

W R I T E R S A N D E D I T O R S W A R T A X P R O T E S T

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FOR RELEASE TO P.M. PAPERS TUESDAY JANUARY 30 OR A.M. PAPERS WEDNESDAY JANUARY 31

FOR RELEASE TO RADIO - T.V. TUESDAY JANUARY 30 12 noon.

NEW YORK, January 30 - A group of 437 American writers and editors, including some of the best known in their profession, announced today that they will not pay the proposed 10 per cent income tax surcharge, "or any other war-designated tax increase" because of their belief that "the war in Vietnam is normally wrong, and it would be morally wrong for us to support its continuing escalation with our tax dollars."

In addition, at least one-third of the signers of an advertisement for "Writers and Editors War Tax Protest," which appeared today in the New York Post, New York Review of Books, and Ramparts magazine, pledged not to pay the 23 per cent of their current income tax which is being used to finance the war in Vietnam.

Among the signers are Robert Bly, Nelson Algren, James Baldwin, Norman Mailer, William Styron, Susan Sontag, Noam Chomsky, Betty Friedan, Peter Matthiessen, Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Jane Jacobs, R. V. Cassill, Leslie Fiedler, Ed Sanders, Robert Duncan, Jack Gelber, Stanley Elkin, Terry Southern, Robert Creeley, Thomas Pynchon and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. Almost all major publishers are represented by editors, as well as leading magazines and newspapers.

The protest was announced today at a press conference in New York's Algonquin Hotel, traditionally a gathering place for New York's literary world. Three writers and three editors spoke for the group: Eric Bentley, drama critic, professor of Columbia, and author of several books on the theater; James Leo Herlihy, well-known novelist and short story writer; and Sally Belfrage, author of "Freedom Summer." Publishers included Richard Grossman of Grossman Publishers; Aaron Asher of Viking Press; and Arthur A. Cohen of Holt, Rinehart & Winston.

The group cited, in its advertisement, Henry David Thoreau's comment on American involvement in the Mexican war: "If a thousand men were not to pay their tax-bills this year, that would not be a violent and bloody measure, as it would be to pay them, and enable the State to commit violence and shed innocent blood." A spokesman for the protesters added, "We agree with a recent statement by leading American economists that since the Magna Carta, whenever persuasion failed to curb a ruler's ill-advised policies, the peoples' representatives have asserted sovereignty through the power of the purse."

One of the group's organizers announced that today's advertisement had been rejected for publication by seven major newspapers before being printed by the New York Post. The New York Times, where ten of the advertisement's signers are employed, twice rejected it, the second time after the advertisement had been changed to meet their earlier objection. Other newspapers which refused to accept the prepaid full-page advertisement were The Boston Globe, the Washington Post, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, the Christian Science Monitor, the National Observer, and the Chicago Tribune. A spokesman for the Writers and Editors War Tax Protest expressed regret that the nation's press, "which is so quick to condemn violent demonstrations, actually encourages them by frustrating conscientious expression of dissent from our actions in Vietnam."