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The Building of a New Left Conglomerate in the City of Ann Arbor: VOICE, the Black Action Movement, and the Human Rights Party (1965-1975)

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The Building of a New Left Conglomerate in the City of Ann Arbor: VOICE, the Black
Action Movement and the Human Rights Party (1965-1975)

A thesis presented to the Faculty of the McAnulty College and Graduate School of
Liberal Arts
Duquesne University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

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March 22, 2006

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Introduction

In April 1972, two, twenty-something members of the fledgling Human Rights Party (HRP) were elected to the Ann Arbor City Council, shocking the local political establishment. However, within a year, the bright future that once seemed inevitable for the burgeoning independent party began to fade. In June 1973, in a violent act unprecedented in the city of Ann Arbor's history, HRP demonstrators decided to throw placard signs at Republican council members who had voted against recognizing Gay Pride Week for the city in a council meeting.¹ The party, the leading advocate for gay, lesbian and transgender rights in the area since its founding in 1970, was now slowly self-destructing largely due to its rigid idealism. The Human Rights Party would never be able to duplicate the electoral success experienced in early 1972. The student radicalism that had been a strong element of the local area since VOICE's anti-war activism on the University of Michigan (U-M) in the middle 1960s, and its ideological child, the Human Rights Party, would slowly fade from the local arena after 1973.

The end of the New Left movement both in Ann Arbor and throughout the United States has allowed historians to decipher the meaning of the most recent leftist movement. The historiography of the New Left has largely focused on national developments within the 1960s movement. Traditional scholars have emphasized that organizations such as Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) went from reforming society through deep ideological concern over the inequality of all races and production of nuclear weapons by the United States, to a more militant approach as U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War escalated. Revisionist historians have emphasized the continuity of the New Left regarding its relationship with the Old Left of the 1930s and

¹ Eve Silberman, "Bringing the Revolution Home," *Ann Arbor Observer*, May 2005, 53.

1940s. In the late 1990s, many scholars turned their focus to specific developments within the New Left movement, referred to as the post-revisionist interpretation. Other historians who emerged during the 1990s emphasized regional developments of the New Left, although with a similar argument adhered by the traditional school; known as the neo-traditionalist interpretation. This paper will champion the neo-traditionalist historical interpretation by examining the developments of what is customarily considered part of New Left, although with a new emphasis on areas often not relegated to the movement, although within the confines of Ann Arbor, Michigan specifically at the University of Michigan. The major organizations that made up this movement were the VOICE Political Party -- Students for a Democratic Society affiliate (unclear if the name is an acronym), the Human Rights Party, and to a much lesser extent: the Black Action Movement.

In the early years, the VOICE Political Party was quite popular with both students and faculty as it predominately focused on anti-war tactics against U.S. involvement in Vietnam -- both with the first teach-in and the Ann Arbor Draft Board sit-in. In late 1966, the organization battled the university administration on several fronts: the release of VOICE names to a congressional committee, police spying, and grade submissions to local draft boards. By 1967, the organization weakened as it increasingly focused on war research on the Ann Arbor campus and the leadership within the organization was increasingly viewed as too "bureaucratic." VOICE split in 1968 as the Jesse James Gang gained control of the group and overthrew the "old guard;" these new members advocated more militant tactics in combating the university. The takeover of VOICE by the "gang" led to several violent confrontations between student and local

authorities, and the eventual crackdown by the Michigan administration, under the leadership of Robben Fleming, the president of the university from 1968 until 1979. The combination of both the division within VOICE and the rhetoric spewing from zealous, anti-establishment new members of SDS calling for a student revolution, ultimately led to the fall of the SDS chapter at Ann Arbor.

The early 1970s at the Ann Arbor campus were also marked by the emergence of other leftist or activist movements that filled the void left in the wake of SDS's declining presence. For example, the Black Action Movement (BAM) emerged at U-M in 1970, in an effort to increase Black student enrollment to 10 percent. This organization led a peaceful, three-week strike that eventually forced the university administration to cave in to its demands. The Black student collective ultimately won its grievances against the University of Michigan by building support primarily among those members of the university community who had supported VOICE in the past, the students and faculty of the LSA (Literature, Science, and Art). Furthermore, BAM's non-violent nature and its lack of any anti-establishment rhetoric, which had characterized the later years of SDS, allowed BAM to be embraced by a larger community, both inside and outside the university, and not necessarily immersed in radical politics.

The Radical Independent Party and later the Human Rights Party, unlike BAM, was a leftist political entity, bent on dramatically changing, or "radicalizing" the local political structure. Emerging in 1970, this loosely based socialist party attempted to build a base by focusing on U-M students as its core constituents. Its limited successes within the city of Ann Arbor resulted from the ratification of the 26th amendment to the U.S. Constitution and the continued U.S. military engagement in Vietnam -- an issue still

provoking anger from students on many of the nation's university campuses, including Michigan. However, by the middle 1970s the party was in complete disarray and would never successfully reemerge.

This paper will argue that the SDS chapter at the University of Michigan from May 1965 to December 1966 was an influential organization when both the general student population and faculty supported its aims, such as protesting the war in Vietnam and combating the university's draft deferment policy. However by 1967, as the Ann Arbor leftist organization began to focus on issues of less significance to their constituents, such as war research, VOICE became weaker at U-M. Eventually SDS-Ann Arbor became more aggressive in its approach against military recruiters at the university by 1969, after new members had taken over SDS - Ann Arbor. The revived chapter advocated anti-establishment rhetoric rather than reform, as it attempted to broaden its scope beyond university issues. Nonetheless, the organization never regained its once important place on the U-M campus after 1968; although VOICE's radical rhetoric throughout the 1960s allowed for the tradition of student protest and political involvement to thrive, both at the University of Michigan and in the city of Ann Arbor, well in the 1970s. BAM, a U-M organization made up of primarily African-Americans, battled the administration in 1970 over its low enrollment of fellow Black students. Unlike VOICE, even in its heyday, BAM won against U-M officials because the overwhelming majority of faculty and students supported their cause particularly for their non-violent, reform-minded approach, which originally emerged with VOICE in the middle 1960s. Furthermore, the 1968 division within VOICE inadvertently allowed some of the misplaced members to help create a local political party in 1970: the Radical

Independent Party (RIP), which later became the Human Rights Party (HRP), in an attempt to give radicals a voice against the political establishment, made up of the pro-war Democratic and Republican Parties. During HRP's tenure of existence, it elected members to the Ann Arbor City council and helped pass legislation decriminalizing marijuana and banning discrimination based on sexual orientation. In 1972, two members of the Human Rights Party were elected to the city council, Nancy Wechsler, a graduate of U-M, and Jerry DeGriek, a senior history major at the university. The election of these twenty-something political novices marked the pinnacle of success for the party. After 1972, the party would face division over its refusal to support the candidacy of Democratic Presidential nominee George McGovern in the 1972 election and over the role the HRP leadership played within its own party. Furthermore, by 1973 direct American combat operations had ended in Vietnam, which had spurred the student radical movement's growth at U-M in the 1960s and the subsequent decade. Although, the party briefly rebounded in subsequent elections, it was shut out of the political process for good by 1975.

Literature Review

The 1960s were a time of tremendous change and upheaval in American society, largely caused by the Civil Rights movement and the escalation of the war in Vietnam. These two specific issues spawned the rise and eventual growth of the New Left: a youthful, mostly white, middle-class movement bent on reform and, and for some, eventually revolution. The literature on these reformers turned revolutionaries can be organized around four schools of thought. The traditional view has primarily focused on Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Revisionism has taken a more critical view of SDS as a whole, and largely has incorporated the New Left with other American leftist movements of the past. This interpretation stresses continuity rather than discontinuity between different generational leftist movements. The most recent analysis on the New Left, post-revisionism, has been geared towards the study of specific regions where the New Left thrived in the 1960s and early 1970s. Recent historians have also attempted to broaden their analysis of the New Left beyond members of SDS.

The first generation of historians began focusing on the New Left in the early 1970s. Many of these writers examined the national SDS. Alan Adelson's study largely praises the movement for its reform-mindedness, but criticizes its later development into a Marxist-orientated organization.² Arguably the most definitive tome on the New Left, and specifically SDS, was written by Kirkpatrick Sale in 1973. His book details the movement from its beginning at the University of Michigan, until its end with the 1970 accidental death of three Weathermen, the last incarnation of SDS, by their own bomb in

² Alan Adelson. *SDS: A Profile*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1972.

New York City.³ Sale argues that the student organization went from reforming society to attempting to revolutionize it -- with disastrous results. Two other authors who emerged in the 1970s to write a detailed history of the New Left were Edward J. Bacciocco, with *The New Left in America* and Irwin Unger with *The Movement*.³ These two histories, like Adelson's and Sale's, argue that student radicals became more bent on violent overthrow of the U.S. government rather than achieving social change through peaceful means. Furthermore, like Sale's definitive work, these men use sources primarily made up of works written by members of SDS, such as *New Left Notes* and publications from left-leaning journals, such as *Partisan Review*.

Interpretations of the New Left remained consistent well into the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s. According to Winifred Breines, in his review essay entitled, "Whose New Left," the consensus among first-generation historians has been that the movement shifted rapidly to militancy by 1968 with the growing frustration over the failure of peaceful anti-war demonstrations. In the 1980s and beyond, works by such historians as James Miller, Maurice Isserman, and Terry Anderson appeared.⁵ Like the historians writing in the 1970s, they largely focused on the national SDS movement and the decade that saw its rise and fall. These authors, like their predecessors, primarily focused on the white men who led the national organization, such as Tom Hayden, Tim

³ Kirkpatrick Sale. *SDS*. New York: Vintage Books, 1974; According to the author, members of the Weathermen decided to attack apartment buildings on Michigan Avenue, in Chicago in an effort to show their contempt for capitalism, resulting in their arrest.

⁴ Edward Bacciocco. *The New Left in America: Reform to Revolution 1956-1970*. Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1974; Irwin Unger. *The Movement: A History of the American Left 1959-1970*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1974.

⁵ Brienens, Winifred. "Whose New Left." *Journal of American History* 75 (September 1988): 528-545; James Miller. *Democracy is in The Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988; Maurice Isserman. *If I Had A Hammer: The Death of the Old Left and Birth of the New Left*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1987; Terry Anderson. *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Gitlin, and Al Haber. In addition to the previous sources used, such as pamphlets and leftist publications, oral interviews were added to further the traditional perspective on the New Left. These historians used additional sources to argue that the New Left lacked intellectual rigor as it became larger and more diverse, thus causing the movement to turn to violent ends and ultimately destroying SDS.

The 1990s saw the emergence of the revisionist interpretation. The decade witnessed the emergence of the first baby-boomer president -- a child of the 1960s (Bill Clinton). This event caused historians and other scholars to reevaluate previous views of the significance of the New Left. Paul Lyons argues in *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties*, that the New Left's influence over 1960s youth has been overemphasized by past scholars. To support his claim he discusses the strength of William F. Buckley's "New Right" organization: Young Americans for Freedom (YAF).⁶ Lyons interviewed many middle-class, white men and women who did support the war in Vietnam. In fact, Lyons' suggests that the "silent" baby-boomer generation supported the war in larger numbers than their parents. Margaret and Richard G. Braungart also attempt to understand the lasting legacy of the 1960s. Their observations show that the New Right had as powerful an impact in shaping a generation's political ideology as did the members of the left in the 1960s.⁷

The New Left, according to the revisionist interpretation, was a continuation of past leftist movements. Some historians during this period attempted to put the New Left into the context of other American leftist movements. John Patrick Diggins argues that

⁶ Paul Lyons. *New Left, New Right, and the Legacy of the Sixties*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1996.

⁷ Margaret Braungart and Richard G. Braungart. "The Effects of the 1960s Political Generation on Former Left – and Right – Wing Youth Activists Leaders." *Social Problems* 38 (August 1991): 297-314.

strong parallels exist between the New Left of the 1960s and the Lyrical Left of the 1920s.⁸ Like the socialist-minded men and women of the 1920s, who held romantic notions of Russia's Bolshevik Revolution, the New Left had a strong infatuation -- at least in its later years -- with third-world revolutionaries, such as Che Guevara and Fidel Castro. Both Richard Pells' *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age* and Kevin Mattson's *Intellectuals in Action* show that the New Left developed from the ideology of liberal intellectuals of the 1940s and 1950s.⁹ Another study, Richard Ellis' *The Dark Side of the Left*, argues that those deemed left-of-center throughout American history have a track record of resorting to violence or rejecting the masses that they once so openly embraced -- the New Left included.¹⁰ All three authors in their studies attempt to bridge the gap between the different generational leftist and reform movements of the past. These historians emphasize continuity between radical or liberal movements, rather than discontinuity, unlike traditional scholars.

By the late 1990s many scholars writing on the New Left began to look at new avenues of study that had not been tapped by the traditional or revisionist interpretations. Many historians became well aware of the lack of histories written on local developments.¹¹ Unlike their predecessors these historians have focused on local areas where the New Left thrived during the 1960s and early 1970s. They have tended to rely extensively on oral interviews of both participants and observers of the New Left

⁸ John Patrick Diggins. *The Rise and Fall of the American Left*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1992.

⁹ Richard Pells. *The Liberal Mind in a Conservative Age: American Intellectuals in the 1940s and 1950s*. 2nd ed. Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1989; Kevin Mattson. *Intellectuals in Action: The Origins of the New Left and Radical Liberalism, 1945-1970*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.

¹⁰ Richard J. Ellis. *The Dark Side of the Left: Illiberal Egalitarianism in America*. Lawrence Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

¹¹ Andrew Hunt, " 'When Did the Sixties Happen?' Searching for New Directions." *Journal of Social History* 33 (Fall 1999) : 147-161.

movement. Additionally, many of these works incorporated organizations and people not necessarily deemed part of the New Left in the past, such as religious organizations and minority groups. Douglas C. Rossinow in his book primarily focuses on the regional developments of the New Left in Austin, Texas.¹² He argues that both Christianity and existentialism played heavily in the Austin movement, specifically the YMCA-YWCA (The Young Men's Christian Association and Young Women's Christian Association) that encouraged a utopian ideal among youth in the early 1960s. Wesley Hogan limits his analysis to the students at Swarthmore College. He discusses how college students were involved with the Civil Rights struggle in the North.¹³ A work that has been very helpful with the development of this paper is Bret Eynon's *Community, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Political Life*.¹⁴ This dissertation analyzes how the Civil Rights movement of the late 1950s and early 1960s in Ann Arbor, Michigan later influenced the regional developments of the anti-war movement of the middle 1960s. This work is especially important since SDS began at Ann Arbor. Another historian focusing on the development of the New Left in a regional setting is Paul Lyons. He emphasizes that local developments in Philadelphia paralleled the national movement.¹⁵ Like his contemporaries, he argues that Christian organizations played a role in New Left activities.

¹² Douglas Rossinow. *The Politics of Authenticity: Liberalism, Christianity, and the New Left in America*. New York: Columbia Press, 1998.

¹³ Wesley Hogan. "How Democracy Travels: SNCC, Swarthmore Students, and the Growth of the Student Movements in the North, 1961-1964." *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 126 (July 2002). 437-470.

¹⁴ Bret Neal Eynon. "Community, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Political Life: The Civil Rights Influence on New Left Political Culture in Ann Arbor, 1958-1966" (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 1993).

¹⁵ Paul Lyons. *The People of This Generation: The Rise and Fall of the New Left in Philadelphia*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003.

In the post- September 11th era many historians, like those in the late 1990s, continued to broaden their scope beyond the more narrow traditionalist and revisionist areas of study. In an age where both radicalism and liberalism lay threatened not only by terrorism, but by the continuing rise of conservatism in the public sphere, a new emphasis was given to the interdependency of organizations and people that had often been ignored in the study of the New Left in the past. These historians have emphasized the unique dynamics that sustained such organizations as the Weathermen and the communal values that flourished among members of the mostly white New Left and those outside its ranks. Jennifer Frost's *An Interracial Movement of the Poor* analyzes the Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), developed by members of SDS. This project was a highly touted scheme by SDS that placed college students within economically deprived areas in cities such as Chicago, Newark, and Cleveland, allowing a relationship to blossom between affluent white college students and the minorities of the inner city. Her historical account of an often neglected chapter of SDS history attempts to bridge the gap between the national movement and its relationship to local members of an urban community. Along the same lines, Francesca Polletta, a sociologist, discusses the participatory democracy advocated throughout the twentieth century by reform movements. Unlike the revisionists, however she believes the spirit of freedom still persists in organizations today, thanks in part to SDS.¹⁶ Another area that is beginning to receive attention is the New Left's internationalism. The Weathermen and West Germany's Red Army Fraction (RAF) were focused on destroying capitalism in the

¹⁶ Jennifer Frost. *An Interracial Movement of the Poor: Community Organizing and the Left in the 1960s*. New York: New York University Press, 2001; Francesca Polletta. *Freedom Is An Endless Meeting: Democracy in American Social Movements*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002.

1970s. Jeremy Varon argues that New Left internationalism was a force to be reckoned with, as it attempted to overthrow “imperialistic” nations through violent means.¹⁷

The broadening of the study of the New Left also has lent more detail to studies within the post-revisionist school of those not part of the predominately white SDS organization. For example, *The New Left Revisited* touches upon the developments of both Blacks and Whites within the New Left with a regional emphasis. Premilla Nadasen, for instance, incorporates the Black women’s struggle for welfare rights within a larger context of a diverse leftist movement.¹⁸

The historiography of the New Left, which has developed throughout the last thirty years, contains four specific schools of thought: traditionalist, revisionist, neo-traditionalist, and post-revisionist. The scholars within the first school have argued the discontinuity between the New Left and leftist movements of the past, while focusing on national developments within the movement. Revisionist historians, on the other hand, have tended to argue the continuity between generational leftist organizations that have lessened the importance of the New Left, in regards to its uniqueness. The Neo-traditionalists’ thesis remains similar to the traditionalists; however the former have focused on local, rather than national developments. Post-revisionists have emphasized the influence of the New Left on society-at-large, moving beyond the Civil Rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s and early 1970s. This paper champions the neo-traditionalist interpretation, as it focuses on three particular Ann Arbor activist

¹⁷ Jeremy Varon. *Bringing the War Home: The Weather Underground, The Red Army Faction and Revolutionary Violence in the Sixties and Seventies*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

¹⁸ John McMillian and Paul Buhle., eds. *The New Left Revisited*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003; Premilla Nadasen. “Expanding the Boundaries of the Women’s Movement: Black Feminism and the Struggle of Welfare Rights.” *Feminist Studies* 28 (Summer 2002): 270-301.

organizations: VOICE, the BAM, and the HRP during the 1965-1975 period. While VOICE and the HRP eventually ceased to exist after experiencing limited success in Ann Arbor. BAM, on the contrary, won a hard-fought battle with the University of Michigan in spring 1970. The failure of both VOICE and the Human Rights Party was the consequence of its ideological rigidity that intensified over time, particularly with the former organization. However, BAM's victory was the result of its reform-minded approach that originally characterized VOICE during the middle 1960s. A central theme emerges in the study of the "New Left" in the city of Ann Arbor during the 1965-1975 period: reform minded organizations flourish, rather than those expunging revolutionary rhetoric or ideological rigidity.

Historical Background – Pre-1965 Radicalism

The early 1960s brought a wave of optimism and hope to a nation in the midst of the Cold War. The early years of the decade promised opportunity for all citizens, as sit-ins broke out throughout the South to protest the discriminatory nature of Jim Crow at lunch counters. Furthermore, the election of John F. Kennedy to the presidency in 1960 offered many idealistic youth the hope that they could positively influence the world around them; although Kennedy by many accounts was neither a radical nor a liberal. Both the election of a youthful man and the dawning of the sit-in demonstrations marked a renewal for the left in the U.S., as it attempted to find new directions after years of idleness brought on by the anti-communist rhetoric of the post-World War II era. Like many of the members of Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), who headed the large demonstrations in the South, the left was reinvigorated with the emergence of a youthful, white, and mostly middle-class movement. These young reformers or radicals were known collectively as the New Left.

The student radicalism that emerged in the 1960s largely had its roots at the University of Michigan. Many of the early members of the national SDS movement were originally students at the Ann Arbor campus. Alan Haber, a graduate student at the university with the help of Sharon Jeffery and Bob Ross founded the national organization of Students for a Democratic Society in 1960 -- which replaced the defunct Students for Industrial Democracy (SLID). Upon SDS's founding it became the educational arm of the League of Industrial Labor (LID), a socialist organization started in 1905 by John Dewey and Upton Sinclair.¹⁹ The purpose of SDS in the early years

¹⁹ Tom Hayden, *Rebel: A Personal History of the 1960s* (Los Angeles: Red Hen Press, 2003), 27; According to Tom Hayden in his updated autobiography, VOICE was the first independent political party

was to create a just and peaceful world through active participation in both national and local affairs. By 1962, the national SDS organization was officially allied with the VOICE Political Party at the University of Michigan, which was started by Tom Hayden. The early years of the national movement were primarily centered on the civil rights struggle, while VOICE was primarily geared to advocating reform at the university.

The national SDS organization was involved in the civil rights movement during the early 1960s. Tom Hayden, one of the leaders affiliated with the national movement as well as the local VOICE chapter often discussed the civil rights movement when talking about creating a democratic university. Throughout 1961-1962 Hayden spent much of his time in the South working with SNCC. The experience in that movement inspired many of the members of SDS, particularly Hayden, to change society into a more just and authentic community, thus allowing all members to participate in the political process. This was especially true as the organization, after 1964, increasingly combated U.S efforts to draft young college men to fight in Vietnam and attempted to politically organize the underprivileged in urban centers with the ERAP project.²⁰

The first four years of VOICE at U-M was primarily geared to advocating reform at the university, though the organization was not necessarily limited to those issues. In the early stages of its development it was a student-based political party bent on representing student demands, on such issues as conduct and course curriculum. The party did run candidates for the Student Government Council (SGC), at least at its onset, and used its clout on the council to publicize both the civil rights struggle occurring in the

on Michigan's campus when it was started in 1960. It remains unknown how the affiliation between VOICE and SDS came to be. It would be assumed a close relationship between Al Haber and Tom Hayden at U-M led to ties between these two organizations.

²⁰ Eynon, "Community, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Political Life," 296.

South and a variety of issues affecting the U-M campus, including the restrictions placed on female students at the university.²¹ Additionally, VOICE attempted to bring educational programs to the Ann Arbor campus in an effort to expose the student body to both the liberal and radical agendas. During its early years, VOICE also branched out and participated in protests against U.S. involvement in Vietnam.²² A concentration on both local and national affairs allowed VOICE to become a burgeoning organization at Ann Arbor in the early 1960s.

²¹ Ibid, 240.

²² "VOICE -SDS –An Introduction," Bret Eynon Papers, *SDS-Miscellaneous*, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan. (hereafter Bentley Library).

Chapter 1 – VOICE-SDS: 1965-1970

The years 1965-1966 marked the height of VOICE's influence at U-M as it protested U.S. involvement in Vietnam and confronted the university administration on a variety of issues. However, after the student power movement of late 1966, the organization would decline in stature as it turned to issues of less importance to the general student population. Ultimately, the organization would be taken over by more militant radicals, the Jesse James Gang in 1968. These new leaders of the local SDS chapter would turn to more aggressive measures in accomplishing their goals. March 1965 was the beginning of a defining period for VOICE as it played a prominent role in the first teach-in to occur on a college campus.

March 24, 1965 marked a milestone for the campus community at the University of Michigan. On that date three thousand students, faculty, and townspeople showed up at the Diag (student union) to protest their dissatisfaction with U.S. involvement in the war in Vietnam. On that early spring day, lectures, workshops, and discussions were held denouncing the Lyndon Johnson Administration's policies in Southeast Asia. The teach-in was not headed by the VOICE chapter; it largely was organized by those who considered themselves members of the local SDS chapter. Officially the event was headed by certain faculty members under the guidance of philosophy Professor Arnold S. Kaufmann.²³ The teach-in of March 1965 marked the beginning of a brief period (1965-1966) where VOICE-SDS was highly visible and influential on the U-M campus.

Several members of VOICE participated in the event that would help start the national anti-war movement, including Michael Zweig, a graduate student who was a highly visible member of the SDS local chapter in the middle 1960s. He recalled, "We

²³ *Michigan Daily*, March 26, 1965.

did a lot of stuff as students, helping organize things, running off programs, getting people to know what was going on.”²⁴ In fact, VOICE members helped spread word of the event to the general student population; the teach-in originally was only expected to bring in a few hundred participants. The thousands who attended the event showcased the wide influence and appeal VOICE had on the Ann Arbor campus. Without the members of VOICE-SDS, the March 1965 teach-in, largely organized by faculty within the social sciences and humanities departments, might have failed to receive the response that it did.

Arnold Kaufmann, the faculty member largely responsible for heading the effort to organize the campus community to protest the Vietnam War would later vent his frustration in a 1970 letter, saying that VOICE-SDS took too much credit for the success of the event and subsequent teach-ins at U-M. According to Kaufmann, this was mainly due to professors’ unwillingness to do labor they deemed below their intellectual capabilities, such as advertising for the teach-ins. This left VOICE-SDS in control of the grassroots effort to mobilize the anti-war movement on the Michigan campus, which led to increased visibility for the local SDS chapter and the national SDS movement -- largely unknown until the March 1965 event.²⁵

The university administration at Michigan had reservations about the event when faculty first announced that they were going to walk off the job for one day to show their solidarity with the anti-war movement; the U-M administration under President Hatcher had some serious concerns. Fearing retribution, members of the faculty decided instead to have a teach-in to avoid any confrontation with Hatcher and the university

²⁴ Eynon, “Community, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Political Life,” 415.

²⁵ Arnold S. Kaufmann, Los Angeles, CA, to George Abbott White, Watertown, MA, June 19, 1970, Arnold S. Kaufmann Papers (hereafter Kaufman Papers) SDS, Bentley Library.

administration. This led to full approval by the university and the use of its facilities in holding the event.²⁶ The faculty decision marked the beginning of a rocky relationship between student activists and the Michigan administration. The flap over the proposed faculty strike would highlight Hatcher's animosity towards those who overstepped their bounds, regardless of whether they were students or faculty members.

The turnout of over three thousand people at the teach-in also showed that the early anti-war movement at Michigan stemmed from the popularity of those organizing the event and the idealism surrounding the anti-war movement. Freshman Susan Harding, not an activist at Michigan prior to the teach-in, discussed in 1981 how the event changed her life. "There were thousands of people there. It felt big -- we were engaged in something larger than ourselves -- it created a kind of euphoria and the basis for a kind of commitment later."²⁷

The March 1965 teach-in at U-M -- the first of its kind -- helped spawn similar outbreaks of student activism on college campuses throughout the country. At Berkeley twelve thousand people showed up for a teach-in that lasted two days to hear speakers such as Dr. Benjamin Spock and Senator Ernest Gruening of Alaska speak out against U.S. involvement in Vietnam. However student protest was not solely contained within the large universities of the nation, which spread throughout the nation's campuses. Marist College in Poughkeepsie, New York, a Catholic institution for higher learning, had its own teach-in against the war. The events of March 1965 at the University of Michigan caused a chain reaction of student activism that engulfed many of the nation's

²⁶ Eynon, "Community, Democracy, and the Reconstruction of Political Life," 414.

²⁷ Bret Eynon, and the Contemporary History Project ed. *Something Exploded in My Mind: Voices of the Anti-War Movement* (Ann Arbor: MI: the Project, 1981), 9.

campuses and led to a strengthening student movement not seen in generations past.²⁸

Even the Johnson administration took notice of the teach-ins popping up throughout the country. In May 1965, the administration sent a three-man unit, called the “truth team” to carry the war message to college campuses, specifically in the Midwest. At the University of Iowa and the University of Wisconsin these men of “truth” were largely booed and shouted down by student protesters.²⁹ The dawn of the student movement had begun, thanks in part to VOICE’s organizational skill in putting together the first teach-in on a college campus anywhere in the nation.

By the fall of 1965, after successfully participating in the March teach-in and the subsequent anti-war protests held in Ann Arbor and Washington D.C., VOICE decided to further its role as the organization for student and faculty radicals on Michigan’s campus by participating in an act of civil disobedience on October 15 and 16. The draft sit-in, where thirty-nine students and faculty sat in at the Ann Arbor Selective Service Office in protest over U.S. involvement in Vietnam, was marked by the arrest of thirty-eight U-M students for trespassing.³⁰ The weekend’s events marked a milestone for VOICE as it increasingly gained greater influence and attention within the university community, by both faculty and the administration. The sit-in at the draft board marked the continuation of the strength VOICE carried in combating what the organization saw as an “immoral” war in Vietnam. The events of 1965 would carry the U-M SDS chapter into the next year stronger and more influential.

²⁸ William L. O’Neill., *Coming Apart: An informational History of America in the 1960s* (New York: Quandrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1975), 141-142.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ “Ann Arbor Sit In and Draft Board Reclassification Cases,” Micheal Zweig Papers (hereafter Zweig Papers) *Mimeographed Papers –Various Groups*, Bentley Library.

The events that unfolded in the fall of 1965 at U-M were largely the result of the Johnson Administration increasing draft calls after 1964. Prior to that year, (1960-1964) 100,000 young men per year, on average were drafted into the military. However, by the beginning of 1965 until 1968, 300,000 men on average were being drafted into the armed forces.³¹ The escalation of U.S. involvement in Vietnam meant a larger number of males – many of whom were opposed to the war -- would be drafted and sent to Southeast Asia.

The events of October 1965 marked increased involvement in VOICE-SDS by the general student population, both during the protest and after the days' events. The organization's meetings grew in size as did the number of those actively participating in daily operations of VOICE. This was largely the result of the Ann Arbor Draft Board sit-in on October 15 and the subsequent arrest of those participating.³² The events of October 1965 showed that opposition to the draft was an issue that had wide appeal to the U-M community at-large. The catalyst for the growth of VOICE-SDS during the fall of 1965 arguably was caused by the feelings of many students and faculty that the draft was a form of indentured servitude that needed to be eliminated, specifically in light of the events in Vietnam.³³ Although draft deferments were given to students attending a college or university in 1965, the escalation of the Vietnam War in the previous spring, caused many college-age men to ask themselves how long the deferments would last and would they have to marry or attend graduate school in the future to avoid being sent to Vietnam.

³¹ Patterson, James T. *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974* (New York: Oxford Press, 1996), 598-599.

³² Voice Political Party Newsletter (Ann Arbor, Michigan), November 1965.

³³ "Are Draftees U.S. Slaves," The University of Michigan News Service, July 21, 1965, Bret Eynon Papers, *Selective Service*.

The arrest of the thirty-eight students that October, including Bill Ayers, the future leader of the Jesse James Gang, showed that VOICE and student radicals were bent on stopping what they deemed an unjust system that drafted men in what they considered an immoral war -- though through non-violent means. Ironically, the man who would later usher in the final violent chapter for SDS, both at Ann Arbor and on the national stage, would also be an active participant in the civil disobedience that occurred at the draft board sit-in. Ayers recalled his experience in his 2001 memoir.

We sang, we chanted, and when we became a little rowdy, a leader from the American Friends would gently remind us of the importance of being dignified in our witness. Then we would sit quietly for a bit, talking among ourselves, but before long Stan would pull out his dangerous guitar and proud Ruthie would take up the tune, and the singing would begin.³⁴

Although protesters avoided violent tactics, their sit-in at the Ann Arbor Draft Board did not mean they were immune to arrest by the Ann Arbor police. By the end of the day on October 15, the thirty-eight people who were still present at the draft board were taken away by the local law enforcement -- four cops per individual protester.³⁵ The student radicals affiliated with the University of Michigan remained steadfast against the Ann Arbor police who carried them off to the local jail. All the men arrested that day lost their college based deferments -- thirteen in all. The male students' arrest and eventual conviction, relating to the break-in of the Ann Arbor Draft Board, caused these men to lose their college-based deferments.³⁶ The arrest and reclassification of these men from 2-S to I-A, or loss of draft deferments, was covered widely in national publications, such as the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, and the *National Observer*. Even network

³⁴ Bill Ayers, *Fugitive Days: A Memoir* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2001), 67.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ *New York Times*, January 29, 1966.

television, such as NBC and CBS news ran sympathetic spots on the students' reclassification of their draft status.³⁷ This extensive coverage of the arrest of only thirty-eight men and women gave credence to the widening radical base at U-M, and the rise of the student left both in Ann Arbor and across the country.

The U-M administration remained sympathetic to the student radicals, both during their march and after their subsequent arrest. The university's Vice-President for Student Affairs, Richard L. Cutler, with the help of the local city police, gave the protesters protection on their march to the draft board.³⁸ Even students involved with the movement were singing the praises of the administration. Skip Taube, a VOICE member, in a 1978 interview said that student radicals, including members of VOICE had to be protected from other students who considered them traitors to the American cause in Vietnam. "The administration had to protect us from the rest of the student element because we were 'against our country.'" ³⁹ The University of Michigan President Harlan Hatcher called the subsequent reclassification of the male arrestees' draft status as a "perversion" of the system -- his criticism being directed at the federal government's Selective Service System (SSS). ⁴⁰

Despite his pronouncement, Harlan Hatcher was viewed by many student radicals as an ineffectual leader during his tenure as U-M president. VOICE's powerful place on the University of Michigan campus during the 1965-1967 period partially lay with Hatcher's weak leadership. According to Gary Rothsberger, Hatcher was called "smiling lunchmeat," by members of VOICE, viewing him more of a joke than a serious leader of

³⁷ "Jail's Too Good for Them," *The New Republic*, 8 October, 1966, 8.

³⁸ *Michigan Daily*, October 16, 1965.

³⁹ Bret Eynon and the Contemporary History Project, ed., 12.

⁴⁰ *The New Republic*, 8.

one of the top universities in the United States. For example, after the Administration building was taken over by student radicals in late 1966, Hatcher, out of town at the time, was not even notified of this development until thirty-six hours after the fact.⁴¹

Following the media attention that surrounded the student protesters both in Ann Arbor and around the country, a federal investigation into SDS was announced. Several accusations were being thrown around by those sympathetic to the U.S. government's involvement in Vietnam, that communists had infiltrated the group, both nationally and in specific chapters, including the one at Michigan. Although the University of Michigan at that time had one of the most active SDS chapters in the country, Vice-President of Student Affairs Richard Cutler refused to release names of members of the organization, citing confidentiality for need of the students to give permission to the university to release their names.⁴² Cutler's and the administration's position would ultimately reverse their decision and release the student names, causing university officials to be the target of protest.

The U-M faculty's response to the sit-in was one of unrelenting support and enthusiasm, specifically to the members of VOICE, an organization many of Michigan's professors credited with the success of the first teach-in. Bill Gamson, a sociology professor, defended the SDS organization against rumors that the group had communist tendencies. He fervently upheld his position that SDS was devoted to the principle of participatory democracy in accomplishing its goals: a theme it had prided itself on since

⁴¹ Gary Rothberger of Cambridge, Ma, interview by author, 31 January 2006, telephone interview, Pittsburgh, Pa.

⁴² *Michigan Daily*, October 19, 1965.

its 1962 Port Huron Statement, a document that highlighted the need to create a society based on allowing all members of society to be engaged in the political process.⁴³

The events of October 1965 that propelled student radicals and VOICE into the national limelight helped at least to maintain its popularity among U-M students. By March 1966, the SDS organization at U-M claimed 150 members.⁴⁴ Whether all those members were active within the group remains unclear. VOICE-SDS, no doubt, was at the peak of its popularity at the university, but this would be last year it which it had commanding presence on the U-M campus.

Prior to the start of the fall 1966 semester, the solidarity that the administration had shown towards VOICE was shattered with the university administration's admission that they had released the names of members of three student organizations, including VOICE, to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) after being subpoenaed to do so. Allan F. Smith, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Richard L. Cutler of Student Affairs both released a statement defending the university's action, citing it had little choice but to obey the law, regardless of popular sentiment. According to the official university statement on the matter:

When the University has defended the rights of members of the University Community their citizen's rights, it has been clear that these are rights under the law. For the University -- a state -- chartered institution -- to defend on the basis of law in previous instances, but to defy lawfully constituted agencies in this instance would be inconsistent and would weaken our position in the future.⁴⁵

⁴³ Eynon, 466.

⁴⁴ *Michigan Daily*, March 18, 1966.; according to the *Michigan Daily* (August 27, 1968) VOICE had an active membership of five hundred during the 1966-1967 school year.

⁴⁵ "Report to the University Community," University of Michigan, August 18, 1966, Alvin M. Bentley Papers, (hereafter Bentley Papers) SDS, Bentley Library.

Although the university released the names of student organizations to HUAC, it did not deter either Cutler or Smith from voicing their regret to the university community. The act sent conflicting signals to student radicals. They called the committee's intention of holding hearings on the activities of student leftist organizations "an effort to stifle the voices of dissent from American foreign policy in Southeast Asia; we decry its purpose."⁴⁶ Regardless of whether certain members within the U-M administration disliked answering the subpoena -- both faculty and student names were sent to Washington without their prior knowledge or consent.

The mostly harmonious relationship among faculty, students, and the university administration was damaged when the University of Michigan Regents approved the administration's actions in regard to HUAC. President Hatcher defended the actions at a Regents meeting saying that members of the organizations, whose names were released, had to accept the law. This showed very little regret over the controversial move by U-M, unlike Smith and Cutler. To this a VOICE representative responded soon thereafter, "we are public when we choose to make ourselves public, but not when we are forced to do it."⁴⁷

A number of the faculty members at U-M were displeased with the University's decision over the HUAC debacle, just as VOICE members were. A panel was formed under the jurisdiction of the Faculty Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs. On October 16, 1966 -- exactly one year after the Ann Arbor Draft Board sit-in -- they released their findings to the public. They concluded that the "University Community must find remedies to prevent a repetition of actions that erode the basic freedoms of

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ *Michigan Daily*, September 17, 1966.

association and dissent, and that the university community must move to maintain and reinforce mutual trust among students, faculty, and administration.”⁴⁸

The U-M SGA, always supportive of VOICE throughout its existence, showed their unrelenting approval of student radicals with their vote to abolish the requirement of student organizations to keep membership lists. The measure passed in September 1966, largely the result of the University of Michigan administration’s decision to release names to HUAC. Cutler, fearing more negative publicity for the university over its relationship to students, did not veto the new rules set by SGA, even though he had the clear right to do so. The push by SGA to defend student radicals showed the growing movement of student activism within in the U-M community. It was largely a loosely based collective demanding more student involvement with crucial decisions affecting student organizations throughout the Ann Arbor campus.⁴⁹

The relationship between student activists and administrators at the University hit another snag in the fall of 1966 when VOICE held an all night sleep-in at the office of Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer Wilbur K. Pierpont. The September 29, 1966 vigil, led by thirty members of VOICE was done in an act of anger towards the U-M administration’s decision not to remove plainclothes police from the U-M campus.⁵⁰ Members of VOICE claimed that undercover Ann Arbor city police were monitoring their politically motivated protest activities, which had increased dramatically since the first teach-in in early 1965. Members such as Eric Chester and Milton “Skip” Taube were being monitored by Ann Arbor police for their political activities. Prior to the fall

⁴⁸ Senate Advisory Committee on University Affairs – the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor , *AD HOC Committee on the Disclosure Question*, Harlan H. Hatcher Papers, (hereafter Hatcher Papers), Bentley Library.

⁴⁹ *Michigan Daily*, November 17, 1966.

⁵⁰ *Michigan Daily*, September 30, 1966.

1966, the issue of police spying would not have fueled so much outrage within the ranks of VOICE; however the release of student names to the government increased the suspicion of university officials by student radicals and the establishment at large. It marked a turning point for the university community, as the Administration threatened to arrest students participating in the sit-in at the University of Michigan Administration Building.⁵¹

Unlike both the March 1965 teach-in and the draft board sit-in, the administration became less accommodating when it became the target of protest. As with the August disclosure that student and faculty names had been released to HUAC, the university stated it had no choice but to obey the law. Vice-President Cutler defended the presence of Ann Arbor Police on campus, citing that the university is within the city and “therefore comes under the jurisdiction of the city police.” He added further, “the police have the right -- and indeed the obligation -- to come on campus in fulfillment of their legal responsibilities.”⁵²

The sit-in at the Administration Building did not evoke much sympathy, specifically from members of the university community who believed VOICE was overstepping its bounds as a student organization and attempting to capture more media attention after the success of the Ann Arbor draft board sit-in. In an editorial written for the *Michigan Daily*, the student newspaper at U-M, Rick Stern wrote in October 2, 1966, “Surely VOICE cannot expect university students to be given jurisdiction over the methods and dress attire of the Ann Arbor Police department,” and “VOICE appears more interested in attracting attention to themselves than in actually solving their

⁵¹ *Owasso (MI) Press*, October 1, 1966.

⁵² University of Michigan News Service, October 3, 1966, Hatcher Papers, *Disruptions*, Bentley Library.

problems.”⁵³ This, coming from the *Daily*, which had always been sympathetic to VOICE, and at one time was managed by Tom Hayden, founder of the organization, was a forewarning that student radicals were risking wide support from the campus community if they chose to focus on issues that were not a great concern to an overwhelming number of U-M students.

Concern over monitoring by the Ann Arbor Police did not create a large stir within the campus community. However, it did highlight the fact that university officials were keeping tabs on VOICE members, including Eric Chester and Milton “Skip” Taube, via local police surveillance. The information the administrators kept on the SDS-Ann Arbor members seems inconsequential, especially when the police themselves remained mystified as to where Chester resided in Ann Arbor. What the university files showcase is that members of the administration, including President Hatcher, considered student radicals a significant force within the university community and a serious threat.⁵⁴

Although the issue of police monitoring did that cause great uproar within the university, the matter of grade submission to local draft boards by the university proved to be a lightning rod. VOICE largely spearheaded efforts to end the university’s policy of submitting male students’ grades to the Selective Service. On November 16, 1966 Michigan students voted 2 to 1 in a referendum ending the practice of class ranking at the university, with over ten thousand students participating. This large number showed the

⁵³ *Michigan Daily*, October 2, 1966.

⁵⁴ “Re: Eric Chester and Milton “Skip” Taube, November 11, 1966,” Harlan H. Hatcher Papers, *Disruptions*.

wide support VOICE received when it tackled an issue that affected almost every male student on the campus, unlike the police monitoring issue.⁵⁵

The strong student movement against the deferment policy had no effect on the administration, which publicly announced one day prior to the referendum that it was remaining committed to the policy of submitting class rank. The university defended its submission of male students' grades to the Selective Service saying, "The policy of the university is to assist the student in making available whatever information the student asks be sent to his local board in support of deferment to continue his education."⁵⁶ The administration's defiant attitude was an attempt to show students that the university would not change its policy ever in the face of widespread animosity toward its policy.

Faculty at the College of Literature and Arts, upset with not only the release of names to the House of Un-American Activities Committee but also the university's policy of submitting grades, resolved to support the students. The faculty support of student radicals over this important issue remained another instance where students and faculty members remained united against those thwarting a more politically engaged student body at U-M. Furthermore, the affirmation of student radicals by a significant segment of the U-M faculty proved members of VOICE were not out to destroy the university, rather they were willing to work within its structure. In November 1966, the faculty proclaimed,

These young men and women, and the students they represent,
deserve the support of all faculty members in their present contest

⁵⁵ Micheal Zweig and others. ed. "The University, Ranking, and the Submission of Grades," 1966, Zweig Papers, *Mimeographed Handouts – Selective Service*; beginning in March 1966 new draft laws were enacted. With the submission of class ranks to the local draft board, those in the lower half of the freshmen class, lower third of the sophomore class, lower quarter for the junior class, and the lower three-fourths of the male senior class were eligible to be drafted.

⁵⁶ "Report to The University Community – From the Vice-President for Academic Affairs," November 15, 1966, Bentley Papers, SDS, Bentley Library.

with the Administration. They have performed the service of making it clear that the Administration had increasingly become in John Stuart Mill's powerful phrase 'time – servers for truth.' That is, the decisions the Administration has made, and more importantly, the way it has made them are increasingly at variance with the democratic principles proclaimed on ceremonial occasions.⁵⁷

In addition to the majority of the faculty at the university's College of Literature and Arts, 700 faculty members voted to criticize the university administration over past policies that had deemed the relationship between students and the administration. With such a large outpouring of support by U-M faculty, it was hard to ignore the pleas of students demanding greater participation in university affairs. William Haber, the dean of the College of Literature and Arts, was pleasantly surprised by the faculty reaction to the plight of the students saying, "I don't recall this kind of outpouring and ferment in my 30 years here. But I prefer this yeasty kind of excitement to an apathetic student body and faculty which we often have had here."⁵⁸

The culmination of a semester of animosity between the administration and students finally peaked at the end of November, with victory claimed by both students and their faculty activist allies -- at least for the time being. A resolution was reached between members of the campus community when President Hatcher announced that a committee would be formed, made up of students, faculty, and administration, to study how students might have a greater hand in University decisions. The announcement, which came on the heels of a planned sit-in, spurred 1,500 students to gather at the administration building -- occupying all four floors of the building, and singing "we shall

⁵⁷ Arnold Kaufmann, "A Resolution Concerning the Current Student – Administration Crisis," November 21, 1966, Kaufman Papers, *Student Power Movement*, Bentley Library.

⁵⁸ *New York Times*, December 13, 1966; William Haber was the father of Al Haber, the founder of the national SDS organization.

overcome.”⁵⁹ The numbers involved showcased the extreme popularity of students to the cause of fighting the university administration, specifically when the issue of student deferments was at the forefront of the agenda.

Those outside the university community expressed outrage at the behavior not only of the students and faculty, but also of the administration over the course of the events that took place during the fall of 1966. Their anger at the university highlighted the strength of VOICE on the Ann Arbor campus, and the failure of the administration to halt the unrelenting support coming from fellow students and faculty members. An alumnus, Charles E. Clark, urged President Hatcher to “resist such behavior on the part of students who think they are acting according to the modern trends, but please resist them with all your effort so that our university will not be classified with those such as [the] Berkeley campus.”⁶⁰ Another letter addressed to Lt. Eugene Stavdenmeier of the Ann Arbor police department voiced its disapproval of the administration in its relation to student activists, specifically President Hatcher, saying, “the administration has gotten way out focus,” and “hopefully Hatcher will be succeeded by a man with guts to do what is right and proper.”⁶¹

The 1965-1966 period marked an active time for VOICE, who with fellow students and faculty members, resisted U.S involvement in the Vietnam War and the university administration on several fronts, including grade submission. Although VOICE seemed to be at the peak of its popularity, both within student and faculty circles during the fall semester of 1966, the following year marked a slow decline for the student

⁵⁹ *New York Times*, November 30, 1966.

⁶⁰ Charles E. Clark, New Orleans, LA, to Harlan Hatcher, Ann Arbor, MI, December 21, 1966, Hatcher Papers, *Disruptions*, Bentley Library.

⁶¹ William S. Zerman, Washington D.C. to Lt. Eugene Stavdenmeier, Ann Arbor, MI, January 23, 1967, Hatcher Papers, *Disruptions*.

organization that would last well into 1968, before the group split and starting advocating revolutionary tactics, rather than reform. By the fall of 1967, the organization was primarily focusing its time and resources on removing the Institute for Defense Analysis (IDA) and Classified Research (CR) from the Michigan campus -- two organizations that worked with the Pentagon to develop new weapons systems.⁶² This new campaign was affected by a lack of organization in getting the group's initiatives widely publicized, combined with the growing involvement of graduate students, whose focus lay more in the discussion of ideas, rather than direct action.

VOICE's concern over military research at U-M during the 1967-1968 period was related to the university's involvement with the Pentagon in the development of weapons for the Thailand government in its fight against communism. VOICE was highly opposed to the ties that bound the University of Michigan with the U.S. government, particularly since the leftist organization had been one of the most vocal critics of the American government's involvement in Southeast Asia. VOICE's ultimate goal was to remove both IDA and CR from the Ann Arbor campus. According to the *Michigan Daily*, "The [defense] programs include development of radar detection and tracking devices and training members of the Royal Thai military in their use."⁶³ All the devices developed at the university were going to be used to detect and fight communist guerrillas in Thailand.⁶⁴

The administration was continuing to put pressure on VOICE over the tactics it used with protests on Michigan's campus -- though by using the faculty administrative board against student radicals. In October 1967, VOICE members, Mrs. Karen Daenzer,

⁶² VOICE Political Party Newsletter, September 1967.

⁶³ *Michigan Daily*, October 25, 1967.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

Eric Chester, and Sam R. Friedman walked into a classified briefing between Navy Rear Admiral S. N. Brown and university officials over the potential for future military contracts. The decision by the students to enter the meeting caused it to be cancelled. The SDS members, who had several others participating along with them, were harshly criticized by Cutler, who asked the Literary College Board to discipline the three students over their actions. The board declined to punish Mrs. Daenzer, an undergraduate student.⁶⁵

War research was the central issue that dominated VOICE's agenda in 1967, however military research did not prove to propel a great number of students to publicly decry the removal of both CR and IDR from the university campus. On November 2, 1967 a sit-in at the Administration Building was held in which the student paper at U-M quickly dismissed as proof of the decaying student left, not only for the fact that it proved mundane, but also for the presence of U-M administrators, including Vice President for Academic Affairs Allan F. Smith and Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Wilbur K. Pierpont.

Sit-ins were originally conceived as a disruptive tactic to protest racial discrimination in the South during the early '60's. This particular sit-in, broadly aimed at terminating the University's involvement in \$1 million counter-insurgency project in Thailand and at ending classified military research here was so undistruptive that it enjoyed the presence of a collection of vice presidents rarely seen in public together at student meetings.⁶⁶

⁶⁵ *Washington Post*, December 3, 1967; It is unclear whether the outcome was different in the cases of Chester and Friedman, both of whom were graduate students at U-M. Chester remained affiliated with U-M radicals for some years to come and Friedman left Ann Arbor in spring 1968.

⁶⁶ *Michigan Daily*, November 2, 1967.

The Ann Arbor SDS organization gained attention in such national publications as the *Washington Post* for its protest against military contractors at the University of Michigan, but it failed to convince fellow students that discontinuing military research was beneficial to the university community. When a student referendum was introduced by SGC in April 1968 denouncing both IDA and CR, it was defeated -- to the dismay of VOICE, which had largely supported the measure. Part of the problem with the referendum was that it proved highly unpopular with students within the engineering school, who benefited greatly from the military research programs VOICE so adamantly opposed. The failure of the VOICE-SDS war research initiative was the direct result of failing to understand the diversity of the “masses” (student body) they once proclaimed to embrace.⁶⁷

The failure of the referendum also lay partially with the failure of the organization to maintain its base among the students at Michigan. It was being suggested among the members of VOICE-SDS that letting the students decide, specifically undergraduates at U-M, did not prove helpful to the agenda of radicals on the Michigan campus. Many of those within the organization believed it would strengthen the base membership of VOICE by convincing graduate students, rather than undergraduates, of their protest against classified military research. VOICE, declared in its monthly May 1968 newsletter that these graduate students were “the already almost convinced,” in regard to VOICE’s all-out 1967 campaign to end U.S. military research being conducted by the University of Michigan.⁶⁸ This would mark a shift for the VOICE organization, which

⁶⁷ VOICE Political Newsletter, May 1968.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

had primarily been made up of undergraduates since its conception in 1960, though it had always been an all-inclusive organization.

The disappointment that many within VOICE felt after the defeat of the referendum on IDA and CR caused the organization to decline in stature. At the start of the 1968 semester, *The Michigan Daily* wrote a piece on the fading glory of one of the first SDS chapters in the nation. According to the newspaper, “VOICE Political Party, the university’s local affiliate of Students for a Democratic Society and a former bastion of SDS’s strength on university campuses, has in the past few years shrunk in importance from a campus-wide coordinating group to an esoteric debating society.”⁶⁹ The decline of VOICE from 1967 to 1968 was also the cause of SGC taking a greater role in combating university policies. Instead of VOICE competing with an influential organization on the Michigan campus, they became the radical wing of student government at U-M, largely relegating their attention to SGC when students combated the university administration, by electing students affiliated with VOICE.⁷⁰

This period was also a transitional time for the University as a whole. Harlan Hatcher, a man who had led the university since the early 1950s, retired in late 1967. His successor, Robben W. Fleming, former chancellor at the University of Wisconsin, seemed to be more willing to work with students and radicals on university policy than his predecessor. In his first speech to the campus community, Fleming proclaimed reconciliation.

It is predictable that strong differences of opinion will divide us. It is too much to hope that in this home of the intellect we can conduct ourselves with dignity and restraint? Or will we have to concede that the humanizing influences and values which we

⁶⁹ *Michigan Daily*, August 27, 1968.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

believe in abound in the University are always betrayed in a time of stress? My dream, my belief, my commitment is that on this campus we can and will preserve our community and its time honored values.⁶⁵

Some radicals found Fleming more to their liking than his predecessor. According to Bill Ayers, Hatcher was from the “old school,” while Fleming was from the “new.” The ninth president of U-M attempted to reason with students and had a background in labor negotiations prior to academia. The problem with the presidency of Fleming was that he thought the U.S. would pull out of Vietnam with the end of the Johnson administration. Not sensing that the Nixon administration would actually escalate the war in Southeast Asia. These developments caused many student radicals to engage in aggressive tactics in act of protest against the Vietnam War. Fleming misread the movement, sensing the end, not the dawn of a new, more militant student conglomerate bent on attacking the establishment.⁶⁶ Not every radical shared Ayers’ respect for Fleming. According to Gary Rothberger, a radical aligned with Radical Caucus, Fleming was “an enemy of progressive thought.”⁶⁷ Rothberger’s negative view of Fleming may be related to Fleming’s more authoritative rule over the university as compared to his predecessor Hatcher, who by some accounts was a running joke with student radicals.

Ayers’ assertion that Nixon escalated the war in Southeast Asia remains arguable. When Nixon entered office in 1969 he attempted to implement a plan, known as Vietnamization, that simultaneously called for the slow withdrawing of American troops in Vietnam, while providing money and resources to the South Vietnamese to continue

⁶⁵ Robben W. Fleming, “The University and the Humane Citizen,” March 11, 1968, Robben W. Fleming Papers, (hereafter Fleming Papers), Bentley Library.

⁶⁶ Bill Ayers of Chicago, interview by author, 1 May 2005, telephone interview, Pittsburgh, Pa.

⁶⁷ Gary Rothberger interview.

their fight against the North.⁶⁸ However, Nixon did increase bombing campaigns during his presidency against the North and “escalated” the war by invading Cambodia in 1970.

Seeing that SDS was causing havoc on such college campuses as Columbia University, Fleming remained convinced that any crackdown would cause resurgence in the movement. Alvin M. Bentley, a member of the University of Michigan Board of Regents, wanted to ban the organization from the Ann Arbor campus and believed it intended to take over the university. In a response, Fleming expressed his belief that any ban would cause the organization to be revived and primarily from “students who just reacted to the banning.”⁶⁹

Even the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) did not see much of a threat coming from U-M leftists. The FBI, who was keeping a close watch on the national SDS movement, especially after the events that occurred on Columbia’s campus, felt that, unlike other universities, SDS was dying at Michigan, or at least it was far from its pinnacle of success. In the FBI intelligence report on VOICE-SDS, it was mentioned that organization really did not have that anti-establishment, militant frame of mind that was sweeping other SDS chapters throughout the country.⁷⁰

VOICE-SDS seemed to have peaked in power from early 1965 to late 1966, to only decline after its war research proposal was rejected by students, and its power weakened by the growing influence of SGC. The events of 1967-1968 highlighted VOICE becoming more of a debating society, rather than an organization committed to

⁶⁸ Chafe, William H. *The Unfinished Journey: America Since World War II*, 2nd edition. (New York: Oxford Press, 1991), 389.

⁶⁹ Robben W. Flemming, Ann Arbor, MI, to Alvin M. Bentley, Owosso, MI, August 21, 1968, Fleming Papers, SDS, Bentley Library.

⁷⁰ Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), “Counter Intelligence Program, Internal Security, Disruption of the New Left,” June 18, 1968, Fleming Papers, SDS, Bentley Library.

actively challenging those who controlled the university. By the end of 1968 a break occurred with VOICE, causing the emergence of a new militant, broadly driven organization, the Jesse James Gang, which would ultimately take over the local SDS affiliate. Those who remained committed to the more debate-oriented VOICE would form their own organization, the Radical Caucus. Several members within the Radical Caucus organization would later go on to found the Radical Independent Party, which later became the Human Rights Party; this political organization would be an integral part of the local political arena for years to come.

The middle of 1968 marked a turning point for student radicals nationally, which would soon affect local SDS chapters around the country, including VOICE. The assassination of two beloved American figures, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, Jr., combined with the lack of a viable anti-war candidate in the upcoming presidential election, provoked demonstrators at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago of August 1968 to direct their rage against those deemed representative of the U.S government: the political establishment. Todd Gitlin, an early member of SDS, discusses in his book, *The Sixties* the increasingly violent retaliatory tactics of the movement that would have been unthinkable for the first generation of SDS members. Instead of being non-resistant towards the police as many members of SDS had done in previous years, including members of VOICE, newer members fought back in a manner approaching anarchy.

When the cops attacked, they led the action into the streets of Old Town; threw gas canisters back at the cops; darted through the traffic, blocked the streets with trash baskets, trashed police-car windows with bricks and rocks, rocked

police cars and paddy wagons and tried to overturn them, got their licks in at isolated cops when they could.⁷¹

The organizational hierarchy that made up VOICE attempted to keep the group viable on the Ann Arbor campus, though it proved rather difficult with the stagnant leadership at the helm by 1968. Members such as Eric Chester and Skip Taube had remained active within VOICE for years, as both undergraduates and for Chester as a graduate student. However their presence within VOICE remained another example of the organization's lack of understanding of both fellow student radicals and the general student population at U-M. Chester's leadership caused many within the group to criticize VOICE-SDS for being too bureaucratic and in need of "new blood" at the helm, to avoid stagnation.⁷² Moreover, the leadership consisted primarily of men, while the gender makeup of VOICE was divided evenly between males and females. Both the hierarchical and patriarchal structures that made up VOICE would slowly cause division within the organization as it approached the breaking point.⁷³ The failure of the leadership of VOICE-SDS to understand the gender dynamics of its own organization, on top of the new trends characterizing other SDS chapters, particularly at Columbia with the takeover of a campus building, ultimately would cause a division within the local SDS organization at U-M.

The events that occurred both in Chicago and at Columbia in 1968 highlighted the changing mood of the left in the United States. Hostility and frustration were increasing among members of the New Left, not just in Ann Arbor, but in SDS chapters throughout the nation; this was caused by the failure of the student left to successfully end U.S.

⁷¹ Gitlin, Todd, *The Sixties: Years of Hope and Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1987), 328-329.

⁷² *Michigan Daily*, September 25, 1968.

⁷³ VOICE Political Newsletter, May 1968.

involvement in the Vietnam War. The division with VOICE that manifested itself in 1968 characterized the growing tendency of many within the new generation of leftists, such as Bill Ayers, to call for a violent assault against the institutions that they blamed for the war in Southeast Asia, and to attack those who remained committed to peaceful tactics. According to Samuel Friedman, a member of VOICE from 1964 to 1968, "...It was part of the growing tendency towards political fissure on the U.S. left as it became clear that we did not have the power to force the changes we were coming to see were necessary."⁷⁴

The fall of 1968 marked the end for the VOICE Political Party as Bill Ayers, Terry Robbins, and Jim Mellon announced the emergence of a new faction of the SDS group, calling itself the Jesse James Gang. The break largely resulted from the failure of VOICE to convince fellow students, both undergraduates and graduates, of the dangers of war research at U-M. This was also caused by the refusal of VOICE leaders to engage in broader issues that not only affected the university, but those within the Ann Arbor community. On September 24, 1968, an unnamed man stood up and denounced the VOICE chapter, proclaiming the existence of a new more militant fraction of the SDS organization: "If you think the only thing to do with war research is to burn it up, and the only thing to do with bad classes is to take them over, and the only thing to do about bullshit candidates is to run them out with your own lives, then let's talk."⁷⁵ The emotional outburst by an unnamed member of VOICE showed that the student movement was moving towards a more expressive approach in accomplishing its goals. No longer would student radicals participate in the democratic process in accomplishing its goals, like VOICE had advocated in the past. Instead, it would argue for violent confrontation

⁷⁴ Samuel Friedman, email to author, October 16, 2005.

⁷⁵ Sale, 490.

that would force the university and the nation to listen to the radical student movement. The revolutionary or anti-establishment phase for the local radical movement had begun.

The Jesse James Gang's militant approach meant that focusing on university policy, which VOICE had largely done since the student power movement of 1966, would have to be broadened to encompass injustice not only at local level, but also the national. The "Gang," largely made up of radicals from the Children's Community School in Ann Arbor -- many were new to the SDS organization and were not fond of Chester or the "Old Guard" that ran VOICE. These militant radicals first made an impression on the Ann Arbor campus in March 1968 when Ayers famously aimed his remarks at President Fleming while participating in an anti-war protest on the steps of the U-M administration building, saying, "fuck you, motherfucker." The coarse language used by Ayers remains another example of the changing tactics of the local movement. The days of debating about societal issues that marked much of the first eight years of VOICE were slowly dissipating for a bold rhetorical approach against the establishment.⁷⁶

The split of VOICE in 1968 occurred as the majority of Americans came to disapprove of the U.S. involvement in Vietnam. In 1965 student radicals were united against what they considered an "immoral" war, without much support from the general U.S. population. However, by 1968 the student left was growing disenchanted with its familiar formula: sit-ins and picketing, which had failed to end the war in Vietnam; although national sentiment was growing against the war by 1968. The newly revamped SDS-Ann Arbor chapter wanted to step up the rhetoric. According to Bill Ayers, "We

⁷⁶ Bill Ayers interview; Incidentally, Fleming would later call Ayers "articulate" in his memoirs.

[student radicals] became more successful, and asked questions: how do you end the war? What needs to be done? Two thousand people within Southeast Asia were being killed a day. That is when Jesse James came in and said let's get more militant."⁷⁷ Members within the Jesse James Gang felt, including Ayers, thought that for the movement to be successful it needed to go beyond just fighting to end the war in Southeast Asia. It had to target those perpetuating the atrocities: the U.S. government. Instead of working within the system, which VOICE had largely done, the resurgent SDS-Ann Arbor wanted to destroy the capitalist system, embodied by the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia.

VOICE's division led to those who remained loyal to the original SDS chapter forming their own group, the Radical Caucus. Originally, the organization consisted of a mere 25 individuals who left VOICE after the takeover by the Jesse James Gang or "crazies," as the members of the Caucus called them.⁷⁸ This organization consisted largely of past and present members of VOICE, who remained committed to reforming university policies on such issues as removing certain course requirements, like the need for a foreign language from the undergraduate curriculum. The leader of the Caucus was none other than Eric Chester. Unlike the Jesse James Gang, "these members advocated dialogue in solving and building coalitions against the University, not antagonism."⁷⁹ Their concern lay primarily within the university, not with national issues, such as the "imperialistic" nature of the U.S. government, as the Jesse James Gang proclaimed within its ranks. Moreover, for many of the new SDSers, VOICE failed by appealing to the masses with its defense research initiative, instead of taking direct action against the university. Radical Caucus, made up of the displaced members of VOICE, believed

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ *Michigan Daily*, January 9, 1969.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

radical change required the majority of students to support it, specifically within the political process.⁸⁰ This idea would eventually spur the development of the Radical Independent Party.

The members that founded Radical Caucus after bolting from VOICE in October 1968 did warn the SDS national convention in January 1969 of the dangers that the new militant SDS organization held for the future and stability of the New Left. Radical Caucus chairman Marty McLaughlin warned the crowd of the unabashed arrogance and intolerance of the members now infiltrating not only the U-M SDS chapter, but the national organization. “To say we ‘know better’ or to force people to be ‘liberated’ is to move toward fascism.”⁸¹

The last months of 1968 marked a victory for the Jesse James Gang as it became the official SDS affiliate at the University of Michigan through the official endorsement of the national SDS organization. It also marked the end of an era. The rise of the oppositional force within VOICE pushed the Radical Caucus to exit the organization it once controlled and to form its own SDS chapter, thus making the militant faction rightful heirs of VOICE. This hostile takeover of sorts caused the Radical Caucus to not only lose its recognition by the university SGC at U-M, but also by the national SDS organization.⁸²

A new era for the SDS chapter at the University of Michigan began with the takeover of VOICE by more combative radicals on the University of Michigan- Ann Arbor campus. They would bring about resurgence for the once moribund organization. However, their popularity in campus circles would never reach the levels that

⁸⁰ *New Left Notes*, November 11, 1968.

⁸¹ *Michigan Daily*, January 9, 1969.

⁸² *The Ann Arbor News*, December 30, 1968.

characterized the period of 1965-1966.; this primarily was the result of its anti-establishment rhetoric that turned off many who once supported student radicals, including U-M President Robben Fleming. The reawakening of VOICE- SDS by the Jesse James Gang, from a leadership that was seen as too ideological and passive, would ultimately lead to more confrontations with the university. However, the brief revival of SDS at U-M would also be marked with the arrest of some of its members, and the emergence of other leftist, and more effective organizations on the Ann Arbor campus.

Radical Caucus was all but declared dead by the *Michigan Daily* at the beginning of the spring term of 1970. Many who worked within the group complained to the student paper that the organization had not changed with the times. Instead of advocating immediate confrontation as the best way to solve areas of dispute, members of Caucus were more oriented to “stress[ing] the importance of educating people on the issues before taking actions.”⁸³ The chairman of the group, Joe Goldenson, claimed, “ ‘people get involved with the action. It releases attention and frustration, but they don’t really understand why they’re doing things.’ ”⁸⁴ The death of the Radical Caucus was a byproduct of the changing atmosphere of student radicalism on the Michigan campus. The new approach, begun with the infiltration of VOICE by the Jesse James Gang, demanded immediate action against hostile forces, such as the university or the United States government, without much intellectual reasoning behind it.

President Fleming, seeing the more militant nature of the new brand of radicals contained within the Ann Arbor-SDS organization, urged U-M faculty to take a stand against the new brand of leftists, who were resorting to more aggressive actions. At the

⁸³ *Michigan Daily*, February 17, 1970.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

end of 1968, the reinvigorated Ann Arbor SDS affiliate had interrupted a lecture, attempted a student strike in protest against U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and wrote obscene words on buildings throughout campus. In Fleming's January 1969 declaration, he asked University of Michigan faculty members to take a stand in opposition to the new breed of radicals, willing to use "the plainly illegal and disruptive tactics that some students are now willing to use."⁸⁵

By the beginning of 1970, SDS- Ann Arbor was continuing to use aggressive tactics in getting its message across to the campus. On January 21, fifteen members of the organization destroyed files that belonged to military recruiters on the Michigan campus. Furthermore, in an act that would never have occurred under the old leadership of VOICE, a navy officer, Joel Robertson, was doused with black enamel paint, on his face and clothes.⁸⁶ In another incident that occurred the same day, an Allied Chemical recruiter's office was sprayed with pesticide and several dead fish and birds were left on his desk in protest of the university's involvement in producing the pesticide, DDT.⁸⁷ SDS was the sponsor for all of these protests. The DuPont demonstration that occurred a week after the Allied Chemical incident, was also characterized by disruptive tactics, by SDS members blocking a DuPont Corporation recruiter from entering the Engineering Building on campus.⁸⁸

The new aggressive action showcased the new mood that characterized student radicals. Instead of advocating reform, as VOICE had done pre-1968, the new leadership was called for a student-led revolution. Although these "new" radicals were opposed to

⁸⁵ *The Ann Arbor News*, January 3, 1969.

⁸⁶ *Michigan Daily*, January 22, 1970.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Michigan Daily*, January 30, 1970.

the establishment, they had no clear-cut ideological framework to replace American capitalism. In a January 1970 flyer, SDS-Ann Arbor discussed its new emphasis

[T]o fight repression and the racist companies which rule Amerika, and the 'free world.' Today we will confront GE, North American Rockwell, Dupont, and others. WE MUST FIGHT REPRESSION AND RACISM IN A REAL WAY, NOT JUST BY TALKING ABOUT IT. Blacks are starting a revolution and we must join them.⁸⁹

However, the numbers participating in the various protests at U-M in 1970 never reached the levels of the 1965-1966 period. In fact, the actions involved, at most, only 100 individuals. Moreover, some of the participants implicated in the various actions were not even students or faculty members of the university. On February 18, 1970, during a confrontation with General Electric representatives at West Engineering building, nine students, and four non-students were arrested for breaking windows, violently confronting recruiters, and provoking the Ann Arbor Police, who tried to bring calm to the scene.⁹⁰

The events of early 1970 persuaded President Fleming to urge the U-M Student Government Council to revoke the status of SDS-Ann Arbor as a student organization affiliated with the University. This decision, which was endorsed by all eight members of the University Board of Regents, contrasted with his earlier stance to remove the radical organization in 1968.⁹¹ In 1968, Fleming was urged by Regent Bentley to remove SDS from the University of Michigan campus because of the organization's increasingly violent tactics at other colleges and universities; although Fleming resisted in taking

⁸⁹ "Stop Dupont," January 30, 1970, Bret Eynon Papers, *SDS*, 69-70.

⁹⁰ "Report to the University Community - From the Office of the President," February 18, 1970, Box 5, *SDS*, University of Michigan- President's Office, (hereafter President's Office Papers), Bentley Library.

⁹¹ *Michigan Daily*, February 4, 1970.

Bentley's advice. However, his crackdown on SDS-Ann Arbor in 1970, now largely resulted from his belief that force and violence had no place on the U-M campus, while still maintaining his support for peaceful student dissent.⁹²

The national events that occurred during the breakup of VOICE-SDS at the University of Michigan-Ann Arbor in 1968 were generally felt by other SDS chapters throughout the country, although after the Jesse James split. Most of these subsequent breakups, like at U-M, were caused by ideological differences between factions within the organization. At the nation's universities SDS became infiltrated by groups, like Progressive Labor, an organization bent on making the national group a full-fledged Marxist-oriented faction, and the Revolutionary Youth Movement (RYM), that advocated an alliance between students and workers. The rise of these organizations within the SDS movement caused a split within the movement.

The Weathermen group, the organization that characterized the last stages of SDS, at least in terms of its membership, was headed by several of the instigators of the VOICE split, including Bill Ayers and Terry Robbins. According to Kirkpatrick Sale the end of the SDS organization, at least nationally, came with the bomb explosion in New York City on March 8, 1970 that killed three members of the Weathermen group: Terry Robbins, Ted Gold, and Diana Oughten.⁹³ After that happened many of the group's members moved underground, to avoid arrest, thus ending the final chapter for Students for a Democratic Society, at least nationally.

Over the course of the events that marked early 1970, other leftist organizations emerged on the Ann Arbor campus, largely over the same issues that had concerned SDS

⁹² "Report to University Community - From the Office of the President," February 18, 1970, Box 5, SDS, President's Office Papers, Bentley Library.

⁹³ Sale, 5.

since late 1968, such as defense research, ROTC, and support of minorities in society at large. The LSA (Literature, Science, and Arts) faculty, who had a history of supporting student radicals since the days of the first teach-in, formed their own association in February 1970, largely in protest of Fleming's crackdown on SDS. The new group, called the Radical College, intended "to formally provide an outlet for collective action by radical faculty members."⁹⁴ Another organization, the Black Action Movement (BAM) caused major disruptions of classes at the university through strikes and picketing begun on March 20, 1970. However, BAM's demands were met by Fleming, who agreed to increase the enrollment of Black students to 10 percent of the student body.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ *Michigan Daily*, February 17, 1970; VOICE- SDS remained in existence at U-M following the Fleming crackdown, although considerably weaker with the national SDS organization dead by 1970. According to the *Michigan Daily* (September 10, 1970), SDS positioned itself as the liberator of all oppressed people, including women, youth, homosexuals, and those "imprisoned for revolutionary activities."

⁹⁵ "Special Newsletter –Office of the Dean, College of Engineering, University of Michigan," April 7, 1970, President's Office Papers.

Chapter Two – BAM Strike

By 1970, the United States was still at the crossroads of social upheaval penetrating all spheres of the power structure. The civil rights and anti-war movements of the middle 1960s had splintered by the late 1960s and early 1970s, allowing for the black power, Chicano, gay, American-Indian, and women's movements to become prominent. This unprecedented upheaval also spurred a minority revolution within the United States, thus allowing for all facets of American society to be affected, including institutions of higher learning. The University of Michigan was no exception. In February 1970, U-M administrators were facing demands from a group made up of predominately Black students, known as the Black Action Movement (BAM). This organization consisted of both undergraduates and graduates calling for an increase in the number of minority students at the University of Michigan.

BAM's battle for minority rights began over the university's refusal to meet the 10 percent quota, first asked by the organization in February 1970. This defiant action by university officials was the impetus for the BAM strike that transpired in late March 1970, which would continue into April of that year. The movement's effective, yet non-violent strike, eventually forced the university to give in to the demands of BAM, and allowed a rebirth of the reform-minded approach, to not only take place at the University of Michigan but in the city of Ann Arbor, even as SDS was falling apart. Former members saw the large coalition of predominately Black students that comprised BAM as not part of the New Left, but more in step with liberal, rather than radical views. The victory of BAM, ultimately accomplished through the majority support of both students

and faculty, particularly within the LSA School, marked a return to the 1966 heyday of VOICE and its reformist approach.

The members of BAM were a loose collective of Black student organizations united in their attempt to force the university's hand in its minority enrollment and recruitment. BAM was made up of approximately a thousand members consisting of seven Black student organizations and one faculty group within the University of Michigan.⁹⁶ The leader of this predominately Black organization was Ed Fabre, a twenty-seven year old law student at U-M. In fact, all the Blacks enrolled at the University of Michigan Law School participated in the movement in some capacity.⁹⁷ Besides the law school Blacks steered by Fabre, the loose collective of activists also included undergraduates such as Ron Harris and Darryl Gormas. These members, unlike those who took over VOICE, attempted to unify university students behind their mission of reforming the system.

The demands of these U-M students were expansive, to say the least. The members of BAM were not only calling for the increasing number of Blacks enrolled in the university to be 10 percent by 1973, but proposed a wide range of programs ensuring Black and other minority students' success at U-M. "Other demands include intensive recruiting of qualified minority students; a [B]lack community center; a tuition waiver for in-state minority students; increased financial aid; an aid appeal board revamping of the Parents Confidential statement; and a re-appraisal of the Black Studies program."⁹⁸

⁹⁶ *Detroit Free Press*, April 5, 1970.

⁹⁷ David Goldstein of Portland, Oregon, interview by author, 23 January 2006, telephone interview, Pittsburgh, Pa.

⁹⁸ *Michigan Daily*, February 26, 1970; The number of Black students at U-M – Ann Arbor was only two to three percent during 1969-1970 school year.

President Fleming and other top U-M administrators were taken by surprise with the list of demands that BAM presented to them in February 1970. U-M administrators, startled by BAM's demands, did not take this burgeoning organization as a serious threat, especially as the university faced violent confrontations with student radicals, many of whom belonged to the Ann Arbor chapter of SDS. In early March, the administration announced that it would be very difficult for the university to achieve all of BAM's demands, especially the 10 percent initiative by the 1973-1974 school year. This was, according to university officials, not because they rejected the movement's concern with the number of Black students entering the University of Michigan, but rather, they found it unrealistic for the university as a whole to support something that would be very difficult to enact, at least financially without diverting funds away from land purchases and campus-wide renovations.⁹⁹

Hoping that BAM would tone their rhetoric down by satisfying some, but not all, of their demands, the university announced on March 18 it would attempt to raise Black enrollment to at least 7 percent by 1973, or increase the number of Black students to 2100, doubling the 1969 number of 1050. Citing a lack of financial resources, the administration did dismiss certain BAM initiatives. Vice President Stephen H. Spurr rejected the idea of tuition waiver for specific Black students, citing the cost and the need to raise funds for impoverished minority students through outside sources, rather than through the university's financial aid office.¹⁰⁰ The announcement, which was reached by both U-M administrators and the Board of Regents, was thought to have ended the

⁹⁹ "To the Members of the Black Action Movement – From the Office of the President," March 5, 1970, *BAM*, Gerald Dunn Papers, Bentley Library.

¹⁰⁰ Statement by Vice-President Stephen H. Spurr," March 18, 1970, *Black Student Demands*, Robert Nederlander Papers, Bentley Library.

matter for the University of Michigan community; however the members of BAM and their list of demands were far from disappearing from the local headlines. In fact, the battle between the university and the BAM was only getting started, and the long drawn-out fight between administrators and students would last for almost two weeks during the spring 1970 term.

The failure of the university to unequivocally support the 10 percent Black enrollment quota infuriated members of BAM and led them to call a campus-wide strike of classes, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. On March 20, 1970, members of BAM asked the student body to join them in a peaceful, student-led strike aimed at advancing the cause of Blacks and other minority students at U-M.

Marching at the entrances to the buildings, demonstrators passed out leaflets and urged people not to attend classes. With the exception of the fishbowl area, the picketers did not forcefully block the movement of people in or out of the buildings for any length of time. BAM leaders called for the strike during a rally Thursday afternoon. The Regents that afternoon adopted a plan for increasing minority admissions, but BAM was not satisfied with the Regents' proposal.¹⁰¹

The strike called on March 20 by BAM, was a well-organized, two-pronged affair, centered both on encouraging all U-M students to abstain from attending classes, and picketing university buildings while distributing leaflets defending their cause. The strike, unlike those previously supported by members of the Ann Arbor branch of SDS, was centered on non-violent, although persuasive tactics, in an attempt to convince both students and faculty of the reasons why the university should reevaluate its decision to compromise on BAM's demands, specifically over the issue of 10 percent enrollment of

¹⁰¹ *Michigan Daily*, March 21, 1970.

Black students by 1973. Supporters of the cause, including whites, picketed the buildings that comprised the LSA, Law, Engineering, and Pharmacy Schools.¹⁰²

The effectiveness of the BAM strike became evident by March 27 with the revelation from the university that student attendance had decreased dramatically since the strike was called, specifically within LSA. In the largest school of the university, estimates claimed 70 to 90 percent of students were not attending classes.¹⁰³ Unlike other activist movements that existed within the post-1965 period at the University of Michigan, an overwhelming majority of students were not only supporting the cause, but they were also actively participating by abstaining from attending class. The effectiveness of the student-led strike mirrored the VOICE led student power movement of 1966, which eventually allowed for more autonomy for U-M students facing the draft and those within radical organizations on the University of Michigan campus.

BAM's effective, well-organized campaign to win approval from both students and faculty members was slowly turning the tide in favor of BAM. Not only were students within the largest school at the university overwhelmingly supporting its cause by refusing to attend classes, additionally, the faculty were showing their unrelenting support for the movement. On March 26, the university faculty's Senate Assembly passed a resolution that called for the U-M's seventeen schools and their departments to make budget cuts, as to enable the university to achieve the ten percent Black enrollment by 1973-1974.¹⁰⁴

The faculty's stance during the BAM strike furthered the idea that the U-M administration, under the guidance of Robben Fleming, had been ill-advised to let the

¹⁰² *The Ann Arbor News*, March 23, 1970.

¹⁰³ *Michigan Daily*, March 27, 1970

¹⁰⁴ *The Ann Arbor News*, March 26, 1970.

strike continue, which only allowed for the University of Michigan's reputation to be discredited in the eyes of both faculty and students. In fact, BAM's unequivocal support by a wide range of parties, including those within the Engineering School -- a group once hostile to the members of VOICE, lay predominately in its effective campaign to enforce the strike in a peaceful manner while arguing a well-researched platform calling for a more diverse student population at U-M.¹⁰⁵

The two-week nonviolent confrontation was resolved with a victory for Ed Fabre and his coalition of Black activists. The student strike resolved itself on April 1 when the U-M Board of Regents promised that they would make a firm commitment to the 10 percent figure. This dramatic change was the result of both U-M faculty and the deans putting pressure on U-M administrators and the Board of Regents, along with the successful student strike that had emptied the majority of the university's classrooms. Furthermore, the faculty and deans offered to sacrifice some of their financial resources to aid the university in its attempt so satisfy the demands of BAM. According to one of the Regents, Robert E. Nederlander, "... the deans and the faculty came in and said they believed this was so important that they would help find the extra money."¹⁰⁶

The university received national attention for its eventual vote to enact the demands advocated by members of BAM; although some of the attention lambasted university officials for allowing the student radicals to triumph. Spiro Agnew, Vice-President under Richard Nixon and a leading conservative voice in the national arena, criticized the university's promise to the students of BAM, precisely because Agnew saw U-M administration's caving in to the demands of a radical student organization as the

¹⁰⁵ "Letter to the Editor" – John E. Powers, Professor of Chemical Engineering, March 31, 1970, Robert Nederlander Papers, Bentley Papers.

¹⁰⁶ *Detroit Free Press*, April 5, 1970.

first step in the eventual lowering of standards of college admissions, and eventually allow for the devaluation of a degree from the University of Michigan.¹⁰⁷ The general reaction from the vast number of U-M alumni concerning BAM remains unknown, although some individuals within the state of Michigan held a view quite similar to Agnew's. According to John P. Hedrick, "I am dismayed to read reports that the university has agreed to demands that roughly 10 percent of the student population be made up of Black people, regardless of what their qualifications might be."¹⁰⁸

The success of BAM, not only caused some within the executive branch of the national government to be displeased with the outcome, it also provoked anger and jealousy from some unlikely students on the University of Michigan campus: white radicals, members of both the now forgotten Radical Caucus and the declining Ann Arbor SDS chapter. According to Eric Chester, the one-time leader of VOICE, the strike was effective, although many within the radical circles at Ann Arbor had apprehension over the Black Action Movement because many of these BAM members had not been involved in previous anti-war activities at the university; which had compromised the majority of the activities students radicals were involved in while attending the University of Michigan.¹⁰⁹ This admission by Eric Chester characterized the feelings of many of the radicals who were not involved with BAM. Instead of white radicals embracing BAM, many dismissed the organization as not in step with their rhetoric, specifically their anti-war message. Thus, BAM to many white radicals was not necessarily a part of the New Left collective that had been established in Ann Arbor since

¹⁰⁷ *Detroit Free Press*, April 15, 1970.

¹⁰⁸ John P. Hedrick, Bloomfield Hills, MI, to Robben Fleming, Ann Arbor, MI, March 22, 1970, Nedelander Papers, *BAM Correspondence*, Bentley Library.

¹⁰⁹ Eric Chester of MA, interview by author, 26 October 2005, telephone interview, Pittsburgh, Pa.

the early 1960s, even though many of their messages and tactics were quite similar those of VOICE.

The wave of support that swept through the University of Michigan campus towards the Black Action Movement during the spring of 1970 was the result of Fabre's organizing skill. BAM could not have succeeded without the twenty-seven year-old law student. His position as the ringleader of the movement allowed the movement to experience a black victory in an overwhelmingly white university. According to David Goldstein, a fellow law student of Fabre's and white supporter of BAM, and later the only white student member to sit on the nine-member special admissions committee in charge of minority law admissions in the aftermath of BAM: "Ed was powerful spokesman. He had a presence. It [BAM's success] had to do with leadership."¹¹⁰

The rise and fall of VOICE and the overwhelming success that BAM experienced provided an ambivalent picture of student activists on the University of Michigan campus. The failure of the one-time pillar of student radicalism: VOICE, marked with the success of a Black activist organization -- within a predominately white context -- proved that reform-minded, and even radical organizations could be tolerated and embraced by a wide-range of interest groups, as long as they remained committed to working within the system, whether it be within the university or in the local political realm. In the post-BAM and VOICE period, HRP would attempt to battle the political establishment by working within it during the 1970-1975 period.

¹¹⁰ David Goldstein interview.

Chapter 3- Human Rights Party – 1970-1975

In 1970, the Radical Independent Party (RIP) emerged, largely due to those who had remained committed to VOICE before the split in 1968. RIP, and its later incarnation, the Human Rights Party (HRP) did make inroads within the local political arena, thanks largely to the support of University of Michigan students. During its peak, it elected two members to the Ann Arbor City Council and helped legislate one of the most liberal marijuana laws in the whole nation. However, HRP's time as a respectable political party in Ann Arbor was brief. Intra-party squabbling over ideology, marked by the end of the Vietnam Conflict ultimately caused the party to decline and eventually disappear from the local political scene. Nonetheless, HRP was the last great upswing for the New Left at both the University of Michigan and in the city of Ann Arbor, before its members would disperse by 1975.

The Radical Independent Party's emergence in December 1970 resulted from dissatisfaction by the student left at the University of Michigan with the local political establishment, which was then steered by a Democratic mayor, Robert Harris. Members of an array of student groups at the university, such as SGC, SDS, International Socialists, and graduate students within the U-M economics department formed the party in an effort to give radicals a voice within local politics; an arena that had largely shut them out, both locally and nationally.¹¹⁰ The formation of RIP was an attempt by the predominately white radicals at U-M to reevaluate their goals after the decline of SDS at the university in the late 1960s. In 1967, VOICE had lost a major battle against the administration in its attempt to end military research; this was the result of campus-wide initiative on the issues that was defeated by the student body as a whole. Nonetheless, the

¹¹⁰ *Michigan Daily*, December 8, 1970.

leftist conglomerate that emerged at the University of Michigan in the middle to late 1960s, with both VOICE and SGC, returned to the idea of turning to the people through the democratic process, although on a much larger scale that would encompass the whole city of Ann Arbor.

Ann Arbor was not the only city in the United States facing radicals in the political realm, Berkeley, an epicenter of student radicalism throughout the 1960s faced its own battles with local authorities, at least in the case of the Peoples Park movement. In the spring of 1969, student radicals wanted to turn a vacant lot owned by the university into a park. However, its development into a green space faced great opposition from both university officials and Ronald Reagan, governor of California. The National Guard was called into the city of Berkeley causing the death of one student and countless injuries. The fight over Peoples Park played a role in allowing the election of three radicals to the Berkeley City Council, including the mayor's office in 1971.¹¹¹ Nevertheless, Berkeley, unlike Ann Arbor, never produced a thriving third political party.

The emergence of RIP in Ann Arbor allowed both current and former student radicals to mature past their time on the University of Michigan campus. Throughout the sixties, many of the radicals who participated in VOICE were still affiliated with the University of Michigan in some capacity. Once these students graduated, many wanted to continue their activism. RIP allowed members of the radical community to grow up, but at the same time, achieve their societal goals.¹¹² The formation of RIP reflected the maturing of 1960s U-M radicals, allowing them to participate in the local electoral process.

¹¹¹ Rorabugh, W.J. *Berkeley at War: The 1960s*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 155-166.

¹¹² Rothberger interview.

The platform that emerged attempted to cover a wide range of issues that directly affected the U-M student population of Ann Arbor, issues such as militarism and sexual prejudice. Many of the arguments set forth by RIP were quite radical, as compared to the positions within the Democratic and Republican parties at the time. For example, the party called for the city of Ann Arbor to ban military recruiting and to provide legal aid to males who refused to be drafted into the armed services.¹¹³ Instead of focusing attention on issues that affected the whole population of the city of Ann Arbor, members of RIP focused on issues that predominately affected the student population within Ann Arbor, as least with the initial development of its platform. This stance was wise, which eventually allowed the fledgling party to find its base within the local political arena.

The burgeoning RIP political organization, in addition to laying out its aims on U.S militarism and sexism, argued for more lenient drug laws and free public transportation. RIP's platform was explicitly geared toward wooing the students of the University of Michigan, radical or not. RIP proposed rehabilitating Ann Arbor drug offenders, through centers aimed at treating the addiction, rather through incarceration, and for free public transportation that would incorporate both city and university resources.¹¹⁴ These two specific proposals along with RIP's anti-military and anti-sexual discrimination rhetoric, attempted to carry the message to the student body to U-M, both to undergraduates and graduates, that RIP was willing to battle the establishment over issues that were considered too controversial by the local Democratic and Republican parties.

¹¹³ "Platform in Brief – Ann Arbor Radical Independent Party," Human Rights Party Papers, Box 1, Bentley Library.

¹¹⁴ *Michigan Daily*, January 24, 1971.

The early electoral success of this loosely based socialist collective proved to be ephemeral, even with its student-friendly message of personal freedom. Part of the reason for the party's lack of success lay in its inability to get on the local ballot. RIP's failure to have an affiliation with any statewide political body, destroyed any chance the party would ever be placed on the local ballot. Nonetheless, in its inaugural campaign RIP chose to run a limited number of candidates as write-ins. In April 1971, the party ran Doug Cornell for mayor and Jerry DeGriek for city council in Ann Arbor's second ward -- an area predominately populated by U-M students. Both Cornell and DeGriek lost their bid for political office, although the defeat in April 1971 set the stage for its overwhelming success the following year.¹¹⁵

RIP's electoral loss in April 1971 did not cause the party to falter, but it allowed the political organization to forge ties with a larger leftist political entity within the state of Michigan. In 1971, RIP merged with the Human Rights Party (HRP) of Michigan, a political party that emerged in 1970 after vehement anti-war Democrats broke away from the party in response to its weak anti-war platform at the state party convention. This leftist party, like RIP, was vehemently against any U.S. involvement in Vietnam, whether militarily or politically. Most importantly, the merger allowed RIP to get candidates on the ballot.¹¹⁶

If the Human Rights Party of Ann Arbor was going to make progress within the electoral process, it needed to register those the party directly appealed to: U-M students. In February 1972, the party led an intensive voter drive in an all-out effort to get

¹¹⁵ "A Personal/Political History of the Human Rights Party," Bret Eynon Papers, *Organizations-Human Rights Party*, Bentley Library.

¹¹⁶ Jeaneane Havstad, "The Human Rights Party of Michigan: A Test Case in Contemporary Third-Party Politics," *Detroit in Perspective: A Journal of Regional History* (Fall 1981): 2.

students to the polls in April of that year, and to win seats on city council. According to the 1970 census, out of 99,797 residents within Ann Arbor 31,200 were university students.¹¹⁷ HRP's efforts were largely successful as it registered over 15,000 University of Michigan students, nearly half of the student population, during a two-week voter drive. Moreover, polls conducted by members of HRP prior to the election, showed that a plurality of voters would vote for any candidate affiliated with the Human Rights Party.¹¹⁸

The voting drive paid off in April 1972 when two members of the HRP were elected to the ten-member Ann Arbor City Council. Both Nancy Wechsler and Jerry DeGriek were twenty-two year-old political novices. Wechsler was a recent U-M graduate, while DeGriek was still an undergraduate history major and had been active within student government at the university. Wechsler's victory in the city's second ward was not unexpected, especially since the area had a high proportion of students. However, DeGriek's win in the first ward was a surprise, as he defeated his nearest opponent by almost 600 votes.¹¹⁹ The two successful HRP campaigns placed the party, for the first time directly within the local political process and at its pinnacle of success. Unfortunately, HRP would have a difficult time improving upon the two-seat gain within the city council and other local political offices after the April 1972 election.

Electoral victory for the HRPers both surprised and rocked the political establishment in the traditionally Republican, conservative stronghold of Ann Arbor. The surprising success both Wechsler and DeGriek experienced was partially advanced

¹¹⁷ *Detroit Free Press*, April 10, 1972.

¹¹⁸ "Human Voice - Human Rights Party Newsletter, February 22, 1972," Human Rights Party Papers, Box 1, *HRP Campaigns - 1972 City Council*, Bentley Library

¹¹⁹ *Michigan Daily*, April 4, 1972.

by the 26th amendment, ratified in 1971 that gave 18 year- olds the right to vote for the first time; this allowed HRP to capitalize on an untapped segment of the population. Both the 26th amendment and 1972 election gave HRP members the hope that longterm political change, previously not seen in Ann Arbor, was possible. It not only caused HRP's main rival the Democratic Party to lose votes, but also weakened the Republican Party. "For in this city, which had been predominately Republican for years, the GOP could not score a majority in the even most conservative fifth ward."¹²⁰ HRP was able to garner 25 percent of the vote in the April 1972 election; an astonishing feat for a party that had only previously starting running candidates a year earlier.

Wechsler and DeGriek's election not only forced the local political establishment of Ann Arbor to view the Human Rights Party as a new, serious player in local politics, but it also signaled the rebirth of the radical movement in Ann Arbor. The electoral victories of two relatively unknown leftists heralded a time not seen at the University of Michigan, or Ann Arbor since the middle 1960s, when VOICE successfully won its grievances against the Hatcher administration over such issues as the university releasing student names to HUAC. Student radicalism, at least in Ann Arbor, was not yet dead, even as the turbulent 1960s developed in to Nixon's "silent majority" 1970s. According to *The Nation*, a liberal national publication, "It is evidence that new voters have a voting pattern distinct from the rest of the electorate and that the student radicalism of the 1960s had not died, but taken new forms."¹²¹

Despite their electoral success the council members would not easily blend into the local political scene; this ending any prospect for longterm success. In fact, the new

¹²⁰ "The New Radicals," *The Nation*, 17 April 1972, 486.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

twenty-two year-old members openly defied the conventions and traditions that were practiced within Ann Arbor's council, to the dismay of many of the veteran members. At the first city council meeting after the election, "They [Wechsler and DeGriek] had remained seated during the pledge to the flag, had given clenched-fist signals to the audience and had grilled Police Chief Walter Krasny in public. Clearly they were a force to be reckoned with."¹²² The action of the HRPers on the council would soon wear thin as they faced continued battles with other members on the council.

Wechsler and DeGriek both were gay, unbeknownst to the electorate that elected them. Once seated on the City Council, however they became open about their sexuality, a brazen move in the early 1970s, especially in a conservative, Midwestern town; the first two openly gay politicians to emerge up to that time period.¹²³ However, it is uncertain if both Wechsler and DeGriek's openness about their sexual orientation was shaped by their radical politics, in an effort to publicly rebel against the bourgeois morality that many leftists or socialists of the time viewed as rampant within American society. It was largely because of these first two openly gay city council members that a city ordinance on human rights was updated, "making it unlawful to discriminate in housing, employment and accommodation against a person for his 'sexual preference.'"¹²⁴

The New Left not only heralded the advent of the anti-war movement, but allowed other radical collectives to emerge by the late 1960s and early 1970s, specifically the gay and lesbian rights movement; largely ignited by the Stonewall riots, which pitted gay men against local police for five days after the Stonewall Inn, a gay bar in Greenwich Village, was raided by police. The riots, added to changing attitudes about sex, in relation

¹²² *Michigan Daily*, April 13, 1972.

¹²³ "Bringing the Revolution Home," *Ann Arbor Observer*. May 2005, 52

¹²⁴ *Ann Arbor News*, April 3, 1972.

to morality within American culture at-large, allowed for a more accommodating American public towards those practicing non-heterosexual activities by the early 1970s. Both the riots and America's changing attitude towards social norms would allow gay men and women to acknowledge their sexuality, open and defiantly. Homosexuality previously, largely considered a psychiatric disorder, was finally removed from the American Psychiatric Association (APA) list of disorders in 1974. Additionally, the National Organization for Women in 1973 formally allowed lesbians to join their ranks after years of rebuking them.¹²⁵

HRP members did work successfully with Democrats on the City Council to pass a city ordinance that decriminalized marijuana. The new law greatly lessened the fine for possession to a mere five dollars. Since the 1970 founding of the party, a more liberal drug policy had been argued, from the standpoint that a more lenient policy would allow drug violators to seek treatment, rather than punishment from a penal system that could care less about the welfare of a drug user or addict. More importantly, the use of marijuana by both high school and college youth during the early and middle 1970s was at an all-time high, at least by percentage. This fact, combined with nearly one-third of the Ann Arbor community being students, allowed for the decriminalization of marijuana to pass in May 1972, the result of an HRP initiative.¹²⁶

If Wechsler and DeGriek's only intention on the Ann Arbor City Council was to defy middle-class conventions through their personal antics, they were succeeding: However they simultaneously lost some important political battles on issues at the heart of the HRP platform, including the party's strong anti-war message. In June 1972, soon

¹²⁵ Patterson, 711.

¹²⁶ Silberman, 53.

after their election to the city council, Wechsler and DeGriek proposed several vehemently anti-war resolutions, in an attempt, to stop any official support from the city for the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia. Ann Arbor Mayor Robert J. Harris called the HRP sponsored proposal, “closely resembling the racial laws passed in fascist countries against the Jews.”¹²⁷ The proposed measures would “have opposed the U.S. involvement in Vietnam including a declaration that the city would resist, obstruct and oppose the war with all powers it had.”¹²⁸ The proposals met an overwhelming defeat, with only Wechsler and DeGriek supporting the resolutions.

VOICE had run its course after the 1968 split that largely curtailed its power within activist circles. Nonetheless, student activism, even radicalism remained far from dead, even after the fall of VOICE and other SDS chapters throughout the country. The 1970 success of BAM working within a white context was proof of that. The 1970 emergence of a loosely based socialist party, HRP, in the local region and its advancement as a serious political fixture within Ann Arbor was further evidence of the vitality of the New Left in a Midwestern college town. The success HRP experienced with the election of two of its members to the Ann Arbor City Council would mark the peak for the party. In the following months and years after the election of both Wechsler and DeGriek, the party would be marred by outside forces disenchanted with the party’s university-leaning rhetoric: Its refusal to support the candidacy of the 1972 Democratic Presidential nominee, George McGovern, when combined with the end of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, took away the impetus that largely supported the student left’s activism against the war for nearly a decade.

¹²⁷ *Ann Arbor News*, April 23, 1972.

¹²⁸ *Ann Arbor News*, June 13, 1972.

By 1973, the Human Rights Party of Ann Arbor was facing the early stages of inner-party bickering that eventually would cause the party to falter by late 1974. Many of the political mishaps tormenting HRP, beginning in 1973, parallel those that VOICE similarly experienced during the 1967-1968 period, such as the intra-party bickering that divided VOICE over the failed war research initiative. Much of the fuss within the party was initiated by the Rainbow People's Party (RPP), a counter-cultural youth organization, loosely affiliated with student radicals at U-M, which had been developing in the Ann Arbor region since the middle 1960s. The members within the group advocated an approach that did not emphasize any concrete ideology, but one that abstractly called for the liberation of all peoples, in an effort they called, "a new life culture."¹²⁹

RPP's close affiliation with HRP began with RPP's conception. This partnership was based on the hope of both parties that both radicals and "hippies" would have a more accommodating city government. However, unlike many within HRP, the members of RPP never pretended to be leftist intellectuals working to solve society's ills. RPP's inclusion within the local leftist conglomerate eventually caused the counter-cultural organization to place blame at those that founded HRP: U-M intellectuals. Unlike those who had close ties to university, members with RPP wanted to broaden the scope of the party, so as to make it friendlier to those not affiliated with the U-M, specifically the local community. The in-fighting between the two organizations slowly manifested itself as HRP became a more visible fixture in Ann Arbor. RPP accused the party of stifling discussion and ignoring both the individuals and the vital problems of the Ann Arbor

¹²⁹ "LET IT GROW! LET IT GROW! , Editorial taken from the Ann Arbor Sun, John and Leni Sinclair Papers, Box 18, *History, Program, Statements and Correspondence*, Bentley Library.

community, specifically the first and second wards: two wards the party dominated by relying heavily on students. While HRP was evenly antagonistic towards RPP, who feared that the Rainbow People wanted to take over the Human Rights Party through infiltration. Since 1972, several members affiliated with RPP had been trying to get on the local HRP primary ballot, positioning RPP as a serious threat to HRP's stability. One member, David Sinclair, won the HRP primary for a city council seat, although he was later defeated in the general election.¹³⁰

HRP's unapologetic radicalism alarmed the members of RPP, sensing some of their divisive measures not only equaled longterm electoral defeat in Ann Arbor, but the return to electoral supremacy of the regional Republican Party. RPP, although considered outside the confines of middle-class society, with its counter-cultural rhetoric, still wanted to win elections even it meant making safe, calculated political moves. However in 1972, HRP's steering committee, in charge of structuring the party's platform, chose to remain on the path of ideological rigidity, ultimately one of the causes for the party's short lifespan. So it was surprise when Peter Fenton, a business manager of the RPP publication *Ann Arbor Sun*, was incensed by the move of the HRP to use "only feminine pronouns in the [its] platform."¹³¹ Further evidence of the ideological rigidity was Wechsler and DeGriek's insistence that federal money given to the city for the benefit of providing healthcare to low-income people, should be used to build a free abortion clinic, which was to be built and run by women exclusively.¹³² The free clinic idea never became a reality, largely because of opposition from other council members.

¹³⁰ *Ann Arbor Sun*, Jan 12-26 1973.

¹³¹ *Michigan Daily*, August 17, 1974.

¹³² Silberman, 53.

The anti-war movement begun in the middle 1960s was largely because of student radicals, spearheaded by Students for a Democratic Society. By 1972, U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War was still an important issue, not just for radicals, but for the national political establishment. The Vietnam War in itself was still a volatile issue, so much so that the Democratic Presidential nominee in 1972 was largely chosen, above all else, for his unapologetic opposition to the U.S.'s involvement in Southeast Asia. This was largely due to both student anti-war activists and radicals becoming increasingly involved within the Democratic Party, a political entity somewhat more accommodating to student radicals than the GOP. The Democratic Presidential nominee, George McGovern, the U.S. senator from South Dakota, became the most "left-of-center" presidential candidate the country had ever seen in its history.¹³³ Nonetheless, his reputation of being a "radical" proved too much for the majority of the American people and McGovern was defeated by Richard Nixon in one of the most lopsided electoral victories in U.S. history.

The growing antagonism of the RPP towards the HRP over its reluctance to be more moderate is most clearly shown by the refusal of the Human Rights Party to endorse George McGovern for president in 1972. McGovern, unlike the 1968 Democratic Presidential nominee, Hubert Humphrey, was quite supportive of student radicals, at least in terms of their anti-war sentiment. If HRP was ever going to find a suitable candidate to endorse outside its political party, McGovern was it. According to Eric Chester, the refusal of HRP to publicly endorse a national, vehemently anti-war candidate "hurt the party" politically, as many of the radicals and peaceniks affiliated with the party, including members of RPP, felt betrayed by the decision and ultimately turned to the

¹³³ Patterson, 762.

party of McGovern, not HRP in the local November 1972 election.¹³⁴ HRP's decision not to endorse McGovern lay in its refusal to align itself with the political establishment in any way, lessening the vitality of a third party in the political process.

The 1972 political blunder of not riding George McGovern's coattails to secure the liberal-radical voting block in the November 1972 election, not surprising, endangered its longterm existence as a viable third political party in Ann Arbor. By early 1973, the Human Rights Party was divided into three separate camps, or "caucuses." The three groups that emerged were the Rainbow People's Party; the Debs; and the Militant Middle. The Debs were concerned that personalities of HRP candidates were being overemphasized in their campaigns to the disadvantage of the issues. The Militant Middle, like the Rainbow People's Party, believed the party needed to broaden its message by catering not just to radicals, but to liberals and Democrats so as to continue its limited success in the Ann Arbor region.¹³⁵

The emergence of factions within the party, forced the party to reflect upon the way the party it was structured. Instead of turning to the people through the democratic process, it was in fact becoming a hierarchal political institution, controlled by a select few. In this way it resembled the elitist mentality of VOICE during 1967 and 1968. According to a report published by the HRP Steering Committee in 1974, the party was comprised of four distinct classes. The elites, called, "mandarins," according to the report made all the decisions relating to the party, even though party meetings were held to ask for other opinions within the party; although outside arguments were seldom reflected upon by the "mandarins." Besides the "mandarins," the "minions" were adherent party

¹³⁴ Eric Chester interview.

¹³⁵ *Michigan Daily*, March 17, 1973.

members used by the “mandarins” to accomplish the goals of the party. The other two classes were the “mavericks,” the independent radicals not fully behind the party’s platform, and the “masses,” who primarily existed to give the party credibility during party meetings, little else.¹³⁶ The labels for these particular groups within the party showed that deep division and hostility were forcing the party to contemplate whether it really was a democratic political institution.

The local Democratic Party’s move further to the left added to the burdens felt by HRP as a whole. The Democrats, in an attempt to gain votes lost to HRP in previous elections, started to cater to the voters whom had largely supported HRP since its early days: U-M students. The Democratic Party did this by embracing the message that had allowed the Human Rights Party to experience unprecedented success in Southeast Michigan. “Many Democrats are now trying to face left to capture HRP’s votes. This has resulted in the Democratic Party fielding no less than five female council members, most of them young and almost all of them talking the same sort of politics as HRP itself.”¹³⁷ In fact, after the collapse of the Human Rights Party in the middle 1970s, many former HRPers joined the Democratic Party.¹³⁸

The 1973 April local election was a crushing defeat to the Human Rights Party of Ann Arbor, not only in the city council races, but also in the mayor’s race. The election signaled the beginning of the end for ten years of New Left radicalism, both at U-M and in Ann Arbor. Overall, the party did not win any political offices, and its overall vote total from the previous 1972 election significantly decreased. Instead of receiving a total

¹³⁶ “A ‘Class’ Analysis of the HRP,” Human Rights Party, Box 2, 1974 *Steering Committee*, Bentley Library.

¹³⁷ *Michigan Daily*, March 17, 1973.

¹³⁸ Gary Rothberger interview.

of 25 percent of the total vote, HRP garnered only 16 percent. This was highlighted with HRP mayoral candidate Benita Kaimowitz receiving only 16 percent of the vote, “much poorer than some political observers had anticipated.”¹³⁹

Members of the RPP largely had been afraid that running HRP candidates, in city races that the party had little chance of winning, would inadvertently allow the Republican Party to make political inroads at the expense of the Democrats. RPP wanted HRP to run candidates in wards that guaranteed the party electoral success, not in areas that would hurt the chance of the liberal candidate running, particularly in the city council races. The RPPers were right. In April 1973, largely because of the HRP’s insistence on running both a mayoral and city council candidate in every city ward up for election, the Republicans were able to win not only the mayor’s office, but to take control of the Ann Arbor City Council for the first time since 1969.¹⁴⁰

HRP never regained the same level of success they had experienced in early 1972; however, after a year of political blows, exacerbated by in-fighting within the party and election losses, the party seemed to have conquered its demons by early 1974. The party’s fortunes improved as HRP candidate Kathy Kozachenko ran a successful campaign to win the second ward city council seat once occupied by Nancy Wechsler. Additionally the party won an election outside the city of Ann Arbor for the first time in its short history. In Ypsilanti, a nearby town, the party won two city council seats.¹⁴¹ Although the Human Rights Party experienced newfound success, the party only slightly increased its vote from the previous year. In April 1974, the party won 18 percent of the

¹³⁹ *Ann Arbor News*, April 13, 1973.

¹⁴⁰ *Michigan Daily*, April 3, 1973.

¹⁴¹ *Ann Arbor News*, April 7, 1974.

vote city-wide; still far from the peak of a quarter of all Ann Arbor voters casting a ballot for a HRP candidate in 1972.¹⁴²

Although the Human Rights Party as a whole seemed to be on the political upswing, one of its major initiatives, rent control, was overwhelmingly defeated by voters in April 1974. The HRP proposal would have controlled rapidly rising rents for students and low-income people, who predominately made up the renting population in Ann Arbor. Not surprisingly, HRP blamed the defeat not on its lack of support, but on landlord opponents. According to the party steering committee, those against the proposal outspent HRP by a “30 to 1 margin.”¹⁴³ Unfortunately, excuses for defeat coming from the party showed that HRP was very frustrated with its lack of electoral victories, particularly those, such as the rent control initiative, that were needed to keep the party viable in the local political arena.

The irrelevance of HRP became apparent by early 1975 with the victory of Richard Ankli in the HRP primary for the second ward city council seat. In February of that year, Ankli ran against the more respected and favored candidacy of Franck Shoichet. Ankli won, even though he himself never viewed the election in a serious light; even considering himself an independent, not a member of HRP. To ease the worries of the party that his candidacy would lead to a disastrous loss for the party in the second ward, he attempted to withdraw his name from the ballot. Unfortunately, he could not legally have his name removed and the party subsequently lost in the general

¹⁴² Ibid.; Both Wechsler and DeGriek decided not run for reelection for personal reasons after their two year term was up in 1974.

¹⁴³ ” Human Voice - Human Rights Newsletter, April 19, 1974, Human Rights Newsletters, *Human Voice, 1973-1975*, Bentley Library.

election.¹⁴⁴ The Ankli affair showed the once vibrant third party of Ann Arbor was now in disarray, unable to even nominate a serious candidate in its own primary election. It was the final blow to a party that had been slowly dying since its decision to abstain from endorsing George McGovern for president in late 1972.

Nineteen seventy-four did mark a brief resurgence for the loosely based socialist political organization, but unfortunately with the party's embarrassment over nominating the wrong candidate the following year in a city council race, HRP was a victim not only of its own workings and inter squabbling, but also the result of the changing political landscape, both locally and nationally. The party's slow death was also largely the result of the changing mood of the nation's youth: no longer was the Vietnam War an issue that rallied both student radicals and mild anti-war activists together.¹⁴⁵ It was the vital issue that allowed for student radicals to build a political base, first with VOICE and later with the HRP, but it had officially ended for the United States in January 1973.

HRP ceased to be an independent political entity by 1977. Its last electoral victory was the election of Beth Kozachenko to the Ann Arbor City Council in 1974. After her election the party faced a dwindling base, exacerbated by the end of the Vietnam Conflict and the growing apathy of America's student population, in the post-Vietnam and Watergate era. HRP, facing a bleak future, joined forces with the Socialist Party USA.¹⁴⁶ The merger thus joined the New Left with its ideological forebears, both the lyrical and Old Left, into political oblivion. New Left radicalism, both at the University of Michigan and in the city of Ann Arbor, was officially dead after a short five-year lifespan.

¹⁴⁴ *Ann Arbor News*, February 20, 1975.

¹⁴⁵ *Michigan Daily*, September 30, 1975.

¹⁴⁶ "Human Rights Party Newsletter April-May -1977," Robert Alexander Papers, *Newsletter*, Bentley Library.

Conclusion

The secondary literature of the New Left fits into four distinct schools of thought. The first wave of scholars who wrote on the New Left emphasized national developments, thus ignoring regional chapters of such organizations as SDS. These historians argued that New Left of the 1960s and early 1970s became more radical as the decade unfolded and frustration increased over the U.S. government's involvement in Vietnam. Revisionist historians have tended to argue the continuity between the New Left and the Old Left, ignoring the rather unique nature of 1960s leftists. Post-revisionists have focused primarily on how the student movement interrelated with those in the larger society, but have largely ignored the great developments of the movement, such as the influential place SDS played in the anti-war movement. Finally, the neo-traditional approach has argued a similar thesis as the first wave of scholars except for its regional emphasis. This paper, although not necessarily part of any distinct school of historical interpretation, most closely champions the neo-traditionalist interpretation, for it attempts to incorporate elements traditionally not considered part of a local New Left study, including BAM and the independent political organization, HRP.

The New Left conglomerate at Ann Arbor finally dissipated by 1975 with the decline of HRP. New Left radicalism went through three stages of development during the 1965-1975 period. VOICE, the organization that characterized the first stage of development, focused primarily on issues affecting the University of Michigan, although it also forged an anti-war movement on the campus. BAM, although not necessarily part of the white New Left movement, emerged in 1970 and successfully battled the university, something that the late-1960s VOICE organization and the HRP were never

able to accomplish. BAM fits into the New Left movement with a reform-minded approach that characterized the early stages of VOICE, before it started spewing rhetoric calling for both an overthrow of the university and the state. Finally, HRP developed, allowing for the white New Left movement to reemerge after a period of dormancy, although this time within a larger realm: the city of Ann Arbor.

VOICE-SDS went through tremendous change and upheaval from the middle 1960s to 1970. In fact, the organization went through three phases of development during these specific years, marked by the rise, decline, and brief resurgence of the local student radical movement. From the beginning of 1965 to the end of 1966 marked a period of strengthening student radicalism largely headed by VOICE members. During the period the premier leftist organization on the Ann Arbor campus rallied students against the draft and university administration over policies regarding names being released to governmental officials and student grades being submitted to local draft boards. The student radicalism was largely supported by faculty members, specifically within the humanities and social science departments. Nineteen sixty-seven and 1968 marked the decline of VOICE, as the organization lost touch with the student body and failed to convince both undergraduates and graduates of the danger of military research on the U-M campus. This lessening of influence also was the result of ineffective leaders at the helm of VOICE, who were more inclined to debate issues rather than take direct action. The third and last phase was launched in 1968. During this period VOICE split, causing the more militant faction, the Jesse James Gang, to take control of the local SDS chapter. Through its new leadership, VOICE became more violent. Instead of advocating reform

as it had prior to 1968, the renewed SDS affiliate often used revolutionary language and tactics.

The emergence of BAM in 1970 allowed 1960s student activism, started by VOICE, to continue on the University of Michigan campus. Ed Fabre, a U-M law student, and his predominantly Black student supporters forged a successful campaign whose aim was to force U-M officials to enact a 10 percent quota for Black student admissions. Through an effective three-week strike of the University of Michigan in the spring term of 1970, BAM put pressure on U-M President Fleming and his administration to enact their demands. This successful campaign, overwhelmingly supported by students and faculty, specifically in the LSA school, helped to make BAM's demands a reality. Like the 1965-1966 period that characterized VOICE's peak in influence at the university, BAM's reform-minded approach, rather than anti-establishment rhetoric, equaled success for the short-lived movement.

The Human Rights Party was the last development of the New Left at both the University of Michigan and in the city of Ann Arbor. Unlike BAM, it remained the ideological descendant of vibrant middle 1960s VOICE organization. Like VOICE, HRP became a victim of changing times, added with ideological rigidity that divided both organizations from within. However, unlike VOICE, HRP did not disperse because of increased militancy within its ranks, but because of increased student apathy. Largely supported by University of Michigan students since its inception in 1970, changing national dynamics would cause the party to falter by the middle 1970s. In 1972, two of its party members, Wechsler and DeGriek, were elected Ann Arbor City Council members; along with their victories a HRP-sponsored marijuana initiative became law. However,

the party was never able to duplicate the political success experienced in 1972.

Eventually, in-fighting over its refusal to support George McGovern for president tore it apart and led to accusations of elitism against party leaders. By 1974, the party made a mild political rebound with the election of two HRP members to the Ypsilanti City Council. Nonetheless, it never became the vibrant third party that characterized the early years of its development. By 1975 the party had become a non-entity on the local political stage.

The three movements that characterized the 1965-1975 period in Ann Arbor ultimately can be tied together through their activist approaches in a context where the resistance was fierce, at least in regard to the challenges all three organizations faced. All three movements: VOICE, BAM, and HRP were crucial to the activist and, at times, leftist culture that played an important role in the city of Ann Arbor and the University of Michigan throughout the 1960s and well into the 1970s. In fact, although the Human Rights Party was a political entity separate from U-M, its existence and short-term vitality would have been impossible without both the radicalism of VOICE and the peaceful student strike of BAM -- two movements that defined the era's activism at the University of Michigan. Although a stronger link is found between VOICE and the Human Rights Party, BAM's place within this group is vital to understanding the diversity of student activism during this tumultuous time, even though it is not part of the anti-war, white, middle class, New Left.

All three organizations, VOICE, BAM, and HRP, may be long dead, but their legacies still live on. Many of the members who were once part of VOICE or HRP aligned themselves with the Democratic Party, in hopes of turning the party leftward. In

1972, in the wake of the death of the national SDS organization, radicals aligned themselves with the Democratic Party and nominated George McGovern, a configuration that has allowed the party to be bastion of former New Left radicals. Additionally, HRP members Nancy Wechsler and Jerry DeGriek paved the way for political candidates to be open about their sexual orientation, the first politicians to do so anywhere in the country. BAM's emergence at U-M in 1970 allowed the minority rights argument to become more prevalent in higher education, allowing affirmative action to be an accepted procedure in many of the nation's leading universities. Like homosexuality, minority rights still remain a lightning rod for both the left and right in the United States. It remains to be seen whether New Left radicalism and reform-minded organizations from the 1960s will continue to influence future political, cultural, and social movements.

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