LIBERAL SYMPOSIUM

Viet Nam War Called ‘Immoral’

BY JOHN EARLY

“The war in Viet Nam is a new type of guerilla warfare which is quite different from most other wars.” This was the central argument posed by Dr. John Ambler of the Rice Political Science Department, Friday, October 15.

Dr. Ambler was one of six participants in a symposium on the war in Viet Nam, held in the Chemistry Lecture Hall and sponsored by the Rice Association of Liberal Students in cooperation with the Houston Citizens for Action on Viet Nam.

The audience, consisting of approximately three hundred persons, remained respectfully quiet and polite throughout the symposium. Similar attempts in other parts of the country have been met often with extreme harrassment by one or both sides.

Heard Both Sides

The panel, moderated by William Hughes, a local businessman, included three members in support of the administration policy and three in opposition to it. Each one gave a ten to fifteen minute speech on the topic, with speakers alternating for each side.

Attorney William B. Dazey was the lead-off man for the supporters of the administration. Mr. Dazey, whose work is in international law, drew most of his speech from what he called his “personal observation of the situation in that part of the world.”

He claimed that as a disillusioned liberal he had supported the settlement in Laos, but has seen that it does not work. He then observed that he had seen the United States emerge from the occupation of Japan as a “loved and respected friend.” He saw no reason why a similar feat could not be accomplished in Viet Nam.

Killing Civilians

Ezra Young, a member of the American Friends Service Committee, was the first speaker for the opposition to the administration’s policy. He cited a report delivered by three American Quakers who had visited Viet Nam.

This report emphasized the destruction of human life, especially of women and children, that the war has brought in its wake. He doubted “whether we have the moral right to continue killing women and children in a war that is not of their making.”

He then proposed a cease-fire plan which consisted essentially of the introduction of a United Nations peace-keeping mission into the war-torn area.

Position At Stake

Dean Kenneth Tollett of the Texas Southern Law School, supported the administration in what he described as a “pragmatic manner.” His argument was that as a matter of world power politics, we have no other alternative than to remain and fight the war in Viet Nam.

He contended that the propriety of the original commitment is not at issue, but rather the question is how shall we fulfill our present obligation. He considers the war to be the theater for the confrontation of the major powers, and the United States can not afford to leave without seriously damaging its position in the world confrontation.

He argued that now is no time for us to leave since we are beginning to win the war.

Desertions Rising

We are winning major battles; the Viet Cong’s desertion rate is rising faster than the South Vietnamese regular army rate, and all this “during the monsoon season when the Viet

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Cong have a distinct advantage.”

Dr. Ambler was the second speaker in opposition to the present policy. His contention about the unique nature of the war became the major point of discussion during the evening.

He asserted that while the United States may continue to win military victories, it cannot hope to win the war since the political nature of the conflict means that triumph can only be secured by those who can establish an effective government. The government in Saigon, he claimed, has shown time and time again that it is incapable of maintaining order.

Against Hostile People

The Viet Cong, on the other hand, has established a rather effective shadow government in the areas which are under its domination. He cited Mao Tse Tung’s famous dictum on guerrilla warfare, that “the guerilla

force in the population is like a fish in water,” illustrating the fact that a war cannot be won with a hostile population.

He agreed with Dr. Tollett that Viet Cong desertion is on the rise, but that it is still about one-fourth that of the desertion among the government forces.

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like to switch to PE or Commerce, too! Do they even respect the academic atmosphere into which they have accidentally stumbled? They have at least as much contempt for real students as we do for jocks.

Fire Failures

Can they even do what we hired them to do? Get serious. Next game take a look at our employees lounging casually on the bench while some new foe is busily wiping the field with what is left of their reputation as football players.

What does one do with employees who fail to perform their job, show no particular interest or pride in their own work, and hold their employer in deepest contempt? One fires them.

And frankly, I’m tired of making excuses. Aren’t you?