

If the perception of that gap should not be unrealistically exaggerated, neither should it be minimized. It does exist. And if our political system is not designed to do everything, yet it can be expected to do much. Much more than it is currently doing. It is this perception, acutely felt, that provides the motivation and driving force behind many of those activities—some only dubiously to be termed political—which are disturbing the present political scene and our recent political certainties.

If the recent talk about a “new politics” means anything it means that *within* the system there is taking place another historic realignment of forces. The realignment is not to be grasped, however, by the concepts we have employed for decades. If it takes place—and this is still speculative—we will have to find new concepts to fit the new reality. But that new wine, however heady, will still be poured into the familiar bottles of our present political system.

J. F.

RESISTANCE

Many young men who are resisting the draft look to the churches for support. Some of them deserve the support they request—and some do not. Unfortunately the line of distinction has been unnecessarily blurred, and a number of ministering clerics are making what might charitably be called reckless statements of general support.

The basis on which a draft resister has a right to appeal to the church is the traditional Christian teaching that in a conflict between individual conscience and the State one must follow his conscience. The difficulty, of course, is that the person may be acting out of an uninformed and errant conscience. It is the function of one who would minister to such a person to see that, to the extent possible, he develop an informed conscience. If that person feels that he must still oppose the State—and whether or not his conscience is errant—he has a right to look to his church for moral support. Given present conditions he will not always receive such support, but at least the tradition supports his appeal.

But there is a group of young men who are resisting the draft as a matter of political strategy. They intend to assert not only the primacy of their consciences but of their political insight and

judgment. By means that are sometimes questionable and sometimes clearly illegal, they intend to obstruct the policies that have been decided upon and implemented by a duly constituted government. There are many things that can be said about such activities, among them that they are likely to be self-defeating. More important here, those who engage in such a political strategy can hardly expect the churches to support it, even by indirection.

Those clergymen who are sympathetic to the troubled draft resister, the person who conscientiously objects to participation in this war, have a particular obligation to draw the distinction between conscientious objection and a strategy of political obstruction. Such an educational endeavor might not change the decision of the draft resister but it would ensure that the decision was made with greater understanding, and therefore greater freedom.

GENERATIONS OF STUDENTS

The voice of the student is heard in the land. And it is listened to, in this country as in countries around the world. But we Americans have a superior talent for attaching ready-fix, easy-switch labels, and in the United States “generations” of students arrive, develop and fade with dazzling rapidity. We have not yet found the appropriate label for the young activists who, plunging into the traditional political system, have dispossessed the hippies as the objects of our national attention—but we will.

When the Russian poet Yevtushenko visited the United States in 1966 he commented on the general tendency to idealize the upcoming generations. Recalling Trotsky's statement that “students are the barometers of revolution,” he called it an empty phrase. He then added that there are fine people and scoundrels among the young and the old but “Young scoundrels are more dangerous because they live longer.” And not long before he died, Konrad Adenauer spoke of those young people who are “not sufficiently tied to history's permanent threads or to the bitter lessons of experience.” These cautions are not recalled to slur our present generation of students but to dampen slightly the imagination of the phrase makers.