

Fact sheet 9: Protest and the Vietnam War

There was a large anti-Vietnam War movement in New Zealand. Worldwide protest against the war centred on the policies and actions of the United States government. Critics of the war in New Zealand accused our government of simply doing what the US told it to. Questions were asked about security arrangements such as ANZUS and SEATO. There were calls for a more 'independent' foreign policy which was not submissive to the US. Opponents of the war also questioned whether communism posed any real threat to New Zealand.

There were moral objections to the war, including objections to the weapons and tactics being used. The extensive US bombing campaigns were major focal point of protest. Anti-Vietnam war groups organised 'mobilisations' against the war and thousands marched in protest in New Zealand's major cities.

Other protests in New Zealand included:

- 1967
 - two members of the left-wing Progressive Youth Movement laid a protest wreath on Anzac Day in Christchurch and were subsequently convicted of disorderly behaviour. Further incidents followed at later Anzac Days as protestors sought to bring attention to their anti-war cause.
 - there were 21 arrests during an Auckland protest against the visit of South Vietnam's Premier, Air Vice-Marshal [Ky](#).
 - police and protesters clashed outside the home of the American consul at Paritai Drive in Auckland
- 1969: Flour bombs, paint and eggs were thrown in protest over a visit of a high-ranking US politician
- 1969: Firecrackers were thrown at an election meeting addressed by the Prime Minister, with 30 arrests.
- 1970: 200 police controlled a riot outside the hotel of the visiting US Vice President, Spiro Agnew.
- 1971: A welcome home parade for 161 Battery was disrupted by a small group of protesters who accused New Zealand soldiers of being murderers and threw red paint, symbolising the Vietnamese blood on their hands.

Prime Minister Holyoake and his National government had their own misgivings about the viability of the war. Publicly they maintained that they were upholding New Zealand's foreign policy principles and treaty obligations. Despite popular sentiment apparently being against the conflict, especially in its final years, Holyoake's National Party was re-elected into government twice after committing combat troops..

For more on the anti-Vietnam War movement in New Zealand go to NZHistory.net.nz