



Paul Azevedo

MAR 27 1985

# The Reactor

## Dissenters Have Rights, Too

I like to express my opinions. That's the reason for this corner. I think you ought to be able to express yours, even though you and I might disagree. I don't like the government harassing citizens for expressing opinions. I don't like national organizations bullying members who disagree with dicta from on high.

I "escaped" the military draft during the Korean War. I did it by enlisting. Since I did my overseas time in Germany, I don't know whether I'm eligible for the Veterans of Foreign Wars or not. I've never cared much about joining, but now I wish I was a member so I could resign in protest at the way the National VFW is treating its Santa Cruz Post, the one that had the temerity to disagree with the national's position. Santa Cruz spoke out for "a policy of self-determination and non-intervention in Central America." The national calls for "American Primacy" in Central America, with a strong military presence, according to the AP story.

I don't know which side is right, if there is any right side to this issue. I'm not a foreign policy expert, but I do know when people are being bullied for their opinions. VFW is trying to yank the charter of the Santa Cruz Post for expressing itself.

The Supreme Court has decided to make young men between 18 and 26 second class citizens. The bureaucrats now have permission to prosecute people of that age and sex if they refuse to register for the draft and say so out loud. It depends on how vocal you are. Speak up and the Feds zap you. The Supremes found some dumb rationalizing excuse to let the Feds get away with it. The big chill is on. Even though my draft-age sons are duly registered, they are still second class citizens until the court changes its mind. If you can gag men in their twenties for speaking up about something so vital to their welfare, then you can silence anyone about anything. I expect this from South American dictators. I expected more from the Supreme Court.

The test of Constitutional freedoms doesn't come from descriptions of fuchsia pruning. It is vital issues like the draft that test our freedoms. I do not object to the draft. I do not object to prosecuting those who evade the draft; or refuse to register, but I object strongly to prosecuting (persecuting) anyone because he expressed his opinion on the draft publicly. The Supreme Court has vandalized the Constitution with this decision.

If David Wayte can be jailed for speaking up, then perhaps I can be punished for supporting him.

If the vets in Santa Cruz can be thrown out of the VFW because they contradicted the national organization, then the VFW might as well close up shop, because freedom of speech is one of the things we fought those foreign wars to protect.

If the VFW can't take dissent, then, in the words of John Nance Garner, it isn't worth a bucket of warm spit.

The Constitution is worth protecting, and peaceful dissent is what the Constitution is all about.



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## Column Gets Strong Endorsement

Editor:

Paul Azevedo's column on free speech was as brisk and refreshing as the ocean breeze.

Had Alexander Meiklejohn, one of our most eloquent First Amendment advocates, read the column, he would be glowing with admiration for the strong, clear argument for free speech made by Paul.

I hope a lot of people read Paul's column and put it on their bulletin board. Many thanks to the Tribune for printing this column.

4/3/85

Clark L. Natwick  
Valencia Wa

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