

Center for Vietnamese Studies Stirs Illinois Dispute

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CARBONDALE, Ill., Feb. 22—Southern Illinois University at first glance seems a most unlikely magnet for antiwar militants.

Situated in the midst of rural conservatism, on the border between the Midwestern prairie and the Illinois-Kentucky coal country, the 23,000-student university has not been a center of revolt.

But since September, a new element has been in the picture: the Center for Vietnamese Studies and Programs, which is supported largely by a \$1-million grant from the Agency for International Development. It is said to be the only academic center in the United States specializing in Vietnam.

Yesterday about 2,500 students—perhaps 1,000 of them from colleges and universities elsewhere in Illinois—marched through Carbondale chanting "Off Aid" (for "Get A. I. D. off campus"), to open what their leaders vow will be a campaign to the finish against the Vietnamese study center.

Issue of Involvement

Leaders of the opposition, which includes both students and faculty members, contend the Government will use the center's expertise to perpetuate United States involvement in Vietnam.

University officials, whose supporters also include both students and faculty members, say they will not allow any encroachment on academic freedom by what they consider a band of political agitators. They insist the center is here to stay.

In two days of rallies, marches and demonstrations this weekend—punctuated by outbursts of window-breaking on and off the campus—the dissidents opened what they frankly describe as a drive to convert their cause into a national one. They were aided by organizers from the American Friends Service Committee, the Quaker group, who arranged for train, bus and car loads of students from other campuses to come to Carbondale.

For the moment, despite the show of outside support, university administrators appear to have the upper hand. As one dissident said, about 80 per cent of the campus is "totally apathetic."

The remaining 20 per cent, he said, is split about evenly between pro and con. And among the opponents of the center, there appear to be only about 200 hard-core activists.

The opposition has been spearheaded by the Student Coalition Against the Vietnamese Center. The coalition was born early last month when members of the Carbondale Revolutionary Union, a group affiliated with Students for a Democratic Society, suggested to the Southern Illinois Peace Committee, a student antiwar organization, that the two groups join to seek allies in the protest against the center.

Subsequently, the student Senate, the Black Student Union, the Graduate Student Council, several religious organizations and other campus groups joined in a loose polyglot federation that has organized and sustained this weekend's activities.

Less than a month ago, the opposition had almost dried up. Interest had dwindled to the point where only 10 to 15 persons were attending meetings of the dissidents.

"I was ready to give up and was going to resign," says Douglas Allen, a 28-year-old philosophy instructor who is faculty adviser to the Southern Illinois Peace Committee, and who apparently is the driving force in the protest.

Mock Trial Staged

Then, on Jan. 29, militant students tried to gain attention by staging a public mock trial in the university cafeteria, with a student impersonating Dr. Wesley Fishel as the defendant.

The real Dr. Fishel once headed a Michigan State University technical assistance team that ministered to the government of former South Vietnamese Premier Ngo Dinh Diem. To many in the antiwar movement Dr. Fishel is an enemy. This year he is a visiting professor at the Vietnamese study center here.

"Dr. Fishel" was found guilty of crimes against humanity, and as punishment was plastered in the face with huge "pies" made of shaving cream on tin plates.

Campus policemen, who apparently had been tipped off to the mock trial, were present in plain clothes. Who instigated what from then on is unclear. But in any case, a scuffle broke out between policemen and students, and in the next two days 19 persons were arrested in more such scuffles. Some students were beaten.

Suddenly the militants were re-aroused. Attendance at meetings surged beyond 200, and things began building toward this weekend's "spring offensive."

Since 1961, Southern Illinois has been sending faculty members to South Vietnam, under an A.I.D. grant, to instruct South Vietnamese on how to train elementary-school teachers. Out of this experience, said Dr. Delyte W. Morris, the university president, grew an affinity for and knowledge of Vietnam.

"We thought we'd like to be helpful in post-war Vietnam," he says, calling this the major impulse behind formation of the center.

The center's purpose, according to both the foreign aid agency and university officials, is to build a "competence in things Vietnamese." Its role is seen as one of basic scholarly research and teaching in the history, government, economics, language, literature and general culture of Vietnam—North and South.

The competence developed by the center would be the basis for future technical assistance to Vietnam, especially during post-war reconstruction, said Dr. Omer Kelley, of the foreign aid agency's Technical Assistance Bureau, in a telephone interview from his Washington office.

Such assistance—in education, road building and crop raising, for example—would be provided under separate contracts negotiated between the university and A.I.D., and would not involve the Vietnamese center directly, say university officials.

History of Opposition

Opposition to the center began building shortly after classes started last September. Mr. Allen of the Southern Illinois Peace Committee took a leading role immediately. Originally, the appointment of Dr. Fishel fueled the protest.

"We had heard about Fishel for years, and used him in speeches for years, and suddenly he's popping up on your own campus," says Mr. Allen. "It was too much."

Dr. Fishel was head of the Michigan State technical assistance team in South Vietnam from 1956 to 1958. In 1966, Ramparts magazine alleged that the team had been used as a cover by the Central Intelligence Agency.

Dr. Fishel says that five team members, who trained Vietnamese policemen for "counter-subversive" work, had at one time or another been with the C.I.A. but that all had severed their connection with the gov-

ernment and were on the Michigan State payroll.

"Everyone knew their backgrounds," Dr. Fishel says. "There was no secret about it. Nobody infiltrated the Michigan State project."

No allegations of C.I.A. involvement have been made regarding the Southern Illinois center.

Fishel's Role

Of his own role Dr. Fishel says that as one of the few American professors specializing in Vietnam he has long wanted to see establishment of such a center. He is gratified, he said in an interview, to have a part in it.

Because of his expertise on Vietnam, Dr. Fishel was brought in for one year to teach Vietnamese government and politics at the center, and to develop a journal on Southeast Asia studies. When that was discovered, "Off Fishel" signs bloomed on the campus.

Mr. Allen said in a private conversation last week that Dr. Fishel loomed less important now because he will not be here after next September and particularly because the protesters have learned more about the center itself and can attack it directly.

Dr. Fishel's decline as a target has roughly coincided with the rise of the Student Coalition against the Vietnamese Center.

The coalition has been aided by staff members of the Chicago unit of the American Friends Service Committee, who had met Mr. Allen at peace rallies elsewhere in the state.

One of the committee staffers, Miss Wendy Batson, described herself as "an organizer." She spent the last few days not only offering general advice but also arranging for phalanxes of students to converge on Carbondale from elsewhere, and arranging for nationally known speakers for a rally after yesterday's march.

Speeches Heard

The speakers included I. F. Stone, the journalist, and Jonathan Mersky, co-director of the East Asia Center at Dartmouth College.

After the pie-throwing incident and the student arrests three weeks ago, the coalition began drawing support from faculty sources.

Thanks largely to the lobbying of Dr. Reinhold Mueller, 29, an assistant professor of history, 19 of 25 members of the history department voted this week, in effect, to disassociate themselves from the Vietnamese study center. This amounts to a boycott, since

the history department must approve the hiring of a historian for the center. If the coalition is able to sustain its pressure—and can find another pie-in-the-face incident at the proper time—the war at Southern Illinois may be a long one.