is no place in our institutions for radicals" among either students or faculty and advanced a strict code of behavior that would prohibit all demonstrations or meetings that did not have prior administration approval.

73. Ibid.; *Brookings Register*, 16 May 1970.

74. Telephone interview with Steve Cormier, Albuquerque, N.Mex., 28 Jan. 2013.

75. Ibid.; *SDSU Collegian*, 20 May 1970; *Brookings Register*, 16 May 1970.

76. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 16, 20 May 1970; *Brookings Register*, 20 May 1970; *SDSU Collegian*, 20 May 1970; telephone interview with Steve Cormier.

Under the proposed rules, anyone who violated the code would be expelled automatically. "Unless reasonable men enforce strong policies, unreasonable men will enforce strong policies," Battey stated in justifying the policy.[77] While the new student-behavior code was tabled for study, the effort to punish demonstrators and gain control over the state's campuses won praise from residents and students who supported the war. The Board of Regents reported that letters and telephone calls were running three to one in favor of the stricter code.[78] Editorials and letters to the editor in the state's newspapers almost universally praised Briggs and other college officials for their quick, decisive action, calling them "the kind [of administrators] we need."[79] Veterans of Foreign War leaders condemned the protests as unpatriotic, while others accused demonstrators of "fostering anarchy" and "weakening our President."[80] Letters to the editor in college newspapers were also highly critical of the protesters, calling them a "pitiful minority" and "hypocrites, bigots and liars"[81] and demanding an end to their demonstrations.

At the same time South Dakota college administrators worked to isolate war protesters on campus, the war began to wind down. As part of President Nixon's Vietnamization strategy, the primary fighting responsibility was gradually transferred from the American military to the South Vietnamese army. This change caused the number of American military personnel in Vietnam to fall dramatically from 156,000 in 1971 to 24,000 by the end of the following year. As the war was "Viet-

77. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 21–22 May 1970, pp. 284, 287. *See also* Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 18–19 June 1970, p. 474, SDSU Archives.

78. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 21–22 May 1970, p. 288; *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 23 May 1970. The Board of Regents ultimately decided not to pass the strict student behavior code, believing that the existing code was sufficient if properly enforced. However, Board of Regents President Richard Battey did issue a stern warning to protesters, saying, "We don't have room in our colleges for those who violate the rights of others and who violate the decorum of colleges." Battey then urged the state's college administrators to take a strong stand on student conduct. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 18–19 June 1970, p. 474.

79. *Sioux Falls Argus-Leader*, 18 May 1970.

80. Ibid., 20 May 1970.

81. *SDSU Collegian*, 20 May 1970. *See also* ibid., 13 May 1970; *Volante*, 12 May 1970.

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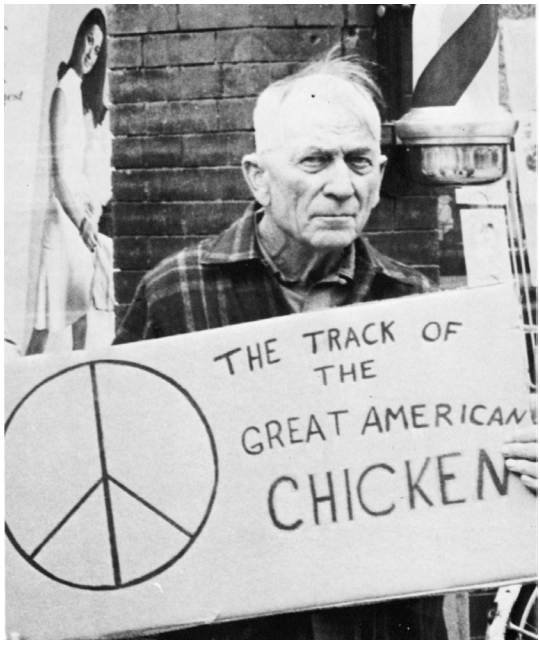

This Vietnam War "hawk" expressed the opinion many South Dakotans held in regard to those who opposed the country's involvement in Southeast Asia.

namized," fewer young men were drafted into service. With the war ending and their chances of being drafted reduced, many students saw less need to demonstrate against the war, leaving the antiwar movement a shadow of its former self. After the spring of 1971, few antiwar protests took place on the nation's college campuses, and the antiwar movement dissolved.[82]

As the national antiwar movement lost momentum, the doves' efforts in South Dakota fizzled, as well. Doves brought antiwar speakers to campus, held antimilitary picnics, and sponsored demonstrations, but these efforts drew few participants. In the spring of 1971, South Dakota doves hoped to join students around the nation in another moratorium. While the protest drew 500 students at USD, only 125 students showed up at SDSU, and the event was cancelled entirely at Augustana due to lack of support. No other schools even planned spring

82. Patterson, *Grand Expectations*, pp. 749–53; Heineman, *Put Your Bodies upon the Wheels*, p. 180.

protests.[83] In January 1973, as the treaty designed to end the war was about to be signed, antiwar organizers held one of their last peace vigils, but only a handful of USD students took the time to attend. "For the last three years people have been apathetic about the war because of the administration's promises that peace was imminent," observed one of the organizers. "The lack of student participation . . . has been disappointing."[84]

The South Dakota war effort demonstrates that the nation's peace movement was more diverse and complex than historians have previously understood. Most studies have focused exclusively on large, prestigious institutions with long and sustained peace movements, but South Dakota demonstrates that young people at small, relatively isolated colleges and universities also took steps to end the war. Peace activists within the state, however, adopted a different strategy than that of the movement's leaders at elite institutions. On big campuses between 1968 and the early 1970s, radicals broke away from the mainstream peace movement and embraced violence. During this same period, however, South Dakota's antiwar force continued to steer a moderate course that avoided confrontation. In the spring of 1970 when some South Dakota protesters did embrace these tactics and occupied buildings, they quickly lost student support. Finally, South Dakota doves also met a significant and widespread opposition that students at Columbia, Berkeley, Wisconsin, and other schools with large antiwar movements did not face. Most South Dakota students, administrators, and state officials supported the war and worked successfully to delegitimize the protesters and end their demonstrations.[85]

The antiwar movement also provides insights into South Dakota campus culture. Far removed from decision makers in Washington, D.C., most South Dakota college students traditionally were more in-

83. *Volante*, 6 Apr., 11 May 1971; *Mirror*, 2 Oct. 1970, 6 May 1971; *SDSU Collegian*, 12 May 1971.

84. *Volante*, 23 Jan. 1973.

85. Charles DeBenedetti, *An American Ordeal: The Antiwar Movement of the Vietnam Era* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), pp. 1–5; Kenneth J. Heineman, *Campus Wars: The Peace Movement at American State Universities in the Vietnam Era* (New York: New York University Press, 1993), pp. 3–9; Small, *Antiwarriors*, pp. xi–xii.

terested in extracurricular and social activities than in national issues. This student tradition of non-engagement was broken in the 1960s and 1970s, but only briefly and by only a few students. The majority of students during the era were uninterested in either supporting or opposing the war or any other political activity. Both hawks and doves consistently complained about student apathy. As soon as the antiwar movement died, so did student political activism, and the strong tradition of nonengagement returned to South Dakota campuses.[86]

Additionally, this episode demonstrates the tenuous nature of academic freedom on South Dakota campuses. In fact, academic freedom did not exist in South Dakota when it came to unpopular and radical ideas. Professor John Crangle lost his job at SDSU because of his political involvement, and several students were punished or harassed by administrators because of their antiwar beliefs and activities. Administrators, regents, and most of the state's residents believed that colleges and universities had the responsibility to protect students from what they considered the corrupting influence of radical and un-American ideas and so worked quickly to remove or isolate those who espoused unpopular beliefs. Richard Battey, president of the State Board of Regents, explained this approach just after the May 1970 protests, saying that firm steps should be taken to end such actions and ensure that "the freedom of the 98% of students who want an education is protected." In South Dakota, the antiwar movement was stifled to protect this 98 percent.[87]

86. *Volante*, 21 Oct. 1969; *South Dakota Collegian*, 25 Feb. 1970.
87. Minutes, South Dakota Board of Regents, 21–22 May 1970, p. 284.

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On the covers: As in the rest of the country, the Vietnam War divided South Dakotans. On college campuses around the state, students and faculty voiced their opinions through protests like those staged during the governor's review of ROTC cadets at South Dakota State University in 1970 (front) and by students at the University of South Dakota in 1972 (back cover). In this issue, Daryl Webb looks at both pro-war and anti-war sentiment on South Dakota's college campuses in the 1960s and 1970s.