Declaring Peace With The Vietnamese

As commencement exercises proceed today, the war in Indo-
China continues also. Students at Middlebury have protested and
worked against the war for several years now. They have can-
vassed, lobbied, campaigned and petitioned. They have written
their Congressmen and Senators and spoken with them personally.
They have marched when necessary—in November of 1969 and on
April 24 of this year. They observed the Moratorium, joined
the Strike last spring and participated in Mayday. All of
these actions were motivated by the same deep concern over
America's tragic involvement in the affairs of the Indochinese.

It is altogether fitting that this concern find expression
again today. Members of the senior class and others present
who are wearing armbands do so to demonstrate their continuing
opposition to the war and the Vietnam policies of the Nixon
Administration. They hope that their symbolic gesture of
protest will remind parents, alumni, and members of the local
community that a war fought in our name is our responsibility;
the task of ending it must be shared by all.

Many who wear armbands today have endorsed the document
known as the People's Peace Treaty. The treaty is an un-
official agreement, negotiated by the National Student Asso-
ciation and student groups from north and south Vietnam, which
declares a cessation of hostilities between the American and
the Vietnamese peoples. It begins with the recognition that
Americans and Vietnamese are not enemies. Its terms are based
on the eight-point peace proposal introduced at the Paris talks
last September by Madame Nguyen Thi Binh of the National
Liberation Front delegation. The Treaty offers a realist,
just and honorable solution to the war—and one that is no
doubt acceptable to most Americans.

The central point of the Treaty is that the United States
must publicly set a date for the complete and unconditional
withdrawal of all its forces from Vietnam. In return for a
commitment to a total pull-out, the Communist side has agreed
to begin in immediate negotiations for the return of all American
prisoners and to establish a cease-fire during the withdrawal
period that would safeguard the lives of remaining American
troops.

Senators Hartke and McGovern and other Americans who
have spoken with the Vietnamese in Paris believe that, if a
withdrawal deadline is set, the fighting will be stopped in
a matter of days and American POWs will be released even before
the last American troops have left Vietnam. Without a fixed
date for total withdrawal, there is no possibility of securing
the return of American POW's, guaranteeing the safety of
remaining American forces, or allowing the Vietnamese to
determine their own political future free of American inter-
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The students and faculty at Middlebury who have sup-
pported the People's Peace Treaty realize, of course, that it
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The students and faculty at Middlebury who have supported the People's Peace Treaty realize, of course, that it is governments, not people, which make treaties and declare peace. But, while only the United States Government can end the war in Indochina, individual action against the war can have great impact. By endorsing the People's Peace Treaty, by doing something as simple as wearing armbands at commencement, individuals can attempt to disassociate themselves from their country's policy in Southeast Asia and identify, in a small way, with the principle victims of American intervention in that area.