

Blazing Rhetoric on Boston Common

A NEW (copy)

By Gordon D. Hall

TWICE DURING the peak Christmas shopping rush, representatives of veterans organizations, Cuban exiles, and the Young Americans For Freedom gathered on Boston's historic Common to "Tell it to Hanoi" in the name of the silent majority.

On both occasions, speakers emphasized that the hastily organized rallies represented only a modest beginning of a nationwide effort to demonstrate that the silent majority is rapidly turning into a vocal and active majority.

"If a couple of thousand of us turn out in freezing weather at the busiest time of the

The writer is a widely recognized authority on national movements and political groups.

year and without much help from the press," one speaker asked, "isn't it easy to imagine how many more there'll be when the warm weather comes?"

The rallies, advertised as support for President Nixon's Vietnam policies, quickly turned into support for the Vietnam policies of the Young Americans for Freedom, which is, of course, a very different thing. Ignoring the President's serious initiatives toward an era of negotiation rather than endless confrontation, rally orators lashed peace demonstrators, Senators Fulbright and McGovern, and ordered everyone to either love America or leave it.

BOSTON Licensing Commission chairman Albert L. "Dapper" O'Neil spoke at the first rally after being introduced by former middleweight boxing champion Paul Pender. The "Dap" is a bare-knuckled, partisan Democrat of the old school, and hardly one to support a laissez-faire YAF button in his lapel, but his primitive appeals to "wipe out Hanoi" and to then do the same to the domestic radical Left, set the crowd to rhythmic chanting of "Win the war in Vietnam."

Mere mention of Senator Fulbright's name brought loud guffaws and whoops, encouraging the speakers to neatly blur the lines between Senator Fulbright's serious criticisms of Vietnam policies and those made by the Communist Left. One YAF official stepped up the attack on the Arkansas, labeling him "that segregationist Senator," a truly wondrous charge when

one recalls that YAF's National Advisory Board is top heavy with names like Strom Thurmond, L. Mendel Rivers, William Colmer, and other congressional champions of racial segregation.

THE DECEMBER rallies on the Boston Common might be best described as counter-protest measures rooted in the Moratorium Day observances of last Oct. 15. On that day 100,000 jammed the Common to protest America's involvement in the Vietnam war.

The very thought of 100,000 protesters sent shivers down the spine of Arthur Stivaletta, a 34-year-old building contractor and former prizefighter from Dedham, Mass., so he sat down and composed a leaflet urging the peace demonstrators to "think twice" about withdrawing American forces from Vietnam.

But how does a single individual handle a crowd of 100,000? Stivaletta pondered the problem right up to Moratorium Day, then impulsively rented a small plane, directing the pilot to fly over the Boston Common. After a few trial runs to test wind direction, the plane swooped low and Stivaletta showered the leaflets in near perfect strikes. "The great bulk of them landed smack in the middle of that huge crowd," he recalls with obvious relish.

The short plane ride was widely reported in newspapers throughout the country. By noon the next day, Stivaletta was swamped with calls from every corner of Massachusetts, and some from as far away as Phoenix, Ariz. "I swear there were at least a thousand calls on Oct. 16 alone," is the way Stivaletta put it. The most persistent calls came from the Boston office of the Young Americans For Freedom. Stivaletta told YAF that he is not a politician, but rather an "ordinary guy, a middle American" who believes in supporting the President of the United States, "no matter who he is." Without a trace of embarrassment, YAF officials expressed agreement with this view. Meetings with Stivaletta followed and plans for the December rallies began to take shape, with YAF now firmly at the controls.

The arrangement met with Stivaletta's approval for with YAF organizing in December, he was free to turn his attention to a "massive" rally scheduled for the Common

on April 19. "But please don't misunderstand me on this point," he cautioned, "I'm glad the December rallies took place, though I thought all along the timing could not have been worse."

Stivaletta dreams of matching the Moratorium Day turnout of 100,000, thus he is extending speaking invitations to Bob Hope and Art Linkletter. He also hopes to exploit his wide friendship among prizefighters and other professional athletes to lure "big names" to the Common on April 19. Stivaletta has asked Larry Eisenhauer, a defensive end for the Boston Patriots, to invite Joe Namath, confident that an acceptance from the jets' quarterback would mean a turnout of thousands of high school and college students. "I hope Namath can make it," Stivaletta said, "for he will prove to young people that you don't have to be a long-haired kook or anything like that to be popular."

THE SECOND rally, held close to Christmas, confirmed Stivaletta's thesis about timing. Congresswoman Margaret Heckler and Representative Silvio Conte were listed as the principal speakers but neither appeared and there is good reason to believe that they were never actually invited. H. Thomas Cole, a state representative from the western portion of Worcester County did speak, but chose to lecture the veterans dominated audience on the meaning of the Bill of Rights.

"I'm as dismayed as you are by the small turnout," Cole began, "but I'm far more dismayed by the attitudes of so many in the audience." Cole had seen a long-haired, bearded college student thrown to the ground and then told "to get the hell off the Common" by a group of flag-waving, middle-aged men. "We cannot teach respect for our flag and our institutions by beating people up and stomping on them," he concluded.

The promises of nationwide rallies made last month will undoubtedly be delivered in the late winter and spring of this year. The cry of "Tell it to Hanoi" may become as familiar in the streets and public parks of our land as the cry of "End the war in Vietnam." But promises, delivered or forgotten, will not alter the fact that President Nixon's Vietnam policies hardly need enemies when they have "supporters" like the Young Americans for Freedom and their allies.