

1BMO210

OPEN LETTER to the Student Committee
from a member of EPIC, the student organization
in Boston and New England

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21 Inman Street
Cambridge 39^m Mass.
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Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee
208 Auburn Street N.E.
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During the summer months the students in Boston EPIC have held several discussions concerning the future of the non-violent movement. (We have been most fortunate to have had James Lawson with us in Boston.) Our discussions have been lively and we are hopeful that in the coming months, the student movement will continue to grow until every manifestation of discrimination is removed from our society. We have also tried in our discussions to sharpen our total philosophy and to draw general conclusions concerning the possibilities of non-violent, direct action. Most of us agree that the kind of action which southern students have taken has broader implications for the political situation which confronts the world today. The kind of community which we have created in our activity might serve as a small-scale model for the future society which we can bring into being.

The philosophy of civil rights and civil liberties is today a revolutionary philosophy in most parts of the world, whether we are speaking of the colonial peoples in Asia and Africa, the peoples living under totalitarianism, or the peoples living under the repressive conditions of racist bigotry. (The police state, regardless of the form it takes, makes victims of its "citizens".) Even in ~~the~~ societies where there is a measure of freedom, the power of the existing bureaucracies often appears to be too immense to challenge. People lose their will to be free, resistance seems

utterly futile; they soon become mere puppets who perform their entire lives according to cue. ^{They} ~~we~~ laugh, applaud, nod, weep, and ^{fight} according to plans which ^{they} ~~we~~ have had little part in making. ^{Our} ~~their~~ lives become part of the bureaucratic ritual. [We are speaking now of the mass society, a society of directives from above and lifeless people below. This grim picture seems to be the shape of the society towards which we are heading.] We must say "No" to this future just as you have said "No" to Jim Crow. We must say "No" to the ritualized existence of mass society, and we must say "No" to the prospect of a nuclear war which could end not only freedom but the possibility for freedom. Those of us who have tried to halt the testing and building of nuclear weapons see the face of mass society when we address the public. It is a face of indifference or hostility. It is the face which we have seen when we picket ^{with} Woolworth stores in support of your movement. [It is the face which if it asks any question, asks: "Why bother?" The pickets seemed bizarre, ~~they~~ ^{they} the ^{public} ^{sometimes} asks, "Who is paying you?" They assumed that we were puppets in the service of some conspiracy. They thought we were madmen because we were not ~~doing~~ ~~thinking~~ what they were thinking. We say that nuclear war could lead to the total destruction of the human race, and yet they asked us, "Why bother?".] Even if people agree with our ideas, they think that we are too small to make any changes. Our picketing seemed puny when compared to ~~the power~~ of the Pentagon.

One of the achievements of the Sit-in movement has been to successfully challenge the customs of the southern power structure. Your action has given you a taste of freedom, [whether or not you actually got a taste of the hamburger or apple pie.] You have said or sung in unison, "We are not afraid". Your voices have been heard. When people act together in a common and just cause, they

become living men and women. [They are not mere statistics or items for the Census. They become something more than potential votes in elections, potential consumers on the stools of lunch counters, potential workers in the labor market, or potential buyers of homes.] Whatever the immediate goals of our actions might have been, we are now different people than we were before we started. We have tasted the freedom that we know is our right. In brief, we have become human beings. We have had our first experience, and we are happy, but not content. Students in the north have heard your voices; we pledge to you our complete solidarity. We are with you because we know that freedom and human life are at stake. Whether we are working to erase discrimination in our own communities, or supporting your movement, or addressing the public about the danger of nuclear war, our voices will be clear and confident. "We are not afraid. We shall overcome some day."

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