

How This Peace Rally

By Tim Findley

A chilly breeze blustered through Kezar Stadium as the afternoon wore on and Dick Gregory stood a little stiffly at first, before warming himself to the dwindling crowd.

"You want to end the war?" he demanded, whipping the crowd for its "picnic" atmosphere. "You want

to end it in 30 days? Then get behind the leaders in the peace movement — stop eating chick-

en and turkey. In 30 days the poultry industry will join the peace movement with Colonel Sanders leading 'em!"

The afternoon's biggest roar of approval rippled back across the oval. People nodded and smiled with satisfaction.

SCOFFER

But off to the side of the stage, on the square of turf privileged to the press, monitors and performers, a young musician in protest uniform of blue shirt and jeans scoffed at the response.

"Yeah, Jeez," he sneered, "they love it. But they won't do it."

"... Boycott Christmas ... Boycott General Motors," Gregory went on, rolling now with the momentum of cheers. "Until you're willing to start dealing with the money in this country, you ain't gonna do a damn thing but go to rallies until you're 99 years old!"

DANCE

The roar came back again, and a young black man on the field danced in little circles of delight at Gregory's challenge.

If you were for it and counting heads, Saturday's anti-war demonstration could have seemed a disappointment.

Was Different

The leaders of the April 22 Coalition had insisted from the start that they were not playing a "numbers game," but most could not resist the temptation.

"You think maybe 40,000?" one asked tentatively of a reporter. The reporter shook his head.

ESTIMATES

The estimates were, as usual, wildly divergent — from the "less than 10,000" reported in one case to the more frequent, and more accurate, "25,000 to 30,000."

A month ago, when the April 22 Coalition began organizing the event, its members were talking about a rally of 10,000. They had said they hoped for 50,000 last week, but emphasized the purpose of the event was to encourage commitment to continuing efforts at social change, not a single display of protest.

In that key to the day's activities, the organizers were delighted.

It was apparent in the blue jean flavor of the crowd that one reason for the smaller turnout was that one group was not there in force this time. Where had all the liberals gone? There weren't any white collars marching under "businessmen for peace" placards.

YOUTH

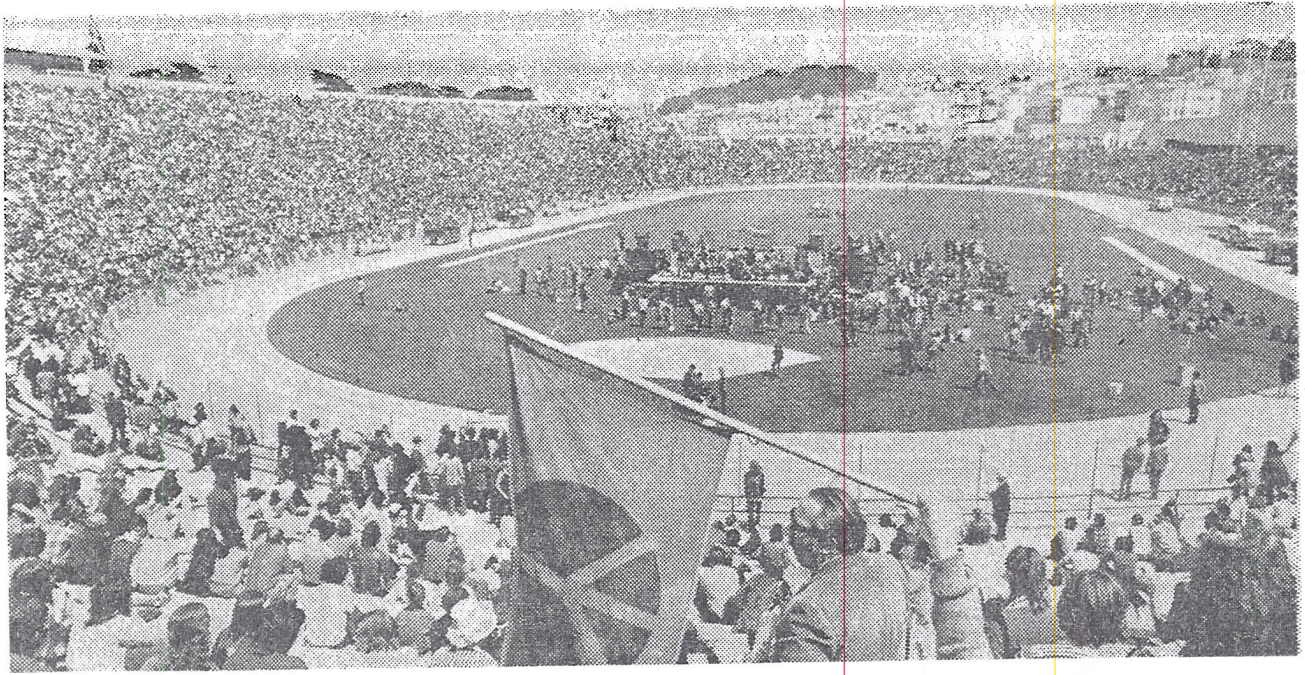
There were clergy men and young professionals and older persons too, but they marched individually, or showed up on their own at the stadium, and their numbers were overwhelmed by the youth of the crowd. Most significant, perhaps, was the presence this time of more "Third World" people — blacks, Chicanos and Orientals. But for the most part, the liberals stayed home.

There were theories why. This march, for one, was the first time a major rally had been held in the United States specifically supporting the seven-point program of the Viet Cong — a program even some liberals argue demands an American surrender.

The coalition had spent most of its money and time in putting out literature on those seven points — right up to passing out pamphlets to those entering Kezar.

EXHORTATION

Viet Cong and North Vietnamese negotiators were listening on a telephone in Paris when Bob Scheer exhorted the crowd to chant, "Support the Seven Points!" The crowd yelled vigorously with him. But the volume



UPI Photo

This was the scene Saturday at the anti-war rally in Kezar Stadium here

dropped hesitantly when Scheer shifted his words to "Victory for the NLF!"

The liberals might be for peace, but reluctant to support Viet Cong victory.

Still that was not the most important reason, because liberals were also apparent by their absence in New York where John Lennon set the tone by singing "All we are saying is give peace a chance," and in Los Angeles where the theme was the familiar "Out Now" demand.

UNIONS

One flat fact is that anti-war organizations of liberals have faded since massive marches of 1969. In San Francisco, there is no longer a Downtown Peace Coalition working the luncheon circuit on Montgomery street. Labor unions, dutifully, but

with some weary futility, endorsed the march but made no effort this time to encourage participation. There were other problems to be concerned with such as the economy or Willie McCovey's broken arm.

"Their sons aren't being drafted so they just don't give a damn any more," Scheer declared.

LARGER

The lack of liberal involvement also showed in the coalition's finances. By the end of the day, the coalition was still \$4000 in debt for a demonstration that even at \$8000 was probably the least expensive one put on here. Donations came in quarters and dimes. The green paper of the more affluent liberals largely stayed home.

The demonstration here

still had three times the number as that in Los Angeles.

Yet numbers aren't everything. The coalition kept its promise that the event would not be another long session of speech making. Thus, it was hard to count people, because there was constantly a crowd of 1000 to 3000 outside the stadium. They watched films on the war in Kezar Pavillion or wandered around the maze of booths at either side of

the stadium that were busy until 7 p.m.

There it was like a flea market of ideas. Mini-rallies were in progress; performers acting out skits or just playing music, literature being passed out, names being taken.

In that respect, the organizers were exuberant with success. The variety of new left projects related to social change got exposure and some new recruits, and because it was so open per-

haps some of the mystery about their motives dwindled. The New American Movement or the Revolutionary Union or the Anti-Imperialist coalition seemed less ominous when there was a chance to talk and even debate with the sincere young person behind the table.

The formal rally was too long and beset by too many problems.

In a gross snafu, sound men had set up the loudspeakers on the stage at the west end zone of the stadium

— then pointed them at the east end, opposite the direction intended.

PROBLEM

Too late, organizers discovered that instead of most people being within 20 yards of the stage, most were half a football field or more away. Throughout the day, the loudspeakers squawked, howled and hissed. Jane Fonda's words were almost lost altogether over the cranky sound system.

The April 22 Coalition, however, came away enthusiastic and vowing that this

time a big rally would not exhaust and destroy the coalition.

Gregory too was obviously pleased. He said he was going on a water-only diet for 40 days beginning today. In that time, he said, people could get on with real protest and "deal with the money in the country" to end the war.

"You got 40 days!" he rasped, and the crowd cheered.

The next anti-war rally in San Francisco has been tentatively scheduled for May 4.