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## War Apathy Is Traced To Powerless Feeling

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The most unsparing view of America's behavior during the crisis which the rest of the world calls an atrocity is published in the Dec. 29 issue of England's "New Statesman."

Under the title of "The Uncaring Americans," William Shawcross, a British journalist recently here as a Congressional Fellow, describes the scene in Washington as the bombs fell on Hanoi.

"On the grass in front of the White House, there is a special seasonal attraction. It is an avenue of brightly lit Christmas trees, each labeled after a state of the union or a U.S. dependency.

"This avenue and a coop at the end of it where half a dozen of Santa's reindeer lie wretchedly in the mud under night-long arc-lamps, is called the 'Pageant of Peace.' There are many signs to say so.

"The President of the United States can watch from the White House above, and every night he can see hundreds of people, most of them young, wandering about, holding hands, laughing at the reindeer and inspecting the gaudy tinseled trees.

"One of these represents Gaum, which is where the B52s come from. As, standing beside his own bright tree, he looks down, Nixon can smile to himself secure in the knowledge that no one cares."

Further on, Shawcross asks why Americans don't care, why there were no massive demonstrations in front of the White House, why no one resigned from his official post "in horror at this latest action." He concludes that some have cared too long, that others never cared about Vietnam and the Vietnamese.

"They were part of the peace movement, but all they cared about was that American draftees should not die. Nixon has granted them that. And so, they ate their Christmas dinners, contentedly . . ."

### Point of View

The same week that brought that devastating view of ourselves brought a letter that was an answer to and a refutation of it. It was addressed to this writer, one of many in the same vein, which fairly shrieks in every line about caring — and despairing.

The writer of the letter is a 35-year-old Foster City, Calif., housewife named Eileen Maloney Larsen. Her husband is an advertising executive, and the Larsens are the parents of three children, the youngest of whom was a year old when the war began and is now 14.

Mrs. Larsen, born in Chicago, was a Republican until 1964 when she switched parties to vote for Lyndon Johnson, to vote against the war. Seven years later, she worked for George McGovern.

In one eloquent paragraph she summarizes the toil and the anguish of those like herself who answered every call to peace and saw their efforts crowned with the destruction of Hanoi.

"We in California," she writes, "elected two anti-war senators and a clutch of congressmen (mine is Pete McCloskey) who promised to act to end the war. We supported their every anti-war move and wrote to urge them to do more. We wrote to the President and to our representatives; we sent telegrams. (In 1969, I wrote 300 letters to the White House, each saying 'Please end the war,' and I got 110 brochures back entitled 'Why We Are in Vietnam.') We campaigned for every dove we could find, we marched in demonstrations and took part in sit-ins. We sent money to Veterans for Peace and every

other peace-oriented group. We boycotted Dow (Chemical Company, which manufactured napalm). I'm sending the \$25 I won from Republicans who bet the war would be over by Christmas to help rebuild Bach Mai (the Hanoi hospital destroyed during the Christmas raid.)"

"As far as my own knowledge goes," Mrs. Larsen goes on, "We have done everything we legally can to end the war. If most of us went ahead and celebrated Christmas, if most of us watched the football games on television, it was with a sense of our own uselessness in having any effect on presidential policy whatever, no matter what we did. Why didn't I write a letter to the White House every day in 1972? Because I knew it wouldn't do anything except enrich the post office. You may call it apathy . . ."

"Tell us how to get through to a President who doesn't even consult his own National Security Council, his own Cabinet, his own Congress."

In a postscript, she says: "I'm really not angry with you or any other columnist who blames 'the American people' for the war. It's one man's war and only one man can end it, and we both know it and nothing we do can help, and it sours everything to know this."

Mrs. Larsen's name is legion. And those legions have, since the sack of Hanoi, been joined by millions more who may have blindly followed Richard Nixon in his every bloody move to end the war, but who saw at once that the Christmas bombing was a horrendous act of spite that defamed his office and his country. All they need, British papers please copy, is a leader.