

# APAC- ACC RALLY



photo by carter tomassi

The November 18 anti-war march and rally sponsored by the Atlanta Peace Action Coalition here in Atlanta seemed to be a memorial to past glories of demonstrations. All over the country, instead of the thousands of people who in the past would march en masse through the streets, on Saturday they numbered no more than a few hundred. The excuses for this are numerous—the seemingly ended war which is really more destructive than ever for the Vietnamese; McGovern co-opting energy; lower draft calls; apathy. All of these reasons seem a little lacking because past action has proved that large numbers of people can be mobilized. What remains is the question of how to go about reaching those people and getting them to respond to a call for a mass demonstration now.

We stood in the cold, grey morning, watching people assembling in front of the Federal Information Building on Peachtree last Saturday. For awhile there were only a few people, and suddenly, almost exactly at 11 o'clock, people popped up out of nowhere, carrying banners and supplies, quickly producing signs and slogans.

People moved through the crowd handing out signs and support leaflets for striking students at Southern University (see story p. 2) and Greyhound strikers. Towards noon, four motorcycle cops parked across the street and stood there, glaring at us. After starting, we found out that they would drive along with us, keeping

marchers in line, directing traffic and, I guess, protecting (?) us.

We marched, with the numerous contingents competing for ear attention with different slogans, some old, some new. They were women, gays, ACC anti-imperialist, APAC, Georgia State University, and Atlanta-based Veterans United Against the War (VUAW). The noise was fairly impressive for 200 people, but the march itself lacked unity.

Later at the rally, this same coalition of marchers was represented by the speakers. They were Rev. C.K. Steele, a national vice-president of SCLC; Sherman Miller, a member of the October League and Mead Rank-and-File Workers Union; Debbie Bustin from Socialist Workers Party; Nina Martin from APAC and Student Mobilization Committee; Eileen Klehr of Atlanta Coordinating Committee; Steve Bunker of VUAW; Phil Lambert of Georgia Gay Liberation Front; Evelyn Clark of Georgia Women's Abortion Coalition; and Charles Bryant of the Black Panther Party.

Under the shadow of the Trust Company of Georgia building, the speakers stood, framed against the dry fountain on the other side of the park.

"We must stand as a physical witness against the war," said Steele. His speech was very short, but he emphasized the moral question of the war.

Both Miller and Klehr spoke of other struggles, such as those of Henry Whitlock, Rhodesian coal-mine

workers, Palestinian refugees, the Black Panther Party, and Mead workers, as having a close relationship to the struggle of Vietnamese liberation forces. "Vietnamese people are standing up against the same enemy we're facing—US imperialism," said Miller. "We must support the NLF [National Liberation Front] and call for Nixon to sign the Nine-Point Peace Plan and to end support of the puppet Thieu regime," said Klehr.

The most glaring deficiency of this demonstration was its base in the past and its inability to broaden into new issues such as those that Klehr and Miller spoke of. Debbie Bustin, APAC's and SWP's representative, said, "We must support the One Point Plan—Out Now." She said the Nine-Point Plan endorsed by the North Vietnamese was a concession to the US. It seems rather presumptuous to tell the Vietnamese people how to fight the war that they have been struggling with and winning. The war is not yet over, and there is a large probability that the US will use the slightest excuse to end talk of settlement.

Our reasons for still being in the streets should be to protest the racist and imperialist policies which lead to aggression in places like Vietnam. This war is not an isolated "mistake" as liberal politicians like McGovern have said. We must take to the streets—not to tell the Vietnamese people what is right for them, but to keep struggling against imperialism and the resulting oppression both abroad and here at home.

—antioch annie

