

Bombing Sterling Hall: Protest, Rhetoric, and Violence in 1960s Madison, Wisconsin

By

Ashley Byrd

History Honors Thesis

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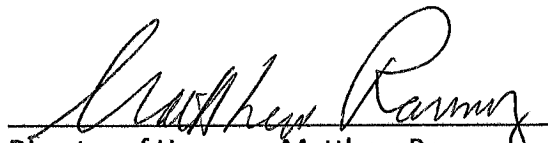
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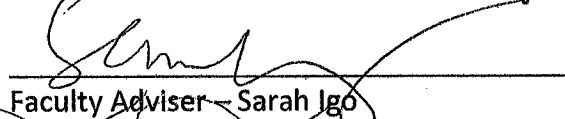
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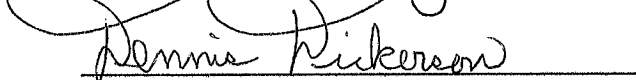
On the basis of this thesis defended by the candidate on April 25, 2013
we, the undersigned, recommend that the candidate be awarded honors
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Introduction

In the early hours of August 24th, 1970, Sterling Hall, on the University of Wisconsin's Madison campus, was no longer an educational and research building, but instead a skeletal structure. The side of the building where the bomb had detonated was now a gaping hole, its edges charred by the explosion's flames. Inside, years of research were reduced to ash. Blocks away, the force of the explosion blew out glass windows in other buildings on the University's campus. One man, a graduate student, had been killed by the blast. The four young perpetrators, later discovered to have been students at the University, were on the run but maintained their militant antiwar stance against the Army Mathematics Research Center, housed in Sterling Hall. On the evening news, CBS called the bombing "a new and dangerous escalation of the radicals' battle to destroy American society."¹ At any rate, Madison, Wisconsin, was now the home of the largest act of domestic terrorism in American history.

Despite this unwelcome distinction, Madison and Sterling Hall have received relatively little attention from scholars. In discussions of the 1960s, both are usually just members of lists: Madison in the list of radical campuses and Sterling Hall in the list of violent events that brought a decisive end to the idealism of the early sixties. In what follows, I seek to take both of these out of their respective lists and develop them more fully to draw out the lessons such an event can provide in terms of thinking critically about the origins of and justifications for violence and of the historiography of the 1960s.

The violent rhetoric used in Madison was not uncommon in the late 1960s, yet its experience with the destruction of Sterling Hall makes it exceptional. With so much violent

¹ Evening news broadcast, Corporate Broadcast System, August 24, 1970. Accessed through the Vanderbilt Television News Archive.

rhetoric swirling around, the question remains: why did the bombers of Sterling Hall turn to action? What factors were present in Madison to help violent rhetoric become violent action that might have been missing from other volatile campuses? It is important to note that this project rejects the idea that violence as protest occurred spontaneously but rather focuses on the intentionality that many radicals brought to their violent actions. It attempts to think critically about the ways that sixties radicals thought and talked about violence, as well as the ways an act of violence can change this conversation.

Focusing on one community in detail helps bring out voices that might otherwise be lost in the study of a broader national trend. There are many disparate voices at play in this work, including students, the national media, community radicals, and non-radical townspeople. Some organizations played central roles in coordinating the sentiments of others into actions, including the campus chapter of Students for a Democratic Society, as well as the Young Socialist Alliance and the Young Democrats and Young Republicans. While these latter three groups tended to set their own ideological agendas and draw from a narrower collective, SDS enjoyed a period where it was a major influence on student politics, although this influence declined significantly around the time when the SDS national organization imploded in 1969. Furthermore, students at the University of Wisconsin often utilized committees to protest specific problems like the Dow Chemical Company's recruiting visits in 1967 or to coordinate efforts for the Moratorium protests in 1969. These committees often gained members through advertisements in local newspapers, making the press an important part of radicalism in Madison.

Off-campus, Madison residents organized themselves in several community groups supporting a variety of causes, including the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam (in which several students also participated), the Madison Draft Resistance League, the Friends

Service Committee, and the Madison Tenant Union, for which Karl Armstrong, one of the bombers of Sterling Hall, worked for a time before 1970. These organizations allowed Madison residents several outlets for protest activities as well as community reform efforts. Similarly, Mifflin Street, although not initially an organized place, served as the off-campus center of radical activity in the late 1960s and later developed several of its own institutions (as well as the nickname “Miffland”) to institute a distinctly radical culture in the wake of Sterling Hall.

As mentioned earlier, the press, especially on campus, served a critical role in organizing radical life in Madison. The city itself had two newspapers, the *Capital Times* and the *Wisconsin State Journal*, that provided much of the mainstream view of the news and culture, but students learned about current events primarily through the student newspaper, the *Daily Cardinal*, which sometimes reprinted articles from the city newspapers or, more often, published scathing editorials about the city’s papers’ coverage of a certain event or protest. In fact, the *Daily Cardinal* served a central role in supporting campus radicals and in keeping students aware of protests that might be happening or other issues on campus or in world politics. Karl Armstrong also told historian Tom Bates that “these two papers influenced me to a great extent,” including in his ideas around violence as a protest tactic.² The paper, although it was the student newspaper for the University of Wisconsin, was not owned by the University and maintained a fierce independence from official opinions. The *Madison Kaleidoscope* was published off-campus but also by young radicals and often expressed positions even more extreme than those in the *Cardinal*. The *Kaleidoscope* supported the bombing of Sterling Hall, and its editor, Mark Knops, was jailed for refusing to provide information about the whereabouts of the bombers. Together,

² Tom Bates, *Rads: The 1970 Bombing of the Army Math Research Center at the University of Wisconsin and its Aftermath* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1992), 182.

both the *Kaleidoscope* and the *Cardinal* provided critical information, organization, and opinions to the radical movement.

In Madison, unlike in many other famously radical communities or campuses, there were not really any movement celebrities. Madison did not produce a Tom Hayden like Ann Arbor did, or a Mario Savio from Berkeley. Even the four men who bombed Sterling Hall, Karl and Dwight Armstrong, Leo Burt, and David Fine, became well known only after August 1970. There were a few important radicals, including Knops of the *Kaleidoscope* and Paul Soglin, a radical sociology professor turned alderman who fought for leftist policies within the city government. There was also a similar lack of infamous enemies of the movement in Madison. Editorialists may have vilified University administrators like Fred Harvey Harrington and Edwin Young, but they were not the biggest targets of criticism. In fact, this is where we see the most intersection with national politics; figures like Ted Kennedy and Melvin Laird, both of whom came to speak on the campus, inspired much greater criticism than did any local figures specifically.

Without an in-depth look at these many organizations and people, some groups can be over-emphasized in our national memory, depending on who is crafting the narrative. Especially in a field like modern United States history, populated with former sixties radicals, it can appear that every student harbored some radical thoughts, and the voices of less-radical people are often drowned out until they become part of the “silent majority” and conservative resurgence of the early 1970s. Instead of leaving these people in the woodwork to magically appear after my work is finished, I have tried to give them a voice in painting the picture of their community as radicalism was supposedly gaining ground.

Moreover, discussions of the 1960s are often centered on the organizations through which people found an outlet for their radical inclinations.³ This approach tends to exclude radical activity that takes place outside of an organizational context as well as that undertaken by those in the lower levels of an organization. It also assumes that these organizations had a significant amount of influence over their members so that the organization's beliefs reflect those of its members. By focusing on one community, this project is able to explore the relationship between organizations and their members more closely. This includes organizations like the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam as well as student media on the University of Wisconsin's campus and to what degree they influenced those involved in radical activity.

Having justified looking at one community in-depth, the question remains: why Madison? In this answer the historical moment becomes much more important. Very few other college campuses, towns, or cities experienced both the level of radical activity that Madison did and a violent event on the scale of Sterling Hall. Those that did, like Kent State in Ohio or Columbia in New York City, have been studied much more often than Madison has. This project seeks to add to those works that use an act of violence as their focal points. Using violence in this way provides an opportunity to examine the forces at work when people act against the laws and social norms that normally keep people from such destructive actions.

A bombing or other traumatic event can serve many people as a break in their memory, an event that stands out as distinguishing what came before from events after. This allows us to examine the ways in which violence can affect a community as well as the strategy of campus radicals. What changed in Madison after Sterling Hall, and to what degree can the bombing be named as the cause for these changes?

³ The alternative to this approach is usually to focus on high-level activists like Tom Hayden and Alan Haber, as in James Miller's *Democracy is in the Streets*, and obviously still suffers by excluding a large number of activists who did not appear on the national radar.

This project implicitly critiques the popular historical narrative surrounding the late 1960s, which focuses largely on the ways in which violent acts like the Sterling Hall bombing or the Kent State shootings helped quiet radical activity. According to this narrative, white radicals, informed significantly by the work of black activists in the Southern Civil Rights Movement, wanted to organize the campuses around the idea of “participatory democracy.” Led in part by Students for a Democratic Society, radicals became increasingly involved in the antiwar movement. When this movement failed to end the war, radicals searched for tactics that would force the government to pull out of Vietnam, becoming increasingly destructive as they turned to violence. Todd Gitlin, in his book *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage*, addresses the late sixties only as a time of implosion and fade-out. It does not discuss what happened to the radicals who only a few years before had been massing in the tens of thousands, instead assuming that for all intents and purposes the radical movement was over after Students for a Democratic Society descended into infighting at its 1969 national convention. This book and many others focus primarily on national-level organizations and events as markers of radical activity. Through this lens, it is relatively easy to claim, as Gitlin does, that radical activity effectively ended after 1969 or 1970. My project, instead, uses a more sharply focused lens to show that radical activity, while it may have been changed by the violence of the late sixties, did not end so quickly as others might claim.

Other works have examined the justifications radicals used for their violence as well as the escalation of antiwar protest, which are helpful since Sterling Hall was targeted for housing the Army Mathematics Research Center. The literature remains important to understand the reasons various authors give for the use of violence because each highlights a different force in play during the 1960s that could have influenced radicals in Madison. In this regard Allen

Matusow's idea of the guerrilla fantasy has provided a crucial starting point.⁴ The guerrilla fantasy is the idea that, as the United States became more involved in Vietnam, the vision of the Third World revolutionary became more attractive to American radicals, especially students. These radicals then began to apply the idea of a liberation struggle to urban ghettos and, based off a desire to imitate what they saw as more-authentic black radicals, used it to justify their growing calls for violence. Although Madison did not have an urban ghetto, some radicals did seek to put themselves in conversation with international struggles. Works like Matusow's help us begin to understand the ways in which radicals were talking about violence during this time, an important theme in this project. It also helped contextualize the conversation in Madison about international issues, which were discussed both before and after Sterling Hall. However, Matusow's work is by no means comprehensive, especially because he only views radicalism in the 1960s as an outgrowth of the guerrilla fantasy. This framework, while helpful, precludes him from considering alternative justifications for campus violence that I consider in my own project.

Kenneth Cmiel recognizes that violence may have come in part from copycatting black radicals, but he places much greater emphasis on violent rhetoric, which constitutes an important part of my own discussion of the development of violent ideas in Madison. Cmiel argues that violent rhetoric comes about in part because radicals wanted to show that true obscenities were the events occurring in Vietnam and urban ghettos and that their language on this topic should reflect the outrage they felt. He uses a much more legally-oriented framework and argues that the Supreme Court helped to facilitate this shift toward more violent rhetoric by rewriting "the line between behavior and violence, allowing more space for aggressive words."⁵ Although I do not

⁴ Allen J. Matusow, *The Unraveling of America: A History of Liberalism in the 1960s* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).

⁵ Kenneth Cmiel, "The Politics of Civility," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*, ed. David Farber (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 1994), 280.

follow his line of inquiry in my own work, his argument about the importance of rhetoric was important in shaping parts of my analysis. Cmiel details the attacks radicals leveled against contemporary social etiquette, preferring authentic expression, especially in politics. In so doing he provides a framework for discussing violent rhetoric that was important in directing my interpretation of student media in Madison.

James Miller echoes both Matusow and Cmiel in his profile of four early SDS activists. He argues that government behavior provided an important justification for radicals' use of violence, including Tom Hayden, who eventually came to embrace what Miller calls a "drama of resistance."⁶ This drama is based in part on the "cult of the ghetto," a Matusow-esque idea that argues that radicals received more attention and peer respect for putting their bodies on the line, especially in confrontations with law enforcement. Although Miller and I come to vastly different conclusions about violence (he finds it "defensive, reactive, [and] without constructive purpose"⁷), his work served as an important reminder to examine radicals' relations with law enforcement and government officials. Students' relations with police especially declined over the course of the 1960s, and this provided an important piece of the violent context in which radicals were operating before and after the bombing of Sterling Hall.

Additionally, I found Robert Self's book about postwar Oakland to provide several key premises for my own work. Self deals with the development of black power, which is important to understand for all the influence black radicals provided to those in Madison. He again reminded me to look closely at accusations of police brutality, because the criticism of authority figures was often parroted on that of black radicals. Furthermore, and more importantly, Self argues that the second half of the 1960s was not a chaotic breakup of the earlier idealism but

⁶ James Miller, *"Democracy is in the Streets": From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (New York: Simon and Schuster, Inc., 1987), 305.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.

rather “a creative outgrowth of earlier efforts.”⁸ This is a key premise for my work, which seeks to find the continuations in radicalism after its supposed decline as well as to document the rise of the factors that are mistakenly blamed for the radical movement’s implosion.

Historiography focusing specifically on Madison and Sterling Hall is minimal. It has not been a focus of major works about the period, and when mentioned is usually given as an example of a community whose radical community was destroyed by an act of immense violence. The one monograph on the subject, Tom Bates’ *Rads*, is not a scholarly work, although it has been invaluable for my own research in providing a narrative and timeline for the events surrounding the bombing. It has helped provide a sense of what the community of Madison was like in the late 1960s, although it primarily focuses on documenting what happened and not on analyzing why events occurred as they did.

In my own work, I do seek to analyze the reasons behind the events in Madison, although that first requires that I paint a picture of the community. Chapter one details the increasing radicalism in Madison before the bombing, primarily through student activities and protests. It also lays a groundwork for the general climate of the University at this time, including a discussion of important faculty members and administrators. After that, it moves into a narrative of important events, especially antiwar protests like Dow Day in 1967 and the Moratorium protests in 1969.

Chapter two focuses more explicitly on the development of violence in Madison, both in words and actions. Following a similar timeline to chapter one, it tracks the varieties of violent talk and its intensification in the Madison community in the years and months prior to the bombing. This chapter also looks outward at what other national factors might have influenced

⁸ Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 218.

Madison radicals from outside the community, including national antiwar tactics as well as the Civil Rights Movement's rejection of nonviolence and adoption of Black Power.

All this build-up to the bombing comes to fruition in chapter three, which opens with a more complete description of the bombing as well as its perpetrators. It then discusses the immediate reactions to the bombing, radical and non-radical alike. This section demonstrates that people had a wide variety of reactions to violence, presumably reflecting an equally wide array of pre-bombing opinions on the subject. Chapter three closes by discussing the radical community in Madison in the months and years following the bombing. It seeks to illustrate continuities in radicals' thinking before and after the bombing. It argues that radicalism in Madison, though it may have been altered by the events of 1970, did not end with the bombing of Sterling Hall. In this way it breaks with the traditional historical narrative to add its own contribution to the field.

Overall, this project seeks to understand how violence, in both rhetoric and action, can take shape in a radical community. Through the Sterling Hall bombing, it uses a close-up view of Madison, Wisconsin, to discuss prevalent themes in 1960s America. The experience in Madison between 1968 and 1971 especially shows how ideas that have remained a part of our cultural heritage can both persist and change under the immense pressure of a tumultuous time. It takes the high drama of the late 1960s and localizes it, making it more realistic and helping us to think about the tumult and consistency of our past. Madison was not the historical everytown in 1970, but it briefly captured our national attention, and it deserves to do so again to help us better understand the development of protest in postwar America. This attempt begins by painting a picture of the community and tracing the central events that stimulated its own discussion of themes impacting America in the late 1960s.

Chapter One: A Progressive Tradition Accelerates: Madison, Wisconsin in the 1960s

The University of Wisconsin at Madison had a reputation for being a high-quality, left-leaning institution well before the dawn of 1960s social activism. Beginning in the Progressive Era, the “crown jewel” of the Wisconsin state university system recruited academics who would cultivate, in the words of historian Paul Buhle, “the fusion of various traditions- Old Northwest democracy with modern social-intellectual currents, grassroots political action with cultivated historical insight.”⁹ By the 1960s, the school started attracting students from all across the country, creating a diverse pool of thought and discourse that only grew as students became more engaged in the issues surrounding them. Thus, there was often a dialogue on campus for events that were not otherwise on the national radar. Furthermore, students at the University were also intent on reforming their own institution and the conditions of their education, a movement that had begun in the late 1950s and added to the issues in being discussed on campus.¹⁰ These discussions, combined with both national and campus-specific events, helped create an atmosphere that was very amicable to increasing radicalism in the student body. Although specific organizations and people played less of a role in the narrative of radicalism at UW, the events detailed below were a crucial part of the student experience at the University and provided an equally important context for the discussions of violence that ultimately contributed to the bombing of Sterling Hall in August of 1970.

The radical movements in Madison, as in many cities and especially college towns in America, began a higher level of activity in the 1960s. Contemporary sociologists like Kenneth Keniston and Richard Flacks argued that many students, influenced by the optimism many in the

⁹ Paul Buhle, *History and the New Left: Madison, Wisconsin, 1950-1970*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 1.

¹⁰ Paul Ginsberg, interview by Barry Teicher, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin Madison Libraries, 1996.

country felt at the dawn of the decade, were acting out of a desire to implement the values they had been taught as children.¹¹ Many student radicals were raised by liberal parents who preached a doctrine of equality and freedom to their children. Exposure to both national and international problems through higher education caused students to want to make their world a better place that would mesh with their moral values of equality, honesty, and peace. Intense moral development was said to be shared by many involved in the social movements of the 1960s; although some radicals later took extreme measures to attempt to fight injustice, they rationalized these measures through their strong moral lens.¹² Many of these moralistic students also exhibited a lack of conformity with mainstream culture that led them to seek alternative peer cultures, further facilitated by higher education, which isolated students from people of other ages and allowed them time to experiment with other ways of living.¹³ These radicals, including those who eventually turned to small cohorts of other violent peers like the Weather Underground, did not start out intentionally self-isolating nor friendless. Many had an intense desire for community that they invested in outlets within social movements, meaning that these movements were often both intellectually and personally important to their participants in addition to being an outlet for social action.¹⁴

There were several possible outlets in Madison for activists to seek community. Within the university, Students for a Democratic Society, Young Democrats, Young Republicans, and other political organizations including Madison chapters of the W.E.B. DuBois Club, the Young People's Socialist League, and the Young Socialist Alliance helped students develop and

¹¹ Kenneth Keniston, *Youth and Dissent: the Rise of a New Opposition* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970). Flacks was also an activist when he was a student, helping to found Students for a Democratic Society at the University of Michigan.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Richard Flacks, *Youth and Social Change* (Chicago: Markham Publishing Company, 1971), 50.

¹⁴ See, for example, Doug McAdam's *Freedom Summer*, which details the creation of a close-knit community among volunteers (often white and college-educated) during the Freedom Summer civil rights campaign in Mississippi in 1964.

articulate their beliefs with similarly minded peers, with many students holding dual memberships in several organizations, especially on the Left.¹⁵ However, the Left, both on- and off-campus, tended to have specific organizations focused around a common issue, including the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam and Wisconsin Women for Peace. While the antiwar movement eventually became a central focus for groups both on- and off-campus, other issues were important, including student rights for both undergraduates and graduate students as well as the involvement of both private companies and the government in industrial or military research on campus. In part because of these other issues, the campus served as an important center for most of the radical activity in Madison. Nearby Mifflin Street was an important offshoot of campus radicalism, especially in pursuing more of the culture changes associated with youth in the 1960s. Local women's groups in the wider community also provided important support for students fighting against the draft. Ultimately, though, the students served as the bulk of the activists in Madison and were the spark of many of the actions that preceded the bombing of Sterling Hall.

Progressive Variety: 1965-1966

Both Madison and the University of Wisconsin-Madison had a long progressive tradition, but this trend accelerated in the early years of President Fred Harvey Harrington's term, which began in 1962. Harrington hired several outspokenly political faculty members, including Hans Gerth, a former mentor to radical sociologist C. Wright Mills, and Harvey Goldberg, a Marxist whose history lectures were widely attended by leftist students.¹⁶ Many faculty members, including those mentioned above as well as a majority of the sociology department and some historians pushed students to think about the world around them and to be active in it, further

¹⁵ Harvey Shapiro, "A Roaring Left..." *Daily Cardinal*, April 28, 1965.

¹⁶ Patrick M. Quinn, "Radicalization in 1960s Madison, Wisconsin: One Participant's Reflection," *Solidarity*, February 27, 2012, <http://solidarity-us.org/site/node/3545>

cultivating an atmosphere of activism.¹⁷ Harrington also defended the recruitment of out-of-state students, often stereotyped as “red diaper babies” and blamed by Wisconsin natives for stirring up political action, to a state university because, he said, “We feel we need these out of state students to make a cosmopolitan student body.”¹⁸ He wanted a university that stood as an equal with the Ivy League and other top-notch schools, both in academics and in social awareness.

With this more cosmopolitan student body came great variety in student politics at UW. The student newspaper ran a special the first week of the 1965-66 school year about the various political options on campus, encouraging freshmen to get involved. The offerings- the Young Democrats, Young Republicans, Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam, Young Socialist Alliance, and the Socialist Club- showcased the many activist opportunities at UW, listing six different political organizations on the Left alone.¹⁹ Some students were involved, as mentioned earlier, in more issue-specific campaigns, including the quest for more student power, which began in the mid-1950s when some conservative-libertarian students began to question the policies of residence halls, including the disparity between men’s and women’s curfew hours.²⁰ The ability to influence hiring and firing of professors was a common desire on campus at this time that attracted students of diverse political persuasions.

The Vietnam War attracted special attention at the University of Wisconsin as early as 1964, when a small group of anti-draft protestors sat in at the administration building.²¹ A group of students attempted a citizens’ arrest of the leader of a local air force base in early 1965, before

¹⁷ Tom Bates, *Rads*, chapter 5.

¹⁸ “Harrington Urges ‘U’ Support for Continued State Growth,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 2, 1965, page 8.

¹⁹ “Political Groups Cover Wide Range,” *Daily Cardinal*, August, 1965, page 14.

²⁰ Paul Ginsberg, interview by Barry Teicher, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin Madison Libraries, 1996.

²¹ *Ibid.*

the war was on most Americans' minds.²² By that summer, historian Marilyn Young noted that alternative groups, as opposed to just a small minority of academics, began to provide information about the war to the wider public. Six months before that, in early February, students and faculty in Madison participated in a march to the Capitol to protest the bombings in Vietnam. The rally monitor, John Coatsworth, a history graduate student, used this opportunity to call for writing to congressmen and increased agitation in the future, realizing that Vietnam was not an issue that would soon go away. Harkening back to the University's tradition of activism, Rabbi Richard Winograd spoke at the march, saying, "There are many voices in government that advocate blindness. We must add our own voices of sincerity."²³ The University community was broadly represented at this march- professors from sociology, and law as well as geography and social science attended alongside two hundred students- in such a way that placed Vietnam squarely on students' political radars.

That summer, the Madison community also became involved more broadly in the antiwar movement through the Vietnam Hearings, which allowed people to raise questions and concerns they had about the war. Both students and community members took part, expressing different but related viewpoints. One statement was given by a Madison housewife, who worried about the lack of an exit strategy for Vietnam, as well as the well-being of her children growing up in a violent society. Evan Stark, a student, also testified saying that students would support a social revolution in Vietnam.²⁴ These hearings helped spark a community conversation and awareness about the war in its early stages, a conversation that would only grow in the coming years.

²² *The War at Home*, DVD, directed by Glenn Silber and Barry Alexander Brown (1979; New York, NY: First Run Features, 2003).

²³ Gil Lamont, "March on Capitol Protests Bombings in Viet Nam War," *Daily Cardinal*, February 10, 1965, page 1. The Rabbi was the head of the campus Hillel organization.

²⁴ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*. Both the above testimonies were videotaped and used in the documentary.

According to the *Daily Cardinal*, the campus newspaper, by October of 1965, the University of Wisconsin had become the “national focal point of renewed antiwar protest.”²⁵ The National Coordinating Committee to End the War in Vietnam had just decided to place its headquarters in Madison, partly because the “liberal nature of the community would allow [it] to exist.”²⁶ Madison had attracted attention by its earlier antiwar activities and its national reputation, based largely on the University, for progressive politics. The arrival of the Committee’s headquarters cemented this reputation and promised to further draw both the university and Madison into the antiwar movement. One of the Committee to End the War’s goals was to work with a wide variety of groups, including the civil rights movement, SDS, and the W.E.B. DuBois Clubs of America. This helped to begin to tie many groups together through antiwar activism, which would become important as the war intensified. It also laid the groundwork for the anti-draft movement, an issue that affected groups with various interests and would become a central focus in subsequent years.

In fact, by May of 1966, the draft was attracting considerable protest on the University campus. A group of students staged a draft card burning and a sit-in at the administration building to express their discontent. At this point, the university was registering students for draft exams, and many students found the release of student information to the Selective Service System to be unacceptable.²⁷ One such student, writing an editorial for the *Daily Cardinal*, argued, “The University is wrong and immoral by complying with the Selective Service System’s demands.” This editorial contained very strong language about the fight over the draft, calling it “a battlefield with students fighting for their right to live and study in a society- against

²⁵ Eric Newhouse, “‘U’ Now National Focal Point of Renewed Anti-War Protest,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 13, 1965, page 12.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Draft exams were given to male students to determine their academic potential; those who received higher scores were less likely to be drafted.

those inhuman and mechanical forces who would want to plunge (and already have) the youth of this country into an amoral and dehumanized system.”²⁸ The idea that students were struggling against a coherent system that was working to place them in rigidly defined social roles was one that arose in the mid-1960s; according to historian Howard Brick, radicals used the idea of a system to tie societal problems together and call for change on a fundamental, as opposed to a symptomatic, level.²⁹ This adversarial tone would later become standard in student publications, but this was one of the first editorials to express a “students against the university” outlook so vehemently. Its urgency may have reflected the immense weight of the draft on male students especially, a thought echoed by Eric Brown, a graduate student at the time. Brown did not express such vitriolic feelings about the draft as did this editorial, but he did seek help from an on-campus draft counselor to see if he could avoid being drafted.³⁰ Brown also spoke to the centrality of the draft for him and his peers when giving his oral history in 2002, saying, “I’m remembering this stuff [about the draft] thirty-five years later, so it shows you what kind of an impact it had on my generation of male students.”³¹ In fact, this impact remained salient for male college students throughout the war, with one student complaining, “It is difficult to convey to one’s elders the agony of uncertainty that comes from living under the fearful black cloud of conscription for as long as eight years.”³²

However, the issue of the draft was by no means single-sex. Women both on- and off-campus were important in protesting the draft and in providing resources for male students looking to escape the draft. Older women especially used their image as respectable mothers to

²⁸ Robb Soffian, “The Lines Are Drawn... Which Side Are You on?,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 18, 1966.

²⁹ Howard Brick, *Age of Contradiction: American Thought and Culture in the 1960s* (New York: Twayne Publishers), chapter 6.

³⁰ Resources for students looking to avoid the draft were available through several media, including the *Daily Cardinal*, which published a two-part series on “Draft Alternatives: Legal and Illegal” in early October 1967.

³¹ Eric Brown, interview by Eric Olmanson, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, August 26, 2002.

³² *Daily Cardinal*, “The Selective Service System,” January 16, 1968.

legitimate their protest, providing an important community link to the anti-draft movement.³³

Younger women tended to use more radical methods, including a pair of female students who helped two of their male friends burn their draft cards and wanted an equal share of the punishment for their protest. One of the women justified her attempts at solidarity by noting that “the draft atomizes every man, and he feels very much alone... [But] conscription affects us all.”³⁴ Although it certainly had a special effect on male students, socially aware women were also interested in fighting the issue of the draft.

Other students were involved in protests against the draft because of their broader antiwar views. One such student recognized that “people just get more interested when you mention the draft” but noted that he was protesting the war as a whole.³⁵ The draft was not entirely its own issue but instead “forced college students to confront the war” and became a vehicle for furthering their own antiwar protest.³⁶ Because it was targeting students specifically, the draft was an important rallying point in creating the student community. The us-against-them mentality expressed in the editorial mentioned earlier was indicative not just of the beginning of an anti-university stance but also of students seeing themselves as a distinct interest group that could work together to accomplish distinct goals. This identification would become important as the war progressed and students continued to deal with issues unique to their position in society and on campus.³⁷

The University strengthened its reputation as an antiwar stronghold in October 1966, when Senator Ted Kennedy came to campus for a speaking engagement. Some students felt that

³³ Amy Swerdlow, “Not My Son, Not Your Son, Not Their Sons”: Mothers Against the Draft for Vietnam,” in *Sights on the Sixties*, ed. Barbara L. Tischler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 163-176.

³⁴ Recent Draft Card Burners Discuss their reasons, *Daily Cardinal*, Dec. 7 1968.

³⁵ Christy Sinks, “Student Reactions Differ Over Handling of Draft,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 17, 1966.

³⁶ Clifford Wilcox, “Antiwar Dissent in the College Press: the Universities of Illinois and Michigan,” in *Sights on the Sixties*, ed. Barbara L. Tischler (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 63-74.

³⁷ Richard Flacks writes about the early foundations of the creation of the student identity through the extension of the time people spent in educational settings, although he does not address the role of the draft in this identity.

the visit showed the university being used as a mouthpiece for the Democratic Party, which they resented as an infringement on their educational freedom and a sign of pro-war sentiments.³⁸

During the speech, many of these protestors taunted the Senator, interrupting his speech with calls of “Talk about the war!” Kennedy eventually attempted to engage one of the hecklers in a discussion about ending the war, but the effect of the encounter was to throw off whatever points Kennedy had been trying to make, disrupting the entire event. In doing so the students showed that they were beginning to prefer an authentic representation of their sentiments even over the bounds of civility because they wanted their positions to come across as clearly as possible.³⁹

Although some predecessor movements, including the Southern Civil Rights Movement, had focused on polite assertiveness to subvert the social mores they wanted to change, the Kennedy protest broke decisively with this pattern by refusing to defer to the Senator’s authority or, probably more importantly, to his cultural popularity as a member of one of the most well-known families in the country.

This event upset many at the university, who felt that “the university’s policy of free speech was turned into an outrageous mockery” by the incident. The author of an editorial in the *Daily Cardinal* that week noted that the hecklers had resorted to “blatant rudeness” to create “the most disgraceful show staged at this University.”⁴⁰ The anger that this author showed toward some of his fellow students was noteworthy because it showed that, at this point, there were still codes of decorum that some students felt should be followed. Heckling a very important and politically powerful man like Senator Kennedy was evidently well outside these bounds. While student radicals were often accused of respecting no bounds, especially when protests became

³⁸ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

³⁹ Cmiel, “The Politics of Civility,” in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*.

⁴⁰ “Vocal Minority Disgraced The ‘U’,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 28, 1966.

destructive or violent, at this stage some still articulated a definite stopping point for their radical activity that was well shy of their boundaries of acceptability in later years.

Broader Involvement: 1967-1968

By 1967, the war in Vietnam was becoming central in the consciousness and political activities of both students and Madison more generally. Two events that year were especially significant in this shift. The first was a Madison Quaker group's decision to organize a trip to North Vietnam to give medical supplies to those in need.⁴¹ In line with their religious affiliation, the trip was meant both as a humanitarian gesture and as an act of protest. It is important to note that this group was composed of townspeople, not university students. The fact that some members of the community were willing to undertake such a potentially scandalous and dangerous action as going to North Vietnam is an indicator of how strongly some people in Madison were beginning to feel about the war. Furthermore, this trip seemed to galvanize further action in its participants: one woman pledged to keep protesting, saying, "Once you've carried the first sign, it gets easier every time."⁴² Thus, the trip was very important in facilitating the transition to broader community involvement in the antiwar effort. It was also well-supported by the campus community- the *Daily Cardinal* ran an interview with one of the trip's members that placed special emphasis on her political, as well as religious, condemnation of the war.⁴³ The placement of the article on the front page meant that it had an influence on the broader antiwar context that students experienced at this time.

However, the most important events in 1967 for the antiwar movement were the protests against the Dow Chemical Company. Dow came on campus twice that year to recruit students for jobs, and both times the interviews were picketed by antiwar students. These protests were

⁴¹ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ "Quaker Tells of Viet Trip" *Daily Cardinal*, May 12, 1967.

primarily antiwar actions because Dow, as the maker of napalm, was heavily invested in the war effort. However, these protests were also directed at corporations more generally and the right of the university to bring them on campus. One flyer handed out by the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam argued, "The University of Wisconsin, by offering to Dow and other companies the use of publically-owned facilities for recruitment, is diverting tax monies which have been designated for education to subsidize these companies."⁴⁴ The Dow protests were based in a broader critique of the military-industrial complex, as opposed to the strict focus on the war itself that had been used up to this point.

This new framework might have been significant enough in itself, but the Dow protests soon became infamous as the first incident in which police beat and tear-gassed student protestors on an American campus.⁴⁵ Students were violently removed from the hallway outside the Dow interview room, but they quickly reassembled themselves outside the building into what amounted to a riot situation. Some professors tried to intervene between the police and the students, but in some cases they were treated just like rioters, including a sociology professor who was clubbed over the head when he tried to speak on behalf of his students. When the riot reached its peak, one observer noted, "The whole place was like a war zone."⁴⁶ Sixty-five students were treated for injuries sustained during what the *Cardinal* called "a bloody, glass-breaking, club-wielding, tear gassing battle."⁴⁷

The Dow protest had several important effects on the student movement. First, it showed many students that nonviolent tactics inspired by the civil rights movement were ineffective,

⁴⁴ "Stop Dow From Recruiting- Grind Dow to a Halt," Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI. Box 2, Folder 6.

⁴⁵ Bates, *Rads*, 92.

⁴⁶ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

⁴⁷ Matthew Fox and Steve Shulruff, "Students Face Clubs, Gas," *Daily Cardinal*, October 19, 1967.

moving many protestors toward a stance of “active resistance.”⁴⁸ They no longer saw themselves as being automatically obligated to follow the laws- one editorialist posited that “those who obstructed [the Dow recruiting] had a right to violate the law if they accepted the legal consequences.”⁴⁹ This new stance was accompanied by a change in rhetoric: students were now encouraging each other to “revolt” and discussing their various “enemies,” including and especially the police, who were now seen as being on the offensive against student protestors. As students began the well-chronicled move from dissent to resistance on a national level, initiated around 1967 with the publication of SDS National Chairman Greg Calvert’s “From Protest to Resistance” edition of the organization’s *New Left Notes*, a “cult of confrontation” developed in radical circles in which activists began to accept the necessity of clashes with law enforcement if they were to continue to escalate their resistance to the war.⁵⁰ Administrators too were criticized, as a handout from the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam stated quite clearly: “As radicals we know that the cops are an enemy with a more direct power than any University administration, [but] what we must make clear to the nonpolitical student is that cops are not the only enemy.”⁵¹ This same handout went on to say that the administration was also an enemy and that the police were simply the military arm of the university administration. Thus, students were no longer simply protesting the war or the war makers in a broad or abstract sense but giving a local face to their opponent. Another handout from the protest was explicit in making this connection, writing, “Dean [Kaufman] sees that the revolt against Dow as a corporation producing napalm is a revolt against America as a corporation producing mass murder of social revolution in Vietnam, in our ghettos and elsewhere. He is therefore correct to see that our revolt

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Paul Soglin, “Power: Faculty vs Police,” *Daily Cardinal*, November 2, 1967.

⁵⁰ Matusow, *Unraveling of America*.

⁵¹ “Fight University Attacks on the People,” Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam Papers, Box 3, Folder 11.

is also against this university, against its sterile academic assembly lines.”⁵² Additionally, this rejection of the university and the violence of the police showed that activists were beginning to identify flaws in basic American structures, which would soon be used to articulate a critique of society in general and not just of the war in Vietnam.⁵³ Overall, then, the Dow protests stoked student rage and politicized many, even starting a brief student strike against the university for its conduct during the protests. Dow simultaneously shifted the war to a more central place in student activism and broadened their critique of the war to include the university and corporatism more broadly.

After the shock of the Dow protests, most of the social movement actions in 1968 focused on more mainstream political outlets, which in turn facilitated greater cooperation with the broader Madison community. In April, community members worked to get a referendum against the war on a special ballot. The referendum called for a ceasefire and withdrawal of troops from Vietnam and ultimately garnered a 33% approval rate, much higher than its drafters had anticipated.⁵⁴ This effort required many hours of leafleting in the broader Madison community by both students involved with the referendum and townspeople more generally. In fact, the involvement of townspeople in supporting the referendum was probably key to its success and provided a more peaceful outlet for antiwar sentiments that worked to bring students and citizens closer together even as Americans on the whole were beginning to tire of the student movement, especially when they watched the actions of radicals on television after the Democratic National Convention in August.⁵⁵

⁵² “Stop Dow From Recruiting- Grind Dow to a Halt,” Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam Papers.

⁵³ Brick, *Age of Confrontation*.

⁵⁴ Quinn, “Radicalization in 1960s Madison, Wisconsin,” *Solidarity*.

⁵⁵ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, *America Divided: The Civil War of the 1960s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 245.

Another event that served this purpose was the Democratic primary election featuring Senator Eugene McCarthy, who was in the midst of challenging President Johnson, and, after March 31, Vice President Hubert Humphrey for the Democratic nomination.⁵⁶ Many university students participated in the campaign, going “Clean for Gene” and working to get his message out to the rest of the state. For some students, the McCarthy campaign provided a last hope that change within the system might still be possible, as well as a viable political option to remove the United States from Vietnam. The fact that the McCarthy campaign was also working within the established political system and required its student volunteers to maintain a straight-laced image also helped make the students more palatable to Wisconsinites, with whom the students were in more direct contact than ever before, often going door-to-door to convince people to vote for McCarthy.⁵⁷ Thus, these two campaigns helped make 1968, a year that was very tumultuous in other parts of the country, a relatively peaceful one in Madison.⁵⁸

Approaching a Break: 1969-1970

By 1969, the war and antiwar agitation were enveloping the entire nation, but there were still several other issues that captured attention on campus. The first was the black student strike in February. African American students wanted a say in the hiring and firing of faculty, the creation of a black studies department, and more rights for black students. When they did not receive a positive response from the faculty, black students went on strike with the intention of shutting the university down until their demands were heard. They were soon joined by many

⁵⁶ Johnson announced on that date that he would not seek reelection, and then worked to have Humphrey carry the administration's positions in the presidential race.

⁵⁷ Steven V. Roberts, “Students Solicit McCarthy Votes: Wisconsin Doorbell Ringers Organized for Campaign,” *New York Times*, March 25, 1968, page 44.

⁵⁸ See Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, chapter 12. The assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the riots that followed King's assassination in many cities, and the confrontation at Columbia gave many Americans a sense that radicals and protestors were “troublemakers,” not activists.

white students, largely out of a sense of guilt over their relative privilege within the university.⁵⁹ A *Daily Cardinal* editorialist noted that the administration was fully aware that it could divide the activists by race because “the blacks and the Left have found no basic ideological bridge for a viable coalition.” However, the author was determined that white radicals not be left out of an important show of solidarity for their black counterparts and told his readers that the black demands “merit the most serious consideration.”⁶⁰ The resulting coalition organized an extremely militant strike that turned violent after police and students clashed, causing some people to think that all the talk of revolution had finally come true.⁶¹ These fears only became more real when Chancellor Edwin Young called in the National Guard to help stop the strike, creating the vision of a military standoff. One student said that the calling of the Guard was “an insult to every member of the University community” and showed the Chancellor trying to “provoke a campus revolt and civil war.”⁶² While the strike ultimately ended with the university capitulating to the students’ demands, it left lasting effects on the University. The black student leaders had been explicit in their wishes against the use of violence during the strike, recognizing that it would limit their credibility in negotiations with the administration. They had been unable to prevent the five arrests that occurred. Furthermore, although the relationship between students and law enforcement had been souring since the Dow riots in 1967, the black student strike firmly cemented a negative view of police and National Guardsmen in the eyes of many students. It left much of the radical community with negative feelings toward the institutions of American society, including the University and law enforcement, but also left them determined to continue to fight for change.

⁵⁹ Paul Conkin, interview by the author, Vanderbilt University Library, September 27, 2012.

⁶⁰ “Standing in the Cold,” *Daily Cardinal*, November 27, 1968.

⁶¹ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

⁶² “Strike,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 13, 1969.

An important incident that exacerbated tensions between student radicals and law enforcement as well as the community at large was the Mifflin Street block party in May 1969. Mifflin Street was a well-known radical hangout in Madison a few blocks from the University campus that housed some students and other cultural radicals. During the block party, which was not held for any political reasons, the police were called for a noise complaint, but when they got there they clashed with Mifflin residents, who ultimately set up barricades to keep the police out. By the end of the fight, seventy people had been injured and one hundred arrested.⁶³ Students continued to blame law enforcement, as when one editorialist wrote after the riot, "The police of this city have lost their minds and have become a real and dangerous threat to the lives of the people."⁶⁴ A leaflet from the Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam expanded upon this sentiment, noting, "The people who run the universities and everything else in this society have a big stake in defeating such a movement, so they counter-attack with firings, injunctions, arrests, rules against demonstrations, and so on."⁶⁵ The Mifflin Street block party created a sense of persecution for many radicals. Because the event was not political, some felt that their way of life was under attack, not just their radical or dissident politics. Students were very distrustful of the power structures in place, and some began to feel justified in resisting their authority.⁶⁶ Although this resistance did not create a permanent insurrection on Mifflin Street, it remained an important indicator of the problems plaguing the city of Madison in the year before the Sterling Hall bombing.

However, students and the broader community did show some solidarity during the Moratorium protests in October and November of 1969. These protests were designed to

⁶³ Bates, *Rads*.

⁶⁴ "Pogrom," *Daily Cardinal*, May 5, 1969.

⁶⁵ "Fight University Attacks on the People," Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI. Box 3, Folder 11.

⁶⁶ "Pogrom," *Daily Cardinal*, May 5, 1969.

encourage the entire population to take a day off from their normal activities and spend it working against the war. In November, this day off was coupled with a massive protest in Washington, D.C. Madison sent groups from both the University and from a local women's peace group, the Wisconsin Women for Peace.⁶⁷ This helped members of the antiwar movement feel included on a broadly national level and contributed some feelings of camaraderie for both community and university members. However, the lack of direct results from the Moratorium left participants with feelings of hopelessness and some with a desire for more militant action to bring about real change. One student editorialist noted that "one day, two day and three day demonstrations against the war, no matter how impressive their turnouts will be able to accomplish only token change" and argued that students could do "more, much more, than participating in national anti-war protests." He then used the lack of results to argue that there were greater demands the students should have been making, including the removal of ROTC and the Army Mathematics Research Center from the University campus.⁶⁸ Thus, although the Moratorium was an example of peaceful cooperation against the war, it also put certain campus institutions on the radars of radicals as potential future targets of criticism.

Against this backdrop, the "New Year's Gang," so called because they committed their first action on New Year's Eve 1970, began some of its violent attacks on war-related buildings in and near Madison.⁶⁹ Karl Armstrong and his brother Dwight, both of whom bombed Sterling Hall eight months later, started fires in the Old Red Gym and Primate Research Lab (mistaken for the actual target, the Selective Service System's office) on campus and attempted to bomb the

⁶⁷ Wisconsin Women for Peace, letter to President Richard Nixon, July 1, 1969. Madison Committee to End the War in Vietnam Papers, Wisconsin State Historical Society, Madison, WI. Box 3, Folder 3.

⁶⁸ "Afterthoughts on the Moratorium," *Daily Cardinal*, October 17, 1969.

⁶⁹ The New Years' Gang was originally just Karl Armstrong and his brother Dwight but included David Fine and Leo Burt by the time the group bombed Sterling Hall. They were called the New Years' Gang by the *Daily Cardinal* because their first attack, on the Badger Ordnance Works plant in nearby Baraboo, occurred on the night of January 1st, 1970.

Badger Ordnance Works in nearby Baraboo.⁷⁰ The *Daily Cardinal* endorsed the firebombings in particular as actions that showed “that the immobile and repressive position taken by this nation can only be countered head-on in the streets with bombs and guns.”⁷¹ The paper further argued that such actions would be justified if they were able to “rid the campus of repressive and deadly ideas and institutions.” This endorsement provided important support for the bombers, who were indeed looking to destroy other “deadly institutions” like the Army Math Research Center. Although other media sources, including the city’s newspapers, roundly condemned the actions, the *Cardinal* helped create a sense of approval surrounding the tumult that kicked off the decade on campus.

This chaos persisted as the year went on, starting with the Teaching Assistant Association strike in March. Many graduate students went on strike for more academic control and better job security, and while some of their demands were ultimately met to help end the strike, the action “set an enormously different tone in terms of the relationships” between graduate students, undergraduates, and faculty members, according to then-campus administrator Joe Corry, giving his oral history in 1999.⁷² Where graduate students had once seemed fairly predictable (if on the liberal end of things), they were now recognized as another militant group on campus, contributing to the confusion and demands of so many other issues.

However, the main event of 1970 occurred in May, when news that the American government had been clandestinely bombing Cambodia leaked to the general public. At UW, this news caused “all hell to break loose.”⁷³ While many college campuses experienced intense

⁷⁰ The targets of the fires were not picked at random; the Old Red Gym held the campus ROTC offices (although the offices were actually the least affected by the fire).

⁷¹ Patricia Simms, “Plant Bombing Try Confirmed by FBI,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, January 7, 1970.

⁷² Joe Corry, interview by Barry Teicher, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, November 17, 1999.

⁷³ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

protests against the Cambodia bombing, Madison “was on the brink” of a major conflict. Students and community radicals alike burned and attacked several buildings, and some people recalled hearing about new firebombings every night in the days following the news.⁷⁴ In the same month, the shooting of students at Kent State University in Ohio heaped more rage and uncertainty on the already agitated campus. Karl Armstrong recalled feeling that the shootings at Kent State were tantamount to the government declaring war on students, and many others had similar feelings of being targeted.⁷⁵ With these two events so close together, some students felt a sense of their world spinning out of control that made them want to retaliate.

The build up to the bombing of Sterling Hall was a long road marked by several important events, both violent and nonviolent. Students worked actively and in large numbers to change many things about their University, from its involvement with corporate America to the inclusion of minority studies in its curriculum. During this time, the Vietnam War served as the main focal point for protest, and students sometimes worked alongside community members to show their discontent with the war. Toward the end of 1970, people in Madison, like many Americans, looked at the events of the past few years- the Dow Protests, the Democratic National Convention, the Mifflin block party turned riot- and felt that they were living in a chaotic world. Radicals, too, had experienced these events intimately, attempting to create progress in the rapidly changing world in which they lived. Accompanying these events was an evolving discourse about the use of violence. While only a few people chose to act on this discourse, many others had the conversation without resorting to action. In so doing they created a key context for the bombing of Sterling Hall, one in which violence was discussed not only as propaganda or a tactic of the enemy but also as a potential tactic for radicals themselves.

⁷⁴ Bates, *Rads*, 237.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

Chapter Two: The Forces at Work: Conversations About Violence in Madison, Wisconsin

As the decade progressed, Wisconsin student activists searched for language and actions that would reflect their greater convictions in the face of what they saw as a corrupt and broken system, one that not only lacked the “meaningful community, useful knowledge, and fulfilling purposes” they desired but also seemed bent on violently spreading this system to the rest of the world.⁷⁶ The language of protests begun in 1960, which focused on high ideals of freedom and equality, no longer seemed sufficient by 1969, especially when students were experiencing physical harm at rallies and protests and when they had identified the war in Vietnam as only a symptom of a broader societal problem.⁷⁷ Although the language of violence manifested itself in several forms, most notable in radicals’ search was the development of a reasoned conversation about violence. This rhetoric, alongside more utilitarian arguments about violence, created a context in which violent events like the bombing of Sterling Hall were possible.

Student radicals began widely discussing violence toward the end of the 1960s, first as part of conversations about protests. Activists began to talk about “confronting” an issue and attacking or being attacked by law enforcement officers. This was strong rhetoric but remained just a discussion. As the war in Vietnam loomed larger, however, the violence that accompanied protest became more salient in Madison radicals’ minds as they were exposed to images of the immense violence being served on the peoples of Southeast Asia. Drawing on this parallel, radicals began using military rhetoric to describe their own actions and this rhetoric was sometimes accompanied with action. Other examples of violence were also available during this time, including the black power movement and increasing police brutality, influencing how radicals thought about their own work. These reflections, evident especially on the editorial page

⁷⁶ Brick, *Age of Contradiction*, 178.

⁷⁷ Theodore Otto Windt, Jr., *Presidents and Protestors: Political Rhetoric in the 1960s* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1990), 139.

of the *Daily Cardinal*, show that students, radicals especially, put serious thought toward the ideas of violence as well as its use and morality. In this way the *Cardinal* both portrayed the reasoned developments of the rhetoric of violence as well as served as a source of encouragement for its readers' political action. Far from being spontaneous or rage-driven as popularly depicted, violent actions were part of a large and thought-out conversation in the 1960s.

Language and Targets: Early Rhetoric

In the mid-1960s, the Civil Rights Movement still served as a model for social justice action, and its tenet of nonviolence cast a long shadow in the minds of student radicals. Many white activists had volunteered on civil rights campaigns at the beginning of the decade, most famously with the Freedom Summer in 1964, and they brought the tactics of that campaign back to their northern universities.⁷⁸ However, passive resistance yielded few results and as the United States became even more heavily involved in Vietnam, some radicals' language became more militant.⁷⁹ Explicit violence was not yet a viable protest tactic, but protestors insistently demanded that authority figures be aware of the problems in their society. For example, a *Daily Cardinal* article in December 1966 about a student protest over a recruiting table for the Marines in the student union was headlined "Protestors Confront Marines."⁸⁰ "Confronting" suggests a different stance than a sit-in or picket line. Confrontation is an active process with a passionate or even angry connotation. Even though the protest in question was a peaceful one, the headline indicates the more energetic and active tenor of protestors' stances toward the issues with which they were concerned. It also echoed the national antiwar movement at the time, which

⁷⁸ Doug McAdam, *Freedom Summer*, chapter 5.

⁷⁹ Cmiel, "The Politics of Civility," in *The Sixties: From Memory to History*.

⁸⁰ Marsha Cutting, "Protestors Confront Marines," *Daily Cardinal*, December 7, 1966, page 1.

emphasized the move “from dissent to resistance” in its actions.⁸¹ Madison radicals, living in the same city as the National Committee to End the War in Vietnam, quickly absorbed the slogan into their own rhetoric and reportage.

Even those who did not advocate the use of more forceful action during protests began to speak in more confrontational terms. One editorialist for the *Daily Cardinal*, for example, was trying to talk students down from the idea of using force against an early Dow Chemical Company recruitment visit in February 1967 in a piece entitled “In Dubious Battle,” presumably titled after a Steinbeck novel of the same name that dealt with striking workers during the Great Depression.⁸² The fact that the author was aware that some students felt that they were in battle with the forces of corporatism and Dow Chemical and took these threats seriously enough to publish a response to them in itself shows the shift toward students’ violent rhetoric at this time. Even though the author warned against using force against Dow (hence the ‘dubious’ affixation to the battle title), he or she still allowed that radicals were connecting to a longer tradition of arguing for free speech rights, although he noted that the connection to free speech was ineffective because redefining free speech the way the radicals wanted was “going to define out someone else’s rights.” Even so, although the author criticized the faulty logic of the protestors, writing that their “argument does not hold water,” he or she did not attempt to wholly discount the relatively nascent student movement and ended the article with “Hopfully, more such... incidents will be avoided.” Furthermore, he or she (the article was written as an editorial without an explicit author) did not call for a moratorium on action, writing, “All that can be done by those of us who find Dow’s manufacture of napalm morally abhorrent is for us to make their

⁸¹ Maurice Isserman and Michael Kazin, “The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism,” in *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930-1980*, ed. Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 213.

⁸² This was not the visit that initiated a large protest with much police brutality on campus that was discussed in detail in Chapter One, but rather a visit earlier that year.

visit to this campus as unpleasant as possible.”⁸³ The author opposed the forceful expulsion of Dow from the University campus, but did not therefore think that students should sit-in or find another less intrusive way to make their feelings known. The article as a whole showed a growing tendency to think of social actions in a militant way if not necessarily a violent one. Similarly, another article about Dow noted that students already heard “the bloodthirsty cries of the Establishment Brownshirts and already realize that this week’s folly will not be the last we shall witness.” By relating the law enforcement involved with the Dow riot to that in Hitler’s Germany, the author furthered the theme of militant confrontations for justice while also anticipating that this line of rhetoric would continue, writing, “There can be no peace on this campus until the present order is hauled down, taken apart, and built anew.”⁸⁴ The systemic critique of American society thus began to surface in the wake of Dow, when students realized that the brutality they were protesting in Vietnam could also be targeted at them on campus.

Students also began to explicitly reevaluate tactics affiliated with the Civil Rights Movement, which furthered this shift toward more militant action. One editorialist in the *Daily Cardinal*, writing about the Mobilization protest in April 1967, noted that marches like the Mobilization were “little more than catharsis, for nothing comes of them.”⁸⁵ Already expressing some of the disillusionment that other radicals felt later in the decade, the author continued, “It is time for a review of tactics. However small the changes may be of seriously affecting Administration policy ... we may be sure that any change that might come about will not be brought by further demonstrations.” Marches had served as a critical component of the Civil Rights Movement strategy, and although the editorial did not mention violence, it still argued for changing tactics, including organizing labor and getting more people politicized as part of their

⁸³ “In Dubious Battle,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 23, 1967.

⁸⁴ “No Confidence” *Daily Cardinal*, October 20, 1967.

⁸⁵ “The Mobilization,” *Daily Cardinal*, April 18, 1967.

“deadly serious proposition.” The language used in this article and others was important in shifting radicals’ framework away from the nonviolent standard of the Civil Rights Movement. Unmoored in this way, radicals began searching for their own strategy for change, which included the potential for violent tactics.

Although the nonviolent Civil Rights Movement may have been on the wane, the Vietnam War was increasingly catching the attention of student radicals. As they familiarized themselves with this conflict, military and other war-related rhetoric began to seep into the way they talked about violence. Many embraced bringing the war back home to American soil through protests and other events, especially after the Dow controversy in October 1967. An editorial in the *Daily Cardinal* reflecting on the protests was entitled “The War Arrives” and said, “At long last the war in Vietnam has finally made itself felt in the fine community of Madison, Wisconsin.”⁸⁶ The author noted that “the repression we witnessed here should have been no surprise” to attentive readers, who could observe a pattern of government repression in the face of outside threats. Drawing on the existence of ghettos in major cities as well as the immense violence in Vietnam, the author pointed to a context of violence to explain the administration and law enforcement’s reaction to students protesting the war. Although this article did not address radicals utilizing the war for their own ends or discuss radicals attacking the war structure, it showed that people were growing more conscious of the war and its violence.⁸⁷ In fact, this idea of “bringing the war home” was another national idea starting to develop currency in October 1967 and especially came to fruition in the summer of 1968; at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, militant activists wanted to make the city and the

⁸⁶ “The War Arrives,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 24, 1967.

⁸⁷ Such rhetoric of “attacking the war machine” and related ideas would develop later, toward the end of the 1960s.

party feel the effects of the Vietnam War on American soil.⁸⁸ According to historian David Farber, the convention “marked a crisis in the nation’s political and cultural order” in which the organizers wanted to vilify the war makers while also confronting the continuation (through the election of another mainstream political candidate) of a corrupt system.⁸⁹ This outlook showed radicals drawing on a context of violence- the war, already shown to be terribly violent, was now part of American lives and something people would regularly experience.

In addition to bringing the war home, other forms of military rhetoric started to enjoy a wider use among radicals during this time. The *Daily Cardinal*, for example, called forth an image of a nation going to war with its January 1968 headline “Nation Arms Against Expected Riots.” In the associated article, the Miami police chief was quoted saying, “This is war” in relation to potential race riots.⁹⁰ Although this was not a local instance, this article was written by a student at the University of Wisconsin and contained several other examples of police agencies acquiring weapons and other cities “arming themselves with every conceivable weapon” to prevent riots, including a statement from Madison’s police chief, who optimistically predicted that his force would improve their riot control tactics faster than riots could occur. It showed that the construction of dissent as war was becoming a national trope and was certainly available to Madison radicals. This rhetoric laid the groundwork for an adversarial relationship between radicals and the police. Together these ideas make violence more plausible because students who believed they were fighting a war could find it easier to begin acting that way as well.

Radicals who believed themselves to be fighting a war wielded rhetoric powerfully worded and potentially dangerous. For example, a *Daily Cardinal* editorialist noted in February

⁸⁸ Isserman and Kazin, “The Failure and Success of the New Radicalism,” 215.

⁸⁹ David Farber, *Chicago '68* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), xiii.

⁹⁰ Joshua Greene, “Nation Arms Against Expected Riots,” *Daily Cardinal*, January 31, 1968, page 4.

1968 that “we are fighting a war” against “the cancer of patriotic militarism.”⁹¹ This author used the active verb, indicating that the fighting was already happening for some people. Even more noticeable is the opponent in this proclaimed war. Calling something a “cancer” imparts a very dark and frightening connotation to it, and this author had no qualms about doing so. This last claim is corroborated later in the article when the author wrote, “We fight on with a ruthlessness” befitting such a cancerous and destructive enemy. The rhetoric in this article represented an important acceleration toward violent ideas, and while the author may not have taken his use of “fighting” to be a literal one, other readers could have. This language was in keeping with an upward trend in a variety of publications and propaganda across Madison at this time.

The *Daily Cardinal* was also fighting against the University regents, whom it accused of going on the offensive and trying to control student life. The regents were a largely conservative group of older white men who oversaw the entire state university system, and during the incident in question the regents had been trying to curtail the freedom of the *Cardinal* after what they saw as unacceptable and obscene language being printed in the paper. The regents also suggested the creation of its own group of agents who would report on activities in classes as well as in residence halls and the student union. This idea, roundly condemned by the *Cardinal* as something that would “destroy the University and people’s lives,” was a legacy of earlier attempts by local law enforcement to keep tabs on student protestors by keeping files documenting their involvement, to be used in the event of an investigation should a protest get out of hand. While the *Cardinal* had criticized the creation of these files, it was incensed about the regents’ threats in 1968. In keeping with the heightened rhetoric of the year, it noted that “if the *Cardinal* dies at the hobnail boot of the regents, the blood will be on 34,000 hands and no

⁹¹ “Complicity or Noncooperation: We Want an Answer,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 17, 1968.

student group or individual will be safe from the guillotine.”⁹² By choosing such a gory threat of death and connecting to the repression of the people in the wake of the French Revolution, the *Cardinal* worked to capture the attention of its readers while also participating in the common rhetoric of 1968.

Interestingly, even those who did not support the use of violence used this language to connect with their readers, which further contributed to a general climate of heightened rhetoric and familiarity with violence. One editorialist attempting to prevent her peers from taking up arms nevertheless acknowledged, “Madison is a battlefield.”⁹³ Unlike the other articles discussed in this section, this one made a specific local connection, bringing the rhetoric used for the United States in general specifically to Madison radicals’ experiences. Furthermore, the author presumably realized that some people were thinking seriously of arming themselves (or talking about it) if she felt the need to devote an editorial to warning that the police “will murder every one of us if we try to fight with guns.” Although this article preceded more public calls for armament, the possibility of radicals with guns was salient enough to prevent the article from being declined for publishing. The author also warned her peers, “Don’t goad the cops into killing you, they aren’t afraid to do it.”⁹⁴ By May 1969, when this editorial was written, the author could draw on a wealth of well known incidents of police harming civilians, including the riots in several major cities in 1967 as well as the Democratic National Convention in Chicago nine months earlier. This warned readers that the police posed a serious threat to their radical ambitions and further contributed to a new willingness to discuss violence as a protest tactic during this time.

⁹² “Up against the wall, re...ts” *Daily Cardinal*, November 5, 1968.

⁹³ Mary Urbanis, “Do You Want to Die?”, *Daily Cardinal*, May 7, 1969.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

As this warning suggests, the police were starting to become important characters in the conversation on violence. Police provided the principal enemy in the “war” as well as the blamed instigators of early violent episodes. In so doing they provided many radicals with their first exposure to violent action, even if they had already been familiar with violent rhetoric. Police brutality became an important issue especially after the early protests against Dow Chemical in February 1967, when the *Daily Cardinal* noted that the student “arrests seem unnecessarily vicious.”⁹⁵ A student was dragged under a police car during this protest. Although the dragging was not the focus of the article, in fact appearing on the page fourteen of the issue, it still provided a vivid image of the types of dangers students confronted as well as a clear perpetrator of these dangers.

In October of 1967, when the larger protests against Dow Chemical were launched, the student confrontation with police was well documented. The *Daily Cardinal* headline noted the violent means the police used on the protestors, including clubs and tear gas. The article stated that the “most violent student-police confrontation in University history” was a “bloody, glass-breaking, club-wielding, tear gassing battle.”⁹⁶ Using the idea of a battle furthered the use of military rhetoric discussed earlier, but now there was a specific enemy in the battle- the police. Although this article placed the responsibility for violence explicitly with the opposition, it also brought violence out in the open as something that actually happened and not just a rhetorical possibility.

The incident during the Dow Day protests was the start of a long-standing adversarial relationship between student radicals and law enforcement agents. The *Madison Kaleidoscope*

⁹⁵ Peter Abbott and Lucy Cooper, “Arrest Sixteen: ‘Brutality’ Alleged,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 23, 1967.

⁹⁶ Matthew Fox and Steve Shulruff, “Students Face Clubs, Gas,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 19, 1967, page 1.

invited its readers to “Read About the Pig’s War on Youth” three years after the Dow protest.⁹⁷ Furthermore, this headline accompanied a graphic comic showing a policeman bloodying a protestor far beyond any possible necessity.⁹⁸ Such an image reflected the radicals’ experience with law enforcement, even if it did engage in some sensational hyperbole. It was intended to galvanize students into viewing the police as their enemy. Together with the other factors discussed above, such images and language helped set the stage- or battlefield, as it were- for future confrontations and further exposed radicals to violent ideas.

Outside Agitators: Influences and Context

While the factors mentioned above brought violence to a local level, there was a broader national and international context swirling around that Madison radicals were aware of through the media. Although these larger or far-off events had little direct impact on the daily lives of Madison radicals, people often took them personally because they happened to and had an effect on “the movement” as a whole. Of these larger events, the Black Power movement and the trials of black Americans especially were seen as requiring a high degree of solidarity from white radicals. Black power, although a difficult term to define accurately because of its many different strains, attempted to empower the black community by allowing African Americans to identify the urban ghettos as places of black culture and pride and not just poverty.⁹⁹ For the Black Panthers specifically, this was at least partially manifested in their “policing the police” campaign, which rejected the idea that police should have a monopoly on the use of force in black communities and combined a pride and territoriality over one’s neighborhood with the

⁹⁷ “Pig” was a common name for police officers in radical parlance throughout the 1960s and early 1970s.

⁹⁸ “Pig Digney: A Smelly Boot on the Neck of Youth,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, March 18, 1970, page 5.

⁹⁹ Self, *American Babylon*, 213.

acceptance of violence as a necessary tactic.¹⁰⁰ Additionally, the Black Panthers self-consciously embraced an internationalist discourse, which fit well with white radicals' increasingly international outlook begun with protests against the Vietnam War. White radicals began to identify not with their race but with oppressed racial minorities and thus felt the need to support Black Power ideology. This was partially out of a sense of white guilt but also could have been due to a sort of guerrilla fantasy that many white radicals began to harbor during this time.¹⁰¹ As the radical critique became more systematic and began to encompass the whole of American society, white radicals worried that they had been complicit in the oppression of their black counterparts and worked to compensate for past sins. Additionally, according to historian Allen Matusow, radicals who identified with the guerrilla fantasy believed that black radicals, because of their oppression, were more legitimately in struggle against the United States. White radicals then wanted to be like black radicals and attempted to apply their guerrilla struggle in urban ghettos to university campuses; this necessitated a further militancy and a need for white radicals to prove their commitment to the radical cause.¹⁰²

Within this context, the murder of Black Panther Fred Hampton in Chicago in December 1969 further radicalized many in Madison. Hampton, a charismatic young man, was killed in a police raid on the Chicago Panther compound while he was in bed, although the police claimed that he had shot at them first. The *Daily Cardinal*, in an editorial entitled "You Can't Kill the Revolution," showed the danger and violence of involvement with the Black Panthers, writing, "The cold reality [is] that individual revolutionaries sign their death certificates by joining the

¹⁰⁰ As stated above, Black Power was not an ideology exclusively associated with a particular group and as such does not necessarily endorse the use of violence, although the more well-known examples and the ones that Madison radicals were most likely familiar with through the media did accept violence as a possible tactic.

¹⁰¹ Paul Conkin.

¹⁰² Matusow, *The Unraveling of America*.

Black Panther Party.”¹⁰³ The author further noted that a “brutal war” had been declared in the United States against dissent. However, where earlier pieces had stopped with simply noting the existence of this war, this piece contained a call to action, including that people “must react publicly only with determined anger” but also writing, “It is time we carry our fight against repression to the doorsteps of the oppressors.” This call to action, even if vague, marked an important shift from defense to offense in the dialogue around violence.

This shift remained in effect up to two weeks before Sterling Hall, when a *Daily Cardinal* editorialist took up the problems of racism and police brutality, writing, “For many black people the only way out seems to be replying in kind to assaults by white policemen... by organized warfare.”¹⁰⁴ However, the author did not stop with recommending war for black radicals but also wanted white radicals to join the struggle, writing that they “need not take up guns to eliminate racism, but all share a responsibility to sacrifice in some way to fight it.” Although the article did not exhort white radicals to street warfare with their black counterparts, it left the extent of white action open to interpretation, only noting that whites who did not act might easily become a target of disgruntled blacks. Furthermore, this article certainly wanted its readers to take some sort of action, telling them, “The time has come for white students to stop talking about social equality and to start doing something.” For many white radicals, living in the shadow of their black counterparts, an exhortation to action from such an influential source as the *Cardinal* was a very persuasive argument.

Radicals also borrowed ideas from outside sources that lent credibility to the use of violence as well as a sense of global solidarity that let them know they were not alone. For example, on the *Daily Cardinal* front page in January 1968 was an article headlined “Delhi

¹⁰³ “You Can’t Kill the Revolution,” *Daily Cardinal*, December 5, 1969.

¹⁰⁴ “Last Chance,” *Daily Cardinal*, August 13, 1970.

Students Effective in Violent Protestations” that showed students that violence could be a viable tactic in achieving their objectives.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, this article added a sense that Madison radicals would have some supporters to fall back on in justifying their violence because other groups of a similar position in a different society believed in using violence too. Radicals in the 1960s were often in dialogue with each other- the reporter noted that news of the Dow protests the year before “was written up in all the daily newspapers” in Delhi- and kept up with the social movements in other countries, especially those that had formerly been under colonial rule. Thus, while a story about protests in Delhi might seem obscure to contemporary readers, during the era in question it provided significant support to radicals wanting to use violence. According to the historian Jeremi Suri, the radical movements in these various countries “coalesced around... an international language of dissent.”¹⁰⁶ In so doing, they were able to connect with each other and often took support from the actions of their foreign counterparts.

Newspaper headlines served as a key tool for keeping violence in readers’ minds. For example, a front page headline in the *Daily Cardinal* reading “Panther Head Favors Violent Struggle” was eye-catching both because it connected to the affinity for black radicals discussed earlier but also because it contained a potentially explosive phrase in “violent struggle.”¹⁰⁷ While it may not have been an explicit call to action, its emphatic word choice and front-page placement meant that this headline helped keep violence on people’s radars. Similarly, another front page headline a few months later read “Panther Leaders Condemn Present Social Institutions, Call for Total Revolution.”¹⁰⁸ Although it did not explicitly advocate violence, the

¹⁰⁵ Marty Kupferman, “Delhi Students Effective in Violent Protestations,” *Daily Cardinal*, January 12, 1968, page 1.

¹⁰⁶ Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 3.

¹⁰⁷ Tim Greene, “Panther Head Favors Violent Class Struggle,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 21, 1969, page 1.

¹⁰⁸ Celia Madsen, “Call for Total Revolution: Panther Leaders Condemn Present Social Institutions,” *Daily Cardinal*, August 1, 1969, page 1.

phrase “total revolution” was not one that would imply nonviolence to many radicals. Other headlines alluded more abstractly to the idea of an upcoming struggle, heading an article about “What Students Will Be Up Against,” while others made sure to document the struggle with law enforcement, reporting, “Aid Protestors Occupy Capitol: Police Rout Protestors.”¹⁰⁹ When headlines like these were appearing frequently on the front page of the *Daily Cardinal*, students and activists could feel that they were living in a society saturated with violence.

Other headlines were misleadingly worded in such a way that they could sound more radical or violent than their content would support. For example, a *Daily Cardinal* article about a professor’s lecture about youth protest involvement was headlined “Mayer Urges Youth to Make Revolution,” which might have been seen as incitement to violence.¹¹⁰ In the article itself, though, the term “revolution” was meant as a softer option when compared to an open rebellion in the streets. Simply scanning the paper or just reading the headline might have made it appear that the professor in question wanted his listeners to take action. Furthermore, because the term “revolution” was often modified by the adjective “violent,” students may have made assumptions about what kind of action they were supposed to take, especially in the context of other stories in the *Daily Cardinal* that discussed violence and protests. Thus, headlines, both nationally and locally related, helped create a supporting context and background for a more local conversation about violence.

Critiques and Discussions: Searching for Why

Although many people’s ideas and positions on violence developed over time, these sentiments should not be seen as arising merely out of emotion; students and faculty were also thinking critically about the use and morality of violence. Especially in a college town, violence

¹⁰⁹ “What Many Students Will Be Up Against,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 13, 1969, page 2. See also “Aid Protestors Occupy Capitol,” September 30, 1969, page 1.

¹¹⁰ April Forrest, “Mayer Urges Youth to Make Revolution,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 14, 1970, page 11.

was discussed academically and theoretically. Even early on, people sought to define the “climate of violence” in which they found themselves. In July 1967, the *Cardinal* asked two University professionals to discuss possible causes of violence in side-by-side articles on the paper’s front page.¹¹¹ Professor Aiken, a sociologist, blamed violence on the structure of society and its failure to grip everyone into its order. When people were not assimilated into this order, he argued, they became less likely to accept its boundaries and thus might have fewer qualms about using violence. On the other hand, Dr. Halleck, a psychiatrist in the University’s hospital, said that violence was caused by students lashing out against the pressure they felt over getting good grades and their relatively powerless position in society and politics.¹¹² Although each perspective had its relative merits and supports, the importance of these articles lay in their beginning to facilitate and exchange ideas about violence. They showed how violence was becoming part of the student experience even for those not participating in it, reflecting a society aware of and conversing about this phenomenon. These two lecturers also added an academic aspect to the conversation on violence.

Additionally, broader national groups, especially of college administrators, created a common context around the search for explanations. Much like student radicals who felt themselves a part of a larger national movement, these people could feel part of a larger group seeking answers about this violence. Academics and administrators within the University were concerned to stop their campuses from descending into violent chaos. At the University of Wisconsin, a committee of dormitory presidents and housefellows¹¹³ was tasked with explaining why students were rioting on campus. Through a survey of freshmen students, the committee

¹¹¹ John Terrill and Lucy Cooper, “Climate of Violence Defined,” *Daily Cardinal*, July 23, 1967, page 1.

¹¹² That is to say, their relatively powerless position working within the electoral system (because they could not vote) or in the economy (because they were unemployed while pursuing their studies).

¹¹³ Housefellows were the equivalent of what we would call a Resident Advisor (RA).

decided that rioting could be blamed on academic red tape hindering those who wanted to change the University, the newfound freedom of college students, and loneliness.¹¹⁴ Even if these people were only interested in stopping violence, and no matter how thin their explanations may have been, their survey showed a search for explanations about violence and that the topic was critically evaluated and taken seriously by people other than student radicals. This search was also conducted on a national level with the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders in 1967 and President Nixon's convening of University presidents in 1970 to explain student actions of the previous decade. Although these two investigations covered violence in different contexts, together they show that violence becoming a preoccupation of the American "establishment" on a range of scales, from local to national.

The academic conversation around violence was joined by those who accepted it as a characteristic of American life. Some student radicals were not bombastic in their discussion of violence but instead treated it as a multi-faceted concept that merited careful thought. One editorialist even noted the inherent challenge of talking about it, writing, "A definition of violence is even difficult to arrive at."¹¹⁵ Instead of providing a tirade on the necessity of violence, the author provided an alternative way of thinking about violence, offering the idea of "mental violence," which he claimed "permeates the structure of our society." However, this permeation meant that violence was omnipresent in American society and should not be avoided by radicals; as the author said, "To exclude violence from one's personal realm of being means only to be unaware of those acts of violence which one commits, to become a tool of violence." This well-structured sentence was a far cry from the inflammatory rhetoric commonly associated with radical calls for violence and showed that the author was thinking analytically about his

¹¹⁴ "Random Survey of Freshmen Explains Why Students Riot," *Daily Cardinal*, May 23, 1969, page 12.

¹¹⁵ Rob McMahon, "A Time for Violence," *Daily Cardinal*, February 20, 1970, page 11.

subject. Furthermore, the author's idea that violence was inextricable from American life seriously challenged those who would write off student radicals or violent ghetto riots as a temporary aberration. If violence truly was a part of American society, it was not just America's behavior overseas that needed reform, but also the day-to-day routines of the majority of the American people and states.

In response to this critical thinking, even those students who remained opposed to violence began to seriously engage with it as a concept. They could no longer disregard it as a fringe idea but rather wanted to respond in kind to editorials like the one above on a similarly analytical level. For example, one editorialist tried to dissuade leftists from using violence, writing, "By adopting the use of violence, the left faces the danger of assuming the oppressive aspects of the present government, for by using an opponent's tactics one can become like him."¹¹⁶ The author did not try to claim that his more violent peers were without reason but rather noted pragmatically that "violent revolution is impractical simply because the right has far more power than the revolutionary factions of the left."¹¹⁷ His opinions revealed that some students may have thought of violence as a potential tool but ultimately rejected it for practical, rather than moral reasons. People had a critical, thoughtful conversation around this topic that did not arrive just out of emotion or rage.

On the other side of this academic language were those people who attempted to rationalize away violence. President Harrington, for example, spoke to the *Daily Cardinal* to remind its audience that "most students reject violence as a method of change."¹¹⁸ Although Harrington had an obviously vested interest in making sure that violence did not tarnish the

¹¹⁶ Randy Croce, "Violent Revolution: Impractical," *Daily Cardinal*, April 24, 1970, page 13.

¹¹⁷ Sources like the *Wisconsin State Journal* often tried to discount the students who wanted to use violence, calling them "slobs," while earlier columns in the *Daily Cardinal* accused radicals of being irresponsible and destructive.

¹¹⁸ "Pres. Harrington Says Most Students Reject Violence," *Daily Cardinal*, November 14, 1969.

reputation of his university, his input and others like it remained a significant voice in the conversation about violence. These people always worked to discredit student radicals and, as part of the University establishment, probably also served as a force against which some radicals reacted in their own decisions about violence. Other professors also rejected violence, including astronomy professor Robert Bless, who called violent protestors people “who took advantage of the lack of law and order to just be thugs.”¹¹⁹ While this reaction was more visceral than Harrington’s, Bless still showed that there were several levels of critique of student violence.

Another powerful critique being discussed at this juncture was the idea that violence had been institutionalized in American society. This stemmed from the “realization” by many radicals that the war in Vietnam was not an aberration in American foreign policy but rather the product of a fundamentally broken system of beliefs. Because this realization was triggered only after the U.S. was significantly involved in Vietnam, the critique did not arise until later in the decade but then contributed further to the idea that violence was a keystone in American life. A writer in the *Daily Cardinal* exemplified these ideas in an editorial entitled “You Can’t Cure Violence,” writing, “Violence in the United States did not originate because of any lack of morality. Its roots must be considered institutional.”¹²⁰ Activists in SDS first advanced this critique in 1967, criticizing the connection between universities and corporations, and these ideas became widespread in the succeeding years.¹²¹ Activists protested the existence of a connection between their schools and the corporations they saw as contributing to an immoral and violent endeavor, the war in Vietnam, for material gain. Radicals also criticized the systemic violence of the society that oppressed people, especially those of color, primarily by keeping them in poverty. Such an attitude created a kind of incorrigibility and inevitability around violence as a

¹¹⁹ Robert Bless, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, 2005.

¹²⁰ “You Can’t Cure Violence,” *Daily Cardinal*, June 25, 1968.

¹²¹ Isserman and Kazin, *America Divided*, 181.

part of people's experiences. It constituted a real social problem and, as such, something that could flare up again at any moment.

This critique also broadened the conversation around violence to include everyday events reinterpreted through a violent lens. Based on the idea that "if we are a violent people, we must analyze the institutions that form us," a *Daily Cardinal* editorialist used this framework to view UW football games, competition for grades, and the fraternity system as aspects of collegiate life that shared an element of violence.¹²² Such an interpretation created the impression of a society in which violence was the rule and student radicals should not be condemned as though they were the exception. This became problematic for those content with the status quo when it began to create a sense of inevitability around radical violence; if the very fabric of society was violent, radicals could certainly think about violence as it would serve their ends as well.¹²³ This militant stance helped radicals justify using violence and also forced people to think about living in a society that was saturated with violence, even in institutions like football that they might have thought exempt.

It Is Happening Now: A How-To Guide

Given the very real possibility of violence as well as some people's previous experience with it, radicals at the end of the decade began to discuss violence and its use in a very pragmatic way. Such tactical discussions began before the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, when protestors anticipated a heavy police presence. They continued into 1969 and 1970, with SDS's Days of Rage protest and reactions against the Kent and Jackson State shootings in early 1970. In these venues both offensive and defensive tactical ideas as well as some of the most militant rhetoric surrounding violence yet heard were aired. This rhetoric also presupposed

¹²² "University Violence," *Daily Cardinal*, January 28, 1969, page 15.

¹²³ "End of the Road," *Daily Cardinal*, January 6, 1970, page 6.

that readers would take tactical suggestions seriously and act upon them. It also took action as a key presupposition of its rhetoric. Some writers attempted to help protestors defend themselves against police brutality. The *Daily Cardinal*, for example, provided several tips for protestors, including what they should do if they were gassed by police. One article, intended as a “practical, do-it-yourself handbook,” listed five types of riot control gas and the properties, symptoms of exposure, and treatment for each.¹²⁴ Such a piece showed protestors expecting violence from other sources and taking rational steps to deal with it. Similarly, another article provided “Revolutionary Reminders” for activists to use during a riot that were meant to help people keep the larger goals of a protest in mind. The author recommended that people not take their anger at the capitalist system out by trashing small businesses, which were also objects of capitalist oppression. Staying in small “affinity groups” was also offered as a tactic to keep people safe from being ambushed by police or angry citizens.¹²⁵ This article and others like it attempted to get their readers to maintain critical and pragmatic thinking even when they were in a volatile situation like a riot.

While these pieces gave defensive-minded advice, other articles provided tips for protestors on the offensive. One, published in the *Madison Kaleidoscope*, provided tips for radicals seeking to work with explosives, including information on the different types of explosives as well as how to use them. Unlike other articles that contained a call for people to use such explosives against their enemies, this one was much more practical in tone, simply providing people a chance to learn about these weapons if they wanted to. These articles did not bother justifying the use of violence but instead implicitly assumed that protestors were going to need weapons if they continued to act against the American power structure. Guns also became a

¹²⁴ “A Survival Lesson on Gas,” *Daily Cardinal*, August 1969, page 12.

¹²⁵ “Revolutionary Reminders,” *Daily Cardinal*, May 6, 1970.

key focus in these sorts of articles, although the rhetoric surrounding them could sometimes be more exhortatory than in the article about explosives, as when a headline in the *Madison Kaleidoscope* told readers, “Take Up the Gun!”¹²⁶ The accompanying article argued that “every kid gotta get a gun” because “when the time comes we got to be able to shut the mother down.” Although it maintained a pragmatic focus by telling people how to use guns, it also focused on getting its readers to take action against the oppressive society in which they lived. This article also provided a glimpse into the extreme rhetoric beginning to take hold in radical circles with its allusion to needing to shut society and the capitalist system down completely. Other articles talked about other weapons or different types of guns, but they still sought to provide advice to people seeking to arm themselves. For example, an article titled “Give Piece a Chance,” an ironic play on the John Lennon song “Give Peace a Chance” released in 1969, was accompanied by a picture of a rifle and instructed the reader on how to saw off a shotgun barrel, which would facilitate the spreading of the ammunition to hit more targets.¹²⁷ This was a far cry from the sentiment behind Lennon’s song and showed that some radicals rejected the hope for peace as a tactic- they refused to “give it a chance,” instead urging others to take up arms with them. In so doing, the authors not only provided information on a weapon but also on how to increase its potential to harm other people, showing the offensive in which some radicals claimed to participate.

While a small group of activists did come to feel that they were at war with the United States, this was not a position that they came to overnight but rather one that came out of a decade-long conversation about violence. It began chiefly as a shift in rhetoric toward more confrontational language, and was helped by a growing sense of solidarity both with black

¹²⁶ Abner Spence, “Take Up the Gun!”, *Madison Kaleidoscope*, May 19, 1970, page 1.

¹²⁷ “Give Piece A Chance,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, June 2, 1970.

radicals at home and other students abroad. Police brutality and state-generated violence in Vietnam also contributed to perceptions that society was an inherently violent place and that radicals were justified in using their own violence. Importantly, this shift, although it was grounded in visceral situations, also contained an element of critical thinking about the morality and practical use of violence. While none of these events or discourses provided a “smoking gun” that caused the bombing of Sterling Hall, they nonetheless saturated the context in which radicals operated. Violence became more plausible in a society that had experienced the upheaval of the late 1960s, and in Madison the ground was prepared for an act like Sterling Hall. The bombing occurred within the context of this conversation. It nonetheless had a powerful impact on both the community of Madison and on radical views on violence, as we will see in the next chapter.

Chapter Three: Refraction: Violence and Radicalism in Madison After Sterling Hall

By August 1970, radical activity was running high at the University. Police-student tensions lingered after Dow Day in 1967 and reflected the national distrust after the Kent State shootings that May. The Vietnam War continued despite huge national protests, and many student radicals had ceased believing the war was a singular mistake, instead favoring an analysis of a military-industrial complex and their university’s complicity with it.¹²⁸ This analysis emphasized the pervasive involvement of the military and war-related industries in most aspects of American life, including the higher education system, where branches of the military funded academic research and companies like Dow Chemical and Lockheed Martin were routine presences on campus, seeking to funnel graduates into their firms. Criticizing their university’s work with the war makers, radicals had already lashed out against other war-related targets in Madison, including the University’s army ROTC building and a primate research lab, mistaken

¹²⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), chapter 7.

for the Selective Service System's on-campus offices.¹²⁹ The University's Army Mathematics Research Center in Sterling Hall was also a well-known target of protest, having first come under metaphorical fire in 1967.¹³⁰ Workers in the physics department, which was also housed in Sterling Hall, remembered having rocks thrown at their windows by protestors thinking they were hitting the AMRC.

The dents from those rocks were a far cry from the destruction visited upon Sterling Hall on August 24, 1970, when the New Year's Gang exploded an industrial van filled with a fertilizer bomb right next to the building. The bombing left Sterling Hall in pieces, an estimated 6 million dollars worth of damage to surrounding buildings (windows were reported to be broken from the blast in a ten-block radius), several students' irreplaceable research destroyed, and one man, a graduate student named Robert Fassnacht, dead. The destruction was enough to earn Madison the distinction of being the site of the largest act of domestic terrorism to date, the death enough to earn it infamy in the radical movement.¹³¹

It was later reported that the New Year's Gang had used a combination of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil (a mixture commonly used to remove tree stumps from agricultural land) in such a large quantity as to produce an explosion larger than several thousand sticks of dynamite.¹³² The bombers had placed a call to the police warning that a bomb had been planted near the AMRC, but either their timing was misplaced or the police failed to move quickly enough. Because of both the time of night (the bombing took place around three o'clock in the morning) and the time of year (ABC News noted the fact that summer school had just ended to point out that the bombing could easily have injured or killed several more people and should

¹²⁹ For more about this case of mistaken identity, see Tom Bates' *Rads*, chapter 14.

¹³⁰ Silber and Brown, *The War at Home*.

¹³¹ Tom Bates, *Rads*, 5.

¹³² *Ibid.*

therefore be viewed as a near-miss situation)¹³³, there were not many people near the building. Unfortunately, three men, including a South African exchange student named David Schuster, were injured in addition to the thirty-year-old Fassnacht's death. A significant amount of research material was lost-- most of it, ironically, from the relatively dovish physics department. In fact, "there was very, essentially no consequential damage to anything in Army Math," because it was on a higher floor of Sterling Hall.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the bombing was inextricably linked to the AMRC, especially when the New Years' Gang claimed responsibility through an underground communiqué outlining their position against the Vietnam War and their willingness to do anything to stop it.¹³⁵

The New Year's Gang consisted of four young men: David Fine, Leo Burt, and brothers Dwight and Karl Armstrong.¹³⁶ Fine, the youngest of the four at nineteen, was a student at UW from New York. He had grown up in a socially conscious family and had been politically active since 1965, when he attended a summer camp based around social issues. At the University, he wrote for the *Daily Cardinal* as an arts and music columnist, which is how he met fellow bomber Leo Burt. Despite his politically active past, David's investigation file kept by local law enforcement was closed in the fall of 1970 because he did not "appear to have any current propensity for violence."¹³⁷

¹³³ ABC News Broadcast, August 24, 1970, accessed through the Vanderbilt Television News Archive. This was also before students were back on campus for the fall term- it was a small window between times when the campus would otherwise have been crowded with people.

¹³⁴ Robert Cadmus, interview by Laura Smail, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, 1977.

¹³⁵ "A Communiqué from the Underground," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, August 24, 1971.

¹³⁶ The biographical information about the bombers in this and subsequent paragraphs is all taken from Tom Bates' *Rads*.

¹³⁷ As mentioned in the previous chapter, these files were kept on student radicals at several universities across the country, and were intended to create a database of people who might be brought in for questioning if ever a large disruption or act of violence were to take place.

Leo Burt was also an East Coaster attending the University of Wisconsin. He had originally come to Madison to compete with the University's crew team, but his association with that group ended in 1969. Burt first became politicized over a dispute with his crew coach over Leo's preference for long hair, and after he was cut from the varsity crew team he became even more focused on politics. This politicization may have been accelerated by his work for the *Daily Cardinal* as a reporter and occasional editorialist as well as through his relationship with his cousin, an antiwar leader at Villanova University. While he knew Fine through the *Cardinal*, Burt met Karl Armstrong, widely thought to be the mastermind behind the bombing, at a local bar known to student radicals through some mutual friends.

Dwight Armstrong, like his brother Karl, grew up on the working-class side of Madison. He attended the University intermittently but also bounced from job to job, including working as a plane mechanic at the Madison airport, a job that would become relevant when Karl asked his brother to fly a plane so that Karl could drop a homemade bomb on the Badger Ordnance Works plant in January 1970. (They did drop the bomb, but it failed to explode on impact.) Dwight struggled to connect with his family and spent much of his time in high school agitating for political causes, often landing him in trouble at home. After high school, he continued to rebel culturally and occasionally used drugs. In keeping with this rebellion, Dwight looked up to his older brother Karl, calling him a "model revolutionary," and generally helping Karl in his radical pursuits.

Karl Armstrong developed the basic plans for the bombing, earning him the distinction of leader of the New Year's Gang. He attended the University longer than his brother Dwight but struggled to keep up academically and dropped out several times. The University, especially some of his classes with radical faculty members, provided his first exposure to political

radicalism. Karl worked on several political causes, going “Clean for Gene” with the McCarthy presidential campaign in 1968 and working with the Madison Tenants’ Union. He was also present at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968, and his experiences there made him start thinking about more radical forms of protest. He began committing small acts of violence in 1969, setting fire to the Army ROTC building on campus and attempting to burn the Selective Service System’s office as well, although he was never caught nor prosecuted for these acts. Karl first targeted Sterling Hall in the summer of 1970, although his specific plans involving the fertilizer bomb came together primarily that July. He had hoped that such a large-scale act of violence would catch the attention of President Nixon, who then would finally choose to end the war in Vietnam. Because of his coordinating role, historian Tom Bates wrote, “In the end, it was Karl. He was the vanguard.” Armstrong certainly did bring the group together, and his experience and research helped them commit their remarkably destructive act.

Dealing With Destruction: Immediate Reactions

The bombing, as one might expect, shocked both its witnesses and Madison residents more generally. One man, a physics student who had left Sterling Hall minutes before the bombing, told ABC that he “wondered what the hell was going on” when he felt the blast.¹³⁸ A reporter at the *Wisconsin State Journal* wrote that he felt horrified by the bombing and that “there is no other [emotion] that is adequate to describe the depth of sorrow and indignation in the Madison community,” especially at the death of Robert Fassnacht.¹³⁹ Robert Cadmus, a Ph.D. student in the physics department at the time of the bombing, recalled during his oral history in 1977 that “everybody was in a state of shock for a while,” noting that he personally was “obviously very upset about Bob Fassnacht being killed, and about [the] general... insanity

¹³⁸ Evening News Broadcast, American Broadcast System, August 24, 1970.

¹³⁹ John Wyngaard, “The Horror in Madison,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, September 1, 1970.

of the whole thing.”¹⁴⁰ Robben Fleming, who had served as President of the University from 1964 to 1967, “was surprised and very saddened, because I just didn’t believe that that would happen.”¹⁴¹ Similarly, Richard Buraldi, a mathematics professor at the University, said that he “was certainly very surprised to see that some people were so against the mathematics research.”¹⁴² Even though people knew that the AMRC was unpopular with student radicals, since it had been the target of protests beginning in 1967, they still struggled to understand such a visceral and destructive act.

Fears of further violence were another reaction to the bombing. The student body president at the University, Michael Jaliman, noted that “a ‘significant part’ of the student body is stockpiling weapons” and that it would “be less than realistic to predict anything but a continuation of violence.”¹⁴³ Although he did not have hard proof about the types or locations of weapons, his view was taken seriously enough to be printed in the *Wisconsin State Journal* and included in the national news broadcast that evening. Several readers wrote to the *Journal* about their fears of more violence, calling the bombing “a forerunner of what is to come.” Even a student who was closer in political outlook to the bombers than faculty members or community members worried that the bombing would create an insensitivity to death on the campus and might possibly spur more bombings as a method of protesting the war.¹⁴⁴ These concerns, coupled with NBC’s earlier prediction based on the Heard Commission’s findings that some

¹⁴⁰ Robert Cadmus, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, 1977.

¹⁴¹ Robben Fleming, interview by Barry Teicher, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, October 13, 1999.

¹⁴² Richard Buraldi, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, February 5, 2007.

¹⁴³ “UW Students Arm Selves, Leader Says,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 26, 1970.

¹⁴⁴ Evening News Broadcast, National Broadcast Company, August 25, 1970.

universities would find it difficult to function in the coming year because of student unrest, created a concern that the University would also close down temporarily.¹⁴⁵

Other readers reacted more from anger than fear and some even threatened violence of their own. A suburban housewife, Mrs. John Kress, Jr., wrote to the *Journal* that her “first reaction was one of shock, then anger, then violence. I just wanted to go down there and wring their necks.”¹⁴⁶ Another woman from the nearby Mt. Horeb wondered, “Perhaps it is time the silent majority become the violent majority. Violent against these forces which are destroying our campuses, our cities, our country.” Although these angry letters were based more on emotional reactions than actual intentions, they showed that people had a very visceral immediate reaction to a destructive event hitting so close to home.

On a more practical level, many people were very upset at the prospect of losing some or all of their life’s work in the bombing. Robert Cadmus, the physics graduate student, said that the bombing created an “incredibly stressful situation” because “everything we did, and our career, was completely related to the bombing.” Their data had been completely at the mercy of the explosion; after the bombing, these scientists’ work hung in the balance while they worked to restore and restart many of their experiments. Cadmus also worried that the nuclear physics department, because it was so new and required such expensive equipment, would not recover from the bombing and would cease to exist at the University.¹⁴⁷ He had to rebuild his experiment from scratch, adding a considerable amount of time to his education. Emily Chapman, a computer science Ph. D. candidate, also lost all of her data in the blast, saying, “It was just awful.” Professor Robert Bless, whose graduate student’s entire thesis was lost in the bombing,

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. The Heard Commission was charged by President Nixon with uncovering the causes of campus unrest and providing ways to quell it. NBC later apologized for its misreporting. See also Leroy E. Luberg, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, 1975.

¹⁴⁶ “Reactions from Area,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 25, 1970, sec. 4.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Cadmus, *UW Campus Voices*.

later agreed, saying, “It was a very grim time.”¹⁴⁸ This sentiment was echoed in the national news coverage, which placed a great deal of emphasis on the loss of work and knowledge that the bombing caused. CBS noted on the day of the bombing that “many students lost valuable research that represents years of work” and spent most of its second segment of coverage interviewing students who stood outside the taped-off rubble, hoping to send someone in to salvage their data notebooks ahead of the bulldozer.¹⁴⁹ The reporter emphasized several times what a great loss this was; their work could only be redone, not replaced. It seems as though, after the tragic death of Robert Fassnacht (which, perhaps out of respect for his family, received relatively little coverage), the loss of so much data was the biggest tragedy to come out of the bombing.

When the focus turned toward the perpetrators, the reaction of the public was decidedly less sympathetic. Instead, many people expressed a considerable antipathy for protest of any kind. Robert Bless, for example, recalled, “I had no use for people blowing things up and destroying, turning cars over just for the hell of it because they can get away with it... I certainly had no sympathy for people trying to blow up buildings.” Demonstrators were seen as wantonly destructive creatures, as “people who took advantage of the lack of law and order to just be thugs.”¹⁵⁰ On a national level, the bombing was reported as a “new and dangerous escalation of the radicals’ battle to destroy American society.”¹⁵¹ While people were obviously saddened by Robert Fassnacht’s death and frustrated by the loss of so much scientific data, they let loose their anger when discussing those who committed and supported the bombing.

¹⁴⁸ Emily Chapman, interview by Barry Teicher, March 9, 1994, and Robert Bless, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, September 15, 2005.

¹⁴⁹ Evening News Broadcasts, Corporate Broadcast System, August 24 and 25, 1970.

¹⁵⁰ Robert Bless, *UW Madison Campus Voices*.

¹⁵¹ Evening News Broadcast, Corporate Broadcast System, August 24, 1970.

With this anger came an attempt to lump all student protestors into one group that approved of such violence. Emily Chapman, a Ph. D. candidate when the bombing occurred, certainly did so when she recalled, “All the environmentalists and the protestors, they’re all the same people.” Later, when discussing the students who supported the Sterling Hall bombing, she said, “Well, these were all fairly Communist-sympathizing students, they really were.”¹⁵² By attaching the Communist label to these students, Chapman was able to identify radicals as uniformly opposite to and separate from her. Chapman maintained faith in the American political system and its leaders during her time at the University; although she never explicitly mentioned a political party in her oral history, she hung an American flag in her office when she worked in the (left-leaning) sociology department after getting her Ph. D., later quitting her job there when the students began supporting the North Vietnamese cause.

Chapman was not alone in her other tactic to lump protestors together: she not only thought they were all Communist, but also that “they were crazy... they were protesting everything.”¹⁵³ Wisconsin Governor Warren Knowles also chose this tactic, saying that the bombing was “an insane act representing the twisted and distorted values of a deranged mind.”¹⁵⁴ Through such extreme sentiments as this, people were able to discount any more nuanced political thoughts that might lead someone to condone this act (or to carry it out himself). Discussing the mental state of the perpetrators showed that people denied the bombing as a political act, even though that was what its perpetrators explicitly intended it to be. In this way the bombing could be viewed as an aberration, not an outgrowth of logical thought or reflective of a potentially widespread sentiment.

¹⁵² Emily Chapman, *UW Madison Campus Voices*.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Evening News Broadcast, National Broadcast Company, August 24, 1970.

Others described the bombing as part of a temporary, albeit dangerous trend circulating through the youth of the day. Herbert Eberhardt, a local businessman, thought that protest violence was “part of this do your own thing attitude that they were teaching in the schools... anything that was against the establishment.” He thought that violence was “the in thing to do” and noted, “You know kids, they follow.”¹⁵⁵ As a temporary trend or “in thing to do,” violence would surely end soon as a new trend took its place. In this way too, people attempted to undercut any thought that might have gone into the bombing, instead preferring to believe that the perpetrators were simply following the crowd and went too far. This tone minimized the emotional impact as well as the political significance of the destruction. By discounting any individual agency that might have gone into the bombing, it became much easier to push the problem off on abstract social forces or mental deficiencies and to refuse to deal with what legitimacy might lie in the bombers’ criticisms of society.

That being said, there were some people who were not surprised that Sterling Hall was bombed and were rather indifferent to the event. Eric Brown, a student at the time of the bombing, recalled his roommate’s reaction to news of the bombing: “Well, they finally did it.”¹⁵⁶ In such a succinct phrase, Brown shared the sense of inevitability that many felt about something targeting institutions linked to the military on campus, especially the AMRC. Even some people who did not support the student movement, like Richard Buraldi the mathematics professor mentioned earlier, realized that the AMRC “was a symbol to attack” and that, given what had already happened on campus, it could very easily be attacked at any point.¹⁵⁷ Similarly, the *Madison Kaleidoscope*, a local radical newspaper, called the bombing “a logical outgrowth of

¹⁵⁵ Herbert Eberhardt, interview by Marie McCabe, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, April 4, 1985.

¹⁵⁶ Eric Brown, *UW Madison Campus Voices*.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Buraldi, *UW Madison Campus Voices*.

everything that came before it.”¹⁵⁸ Although the radical paper had a vested interest in justifying the logic behind the bombing, this statement reflects a sense of predictability about the bombing that certainly contrasted to the surprise or shock that many other people experienced. The *Wisconsin State Journal*, too, noted that “the campus community itself... did not seem shocked” at the news of the bombing, in contrast to many of their off-campus readers.

Some groups, in addition to the *Kaleidoscope*, supported the bombing as an attack on the system they saw corrupting America and their university. The *Daily Cardinal*, for example, supported the bombing in part out of their general encouragement of a politically active student body in the late 1960s.¹⁵⁹ The editors of the paper were often radicals, and they encouraged their readers to take part in protests, which would then be covered in full by the *Cardinal*. Leroy Luberg, a University administrator, also later recalled that “many in student government defended [the bombers’] act.”¹⁶⁰ His recollection was supported by David van Vort, a student active in student government who was interviewed by CBS after the bombing. Instead of condemning the bombing, van Vort used his air time to rail against the University for being undemocratic, noting that “if the University is a microcosm of our society, then we must say that our society is not free... is not a democracy.”¹⁶¹ Although this was not an endorsement of the bombing, it echoed some of the bombers’ criticisms of society. It was one of few examples of the political side of the bombing being presented to the public, and even more significant for occurring through a national medium. The national media by this time had grown accustomed to covering the positions of student radicals across the country, which may have contributed to their willingness to show a criticism of America as part of their coverage.

¹⁵⁸ “Why the Bombing,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, May 5, 1971.

¹⁵⁹ Joe Corry, interview by Barry Teicher, *UW Madison Campus Voices*, University of Wisconsin-Madison Libraries, November 17, 1999.

¹⁶⁰ Leroy Luberg, *UW Campus Voices*.

¹⁶¹ Evening News Broadcast, National Broadcast Corporation, August 25, 1970.

Leroy Luberg pointed out that the New Year's Gang had a feeling that "they were doing something in which they really acted for, they spoke for, the major segment of the student body."¹⁶² Although Luberg obviously did not agree with the Gang's ideas, the fact that he was able to engage them reveals the possibility of a sympathetic climate surrounding the bombers on at least one level. His sentiment is supported by David Burress, a graduate student at the time who later remembered that he had been "sort of in favor of there being a revolution."¹⁶³ While students like Burress probably did not imagine anything like Sterling Hall when they expressed these sentiments, the fact remains that the bombers likely drew some support from the attitudes of their peers.

There was also outright support from some local radicals, including those at the *Madison Kaleidoscope*, who wrote after the bombing, "We understand and support the demolition of the Army Math Research Center."¹⁶⁴ These writers identified with the bombers on a personal level, calling them "some friends of ours." They pointed out that the bombers were not a "monolithic revolutionary movement" (contrary to the perceptions of some graduate students discussed earlier) but "just people, kids, not superheroes but frightened brave determined friends." This sort of solidarity and such positive descriptions of the bombers showed a considerable amount of support when so many were vehemently condemning the bombing. The *Kaleidoscope* justified their support by framing the bombing within the years of protest against the AMRC that had proved futile. Instead of viewing the bombing as an act of aggression, they saw it as a valid response to a lack of action on the University's part, writing, "By ignoring reasoned argument and negotiation, the University's managers provoked rebellion. By responding to rebellion with

¹⁶² Leroy Luberg, *UW Campus Voices*.

¹⁶³ David Burress, *UW Campus Voices*.

¹⁶⁴ "Why the Bombing," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, August 24, 1971. Although this quote is from the first anniversary of the bombing, the paper had reprinted its work from the actual day for the occasion.

naked force, they left those who disagreed with only one option-- force in return.”¹⁶⁵ Their unabashed solidarity was important in showing that the New Year’s Gang was not alone in Madison.

Moving Forward: Radicalism Revisited

The shock of Sterling Hall provided a critical pause for reflection in the Madison radical community. Many people began to divide their experiences and memories into before and after categories based on the bombing. Several of them also began to view the bombing as the event that put an end to the radical movement in Madison; Emily Chapman, for example, said, “I think it did sort of punch a hole in the protest movement.”¹⁶⁶ Joe Corry, a former University administrator, agreed, saying that Sterling Hall “sort of put a crush on things.” Even some people who expressed a more nuanced position on this issue, like Robert Cadmus, felt that the aftermath of Sterling Hall limited the creativity on the University’s campus, saying, “The nature of the campus just doesn’t seem to have that spark to it” that it had during the height of student protests.¹⁶⁷ Thus, even people who did not think radical protest in Madison ended after Sterling Hall still felt that the bombing ended something of significance.

Most importantly, though, the bombing of Sterling Hall provided an extremely violent flashpoint that forced Madison radicals to contend with the discussions about and use of violence in their community. In some ways, the conversation around violence shifted to reflect the aftermath of Sterling Hall as well as broader trends in the New Left. However, there were also important continuities that went unnoticed by community members who thought the student movement ended with the bombing and that are often overlooked in the popular narrative of the 1960s.

¹⁶⁵ “Why the Bombing,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, August 24, 1971.

¹⁶⁶ Emily Chapman, *UW Campus Voices*.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Cadmus, *UW Campus Voices*.

At this point in the popular narrative, the student left entered a period of inexorable decline. When this decline started is not a matter of consensus, but scholars have narrowed it down to a handful of events: the SDS national convention in 1969, the Kent State shooting in May 1970, the Weather Underground townhouse bombing in March 1970, the bombing of Sterling Hall that August. However, even as this narrative was being constructed by the mass media, students refused to accept that their activism was faddish or unserious and instead argued for their continued involvement in world affairs.¹⁶⁸ For example, when Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird was scheduled to visit the University in early 1971, a student editorialist noted the opportunity to show the continued vitality of the student movement at Wisconsin. He argued that “the movement should not be totally reactive” but rather that “it must strive to create the conditions under which it acts.” If they did not protest Laird’s visit, in fact, the author knew that “the newspapers will report that even students in Madison accept Nixon’s Vietnam policy” which “would present substantiation of the mass media’s line that student activism is a passing fad.”¹⁶⁹ By continuing to attempt to dictate its circumstances in a world that remained stubbornly outside their control and their vision, student radicals worked to maintain their movement even as the media and opposition figures were attempting to write them off as declining.

Similarly, an earlier editorial argued for the continued life of Miffland, a neighborhood near campus where many radicals lived and the site of many co-ops an important new form of radical living popular after Sterling Hall. Opening the article by stating plainly, “Miffland is not dying,” the author argued that the relative lack of activity showed that the neighborhood was going through a period of critical reevaluation, taking a pause from existing at constant crisis levels to think about how to broaden their reach beyond the current confines of the

¹⁶⁸ “Laird and the Movement,” *Daily Cardinal*, January 14, 1971.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

neighborhood.¹⁷⁰ Another author, a student named June Johnson, speaking specifically about living in the aftermath of Sterling Hall, also touched upon this theme of reevaluation, writing, “The bombing of Sterling Hall has definitely forced me to establish my commitments.”¹⁷¹ Refusing to lend a decisive argument to either advocates of violence or their nonviolent counterparts, the author simply hoped that her readers would critically evaluate their beliefs, writing, “I would hope that those people who are speculating going into the streets this fall are fully aware of the circumstances and truly believe in their commitments, and, at the same time, for those people who end up in the streets, be willing to face the consequences of these commitments.” Furthermore, although the author did not provide an argument that others should follow her position, she did close the article with her own beliefs, writing, “Until the revolution comes closer to me... I will remain revolutionary in thought and in non-violent deed (subject to slow change by frustration).” Johnson continued the reasoned conversation around violence begun before the bombing: she rejected violence on a tactical ground, not a moral one, and she allowed that her position was malleable based on future circumstances. Taken together, these articles showed a pause in the student movement after Sterling Hall but not one that signaled the decline of campus involvement as the mass media claimed.

Almost immediately after the bombing, writers at the *Daily Cardinal* worried less about the lack of student activism than about the increased polarization of the campus community. One writer told an anecdote about radicals who supported the bombing putting posters up around campus expressing their support. Their posters “were torn down almost as fast as they could be put up” which the author explicitly noted was “a rare occurrence in a community used to

¹⁷⁰ Gene Wells, “Bombings,” *Daily Cardinal*, November 13, 1970, page 11.

¹⁷¹ June Johnson, “Frustration,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 1, 1970.

communicating via such methods.”¹⁷² In this reflection the surprise was not support for the bombing but rather that those who did support it were not really able to express their opinions. In this sense the anecdote was more of an assessment of free expression instead of any judgment of support for the bombing. Sterling Hall did cause a rift in the relations between people of different political persuasions, but this tear was not manifested through inaction or apathy. Instead, people deepened their convictions and continued to think critically about their politics and the actions that would come out of them.

It is also fair to say that the bombing of Sterling Hall placed the use of violence in a bad light, and as such accusations of violence were more of a tool, used by radicals and the establishment alike, to discredit and belittle one’s adversaries. Alderman Paul Soglin, a local radical politician, accused the local Republican Party of attempting to provoke violence the weekend before the 1970 midterm elections. He and other local radicals worked to identify undercover police provocateurs and also paid close attention to the schedules of local police departments, because extra officers on duty would be seen as a sign of further provocation. By printing this story on the front page the Friday before election day, the *Daily Cardinal* wanted both to caution its readers about the possibility of extra police harassment but also to discredit the opposition for framing radicals unfairly. Soglin made this distinction very clear, saying, “The only violence that will be perpetrated will be caused by [Republican sitting] Attorney General Warrant to gain votes for himself and his party” and later said that anyone doing anything that would provoke repression in the upcoming four days would be considered a pig, the term also used for the police and other law enforcement.¹⁷³ While the establishment wanted radical

¹⁷² “Reaction to Bombing,” *Daily Cardinal*, Fall Registration Issue, 1970, page 4.

¹⁷³ Jeff Miller and Judy Royster, “Soglin Hints at GOP ‘Plan’ for Violent Weekend,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 30, 1970, page 1.

violence that they could then link to the bombing and gain votes for themselves, radicals also wanted to discredit the establishment for their own association with violence.

These claims of possible police harassment show another continuity after Sterling Hall: the adversarial relationship between radicals and the police. This relationship was established around 1967 with the Dow Day protests and was cemented as police fought with protestors.¹⁷⁴ It was also furthered by national events, including the use of tear gas by police in People's Park Berkeley, California in 1969. Thus cemented, the relationship continued to be chronicled in a column in the *Kaleidoscope* entitled "Them Vs. Us." The picture accompanying every issue of this column portrays a hippie standing nose-to-nose with a grumpy, old National Guardsman who is holding a prominent nightstick.¹⁷⁵ This arrangement clearly shows radicals' feelings toward law enforcement figures and their willingness to continue to be confrontational with them even after the Sterling Hall bombing. The mainstream *Wisconsin State Journal* also noted these feelings shortly after Sterling Hall, writing, "Radical extremism has given birth to hatred of police" and asking for community support for law enforcement to avoid the confrontations radicals remained willing to pursue.¹⁷⁶

The *Kaleidoscope*, like Alderman Soglin in his *Cardinal* article, also served as a community whistleblower for citizens who served as police informants. An article exposing a police informant posing as a runaway shelter coordinator set up a stark "good guys bad guys" contrast between the radical community and the police, writing, "The Madison police are trying to set up a network by which these youths fall right into their traps." The adversarial tone was further developed throughout the article. The author broadened his accusations, writing, "The

¹⁷⁴ This antagonism was further by national events, such as when the police used tear gas on protestors in People's Park at the University of California- Berkeley

¹⁷⁵ "This Week's Them Vs. Us: Manitowoc Wakes Up," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, July 21, 1971, page 9.

¹⁷⁶ "Call for Citizen Support," *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 31, 1970.

situation must be seen as a question of community control of the police force versus the fascists who are trying to destroy us.” Thus, it was not just a question of police actions against homeless youth but of how the community’s relations with the police would be structured. The author also noted that “the pigs are trying to pull a fast one on all elements of the community,” suggesting that the handling of this issue could be indicative of how the police would deal with other community issues as well.¹⁷⁷ Given the pejorative (though common) term “pig,” it seems that the author holds little hope or desire for this adversarial relationship to end in the near future.

This adversarial relationship with the police was extrapolated to a general distrust and dislike of courts as well. The *Kaleidoscope* ran a negative article about the grand jury being formed for the Sterling Hall trial in which it primarily criticized the secrecy of the juror selection process. As such, the staff pledged “general non-cooperation” with the jury’s selections and subsequent subpoenas.¹⁷⁸ This non-cooperation had already come to a dramatic head immediately after the bombing, when editor Mark Knops was jailed for contempt of court. Knops had allowed a statement from the New Year’s Gang to be printed in the paper and then refused to answer questions concerning the whereabouts of the bombers or the source of the statement, an experience that contributed to the paper’s stance against the investigation and prosecution of the bombers.¹⁷⁹ The paper urged its readers to refuse to testify, directing them instead to get in touch with the Committee to Quash Grand Juries, which would help them know their rights when called by the court. The *Kaleidoscope* wrote, “There is no justification for helping the grand jury,” which it called a “perverted... government weapon.” It also encouraged its readers to support any friends who had been called to testify to create a sort of “collective

¹⁷⁷ “Watch Out! Informer Sets Up Runaways,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, March 17, 1971, page 3.

¹⁷⁸ “A Grand Jury- indeed,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, July 21, 1971, page 12.

¹⁷⁹ Walt Bogdanich, “Knops Returned to Jail,” *Daily Cardinal*, September 29, 1970, page 3.

non-collaboration.”¹⁸⁰ Although this stance was not as visceral as the hatred of police expressed in other articles, it still shows a general distrust of authority figures very similar to the attitudes of Madison radicals before the Sterling Hall bombing.

Other radicals lashed out not at local politicians or law enforcement but at the media for associating radical activity solely with violence. One editorial six months after Sterling Hall decried the national media for refusing to pay attention when protests were non-confrontational or nonviolent, given their immense interest in the aftermath of Sterling Hall. The author complained about the unfair coverage given to violent protestors, even surpassing the violence in Southeast Asia. The local media was not exempt from his critique either, because they were “telling us that various protest actions have fizzled and that we are confused and disorganized [while] if there had been violence, the press wouldn’t be complimentary to us, but it also would not be calling our actions a failure.” In this analysis he not only rejected the common idea that the student movement was on the decline but also claimed that the media was holding the movement back because they defined “a successful protest in terms of the amount of blood and broken glass left on the street afterward.”¹⁸¹ In this analysis the author alluded to a continuing politics around violence, something that was probably more salient after the bombing. Although radicals discussed the possible consequences of violence before the bombing, they now knew firsthand that it could be used to tar the left as dangerous or irrational. Complicating this picture was the fact that the same violence could bring the left and its agenda attention from the mainstream media. This tension between the use and prohibition on violence meant that radicals continued to discuss its utility and have a reasoned conversation about their tactics for the future.

¹⁸⁰ Edward Parsons Lofcourt and Rudi Burk, “Dane County Grand Jury” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, August 4, 1971.

¹⁸¹ “Blood and the Press,” *Daily Cardinal*, February 12, 1971.

There were also important continuities in both the radical movement and its conversation about violence. The *Daily Cardinal*, for example, refused to limit its coverage in the wake of Sterling Hall and continued to publish views that were controversial, including some from people who continued to promote violence. An article only a month after Sterling Hall covered the debate between Vice President Spiro Agnew and a student radical on the television show “The David Frost Show.” During this debate, the student not only criticized Agnew’s reactions to the Kent State shooting and attacks on antiwar protestors in New York City but also told the Vice President, “You have done more to build an aura of violence, to build a milieu in which violence is accepted, than anyone I know.”¹⁸² This idea of violence as a foundational part of American life, while not explicitly tied to the bombing of Sterling Hall, nevertheless could have been used by some readers as a justification or at least attempted explanation of the bombing. In fact, this idea was an important continuity with pre-bombing radicals, who had drawn on it as early as 1967, when influential African American activist H. Rap Brown proclaimed that “violence is as American as cherry pie” and when, according to historian Howard Brick, “overt manifestations of violence in American life... fed impressions of a...national proclivity to violence.”¹⁸³ In addition to the blatant disrespect of the Vice President of the United States, the idea that violence was an accepted part of society found a voice in the *Cardinal*.

Perhaps even more surprising was an article published a few weeks later about UW students meeting and talking to Dionne Donghi, a member of the Weather Underground. While the students discussed rather uncontroversial and accepted problems like the increased police presence in Madison, talk also turned to the bombing of Sterling Hall. Donghi worked to cultivate a sense of identification with the New Year’s Gang, saying, “It’s really important that

¹⁸² “Agnew, Student Clash on Frost Show,” *Daily Cardinal*, September 23, 1970, page 9.

¹⁸³ Brick, *Age of Contradiction*, chapter 7.

people can identify with the four men accused of the bombing.”¹⁸⁴ While it was perhaps unsurprising that a member of a self-proclaimed violently radical group would advocate supporting a group of people who had just blown up a building and killed a man, it was still significant that the *Cardinal* chose to print Donghi’s expression of solidarity. The article as a whole reflected a very positive view of Donghi, saying that she shattered “the image of weatherpeople as cold superhuman bombers,” and there was no contradiction of her support of the bombers.

This reflects a broader trend that continued after Sterling Hall: the presence of a critical conversation around violence and the pros and cons of its use for radical ends. As discussed in chapter two, people from both sides argued about the use of violence in very reasonable ways. There were polemics and diatribes both for and against the use of violence, but there were also people thinking critically about whether or not they should use violence. One editorialist in fact initially criticized the university community in October 1970 for not providing “articulate criticism of the bombing.”¹⁸⁵ He asked several important questions about the use of violence, including “Can any act of violence be productive in bringing about the change we desire in this society at this time?... Can non-violent efforts be productive by themselves? If so, how much change can they produce, at what price?” His positions were not based on a black-and-white, uncomplicated idea that nonviolence is good and therefore violence must be bad, even though he did not support the use of violence. Instead, he continued to apply pragmatic reasoning to the conversation around violence, just as his counterparts did before Sterling Hall.

Another writer expressed a similar sentiment a month later, saying that while he supported “all those who are by various means, demonstrating to the American public how the

¹⁸⁴ Maureen Turim, “Students on the Terrace Rap with Weatherwoman,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 8, 1970, page 5.

¹⁸⁵ Clyde Farrell, “Call for Restraint,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 8, 1970.

system is hurting not only minorities and students, but the majority as well,” he did not personally support the use of violence.¹⁸⁶ He recognized his solidarity with everyone fighting against the system, but argued against violence because it “does not attract the additional support which the movement will need to succeed.” These editorialists recognized that “frustrations and disillusionment are still widespread” and thus continued to critically evaluate the various tactics that might alleviate this disillusionment instead of rejecting some tactics out of hand because of their potential association with the bombing.¹⁸⁷

Some people worked to develop historical continuities in the wake of Sterling Hall, in some cases stretching out the timeline to show the violence of American society. The University Vice President, for example, although he predictably rejected the use of violence, noted that violence was part of the labor union experience in the 1930s and that this provided a historical precedent for students to use violence.¹⁸⁸ His purpose was to show that some groups that began out of violence eventually moved toward nonviolent techniques like collective bargaining, but he also provided a reason for those looking to justify the continued use of violence to bring about change. A senior at the University of Notre Dame from a Madison suburb was quoted expressing a similar sentiment in the *Wisconsin State Journal*, noting that violence “has been used by many political movements” and also mentioning the labor unions.¹⁸⁹ Although both these people ultimately rejected the use of violence, their arguments about the historical trend of violence showed that even in the wake of an event like Sterling Hall, non-radical citizens sought to understand the political reasons for the use of violence.

¹⁸⁶ “More Alive Than Dead,” *Daily Cardinal*, November 13, 1970.

¹⁸⁷ Marian McCue, “Faculty, Students Compare Ideas on Campus Violence,” *Daily Cardinal*, October 9, 1970, page 6.

¹⁸⁸ Gene Wells, “Clodius Sees Violence as Ineffective Tactic,” *Daily Cardinal*, September 26, 1970, page 4.

¹⁸⁹ “Reactions from Area,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, August 25, 1970.

Other people, in keeping with the trend of criticizing the other side for using violence, worked to draw unfavorable historical parallels with government repression in the wake of violence. The Reichstag fire in Germany in 1933 was an oft-cited example of violence begetting repression. Both Alderman Soglin and a well-known local attorney named William Kunstler worried that the bombing of Sterling Hall, like the Reichstag fire, would be used against radicals as an excuse to enact repressive legislation or elect regressive politicians. While these men regretted the death of Robert Fassnacht, they did not think that the bombing was without historical precedent, and they used this context to draw critical, worrisome parallels about the future of Madison.

Furthermore, a radical community did remain in Madison after the bombing. Attuned to world events and continuing to seek change in their communities, these radicals, like many around the country, did turn to a variety of new issues in the new decade. For example, Madison was active on a national level in the women's movement. This activity was part of the reason why the city was once again "picked as a national protest center" in the summer of 1971.¹⁹⁰ Earlier that spring, in April, Madison hosted a regional women's conference that over one hundred women from Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota, Ohio, and Washington, D.C. attended. The women listened to speakers from both the United States and Canada about a wide variety of topics, including women's history (or herstory) and gay liberation.¹⁹¹ While this event may not have been as loud or widespread as something like Dow Day before Sterling Hall, it shows that radicals in Madison continued to see themselves as a center of protest and a leader in social change. Rather than be cowed by the bombing, radicals heralded their own activity as a continuing leadership of the radical movement.

¹⁹⁰ "Madison Is Picked as National Protest Center," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, May 12, 1971. The *Daily Cardinal* also claimed this title for Madison in reference to the antiwar movement in 1965.

¹⁹¹ "Madison: Women's Conference," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, April 28, 1971, page 21.

Radicals also continued to take up international issues, including the Vietnam War and United States foreign policy more generally. In one week in 1971, there were four rallies and one march on these topics, suggesting that they continued to hold a prominent place on the radical agenda. The protestors confronted a pro-war veterans' council and protested American involvement in both Laos and Greece at a speech given by Andreas Papandreou.¹⁹² The presence of countries outside of Southeast Asia on the radicals' radar also suggests that they may have been broadening their interests in a way that some protestors did not before Sterling Hall, when so much radical activity was focused on the Vietnam War. In this way radicals may have been able to continue to expand their critique of American foreign policy, a task begun only by some before the bombing.

Helping them in this pursuit was a column in every issue of the *Kaleidoscope* called "Hour of the Wolf." The column was composed of short updates from around the country and the world related to their foreign and domestic policies or struggles against outside powers. The April 28th, 1971, issue contained news from Ceylon, Pakistan, Cuba, Nigeria, and Southeast Asia so that readers could learn about various liberation struggles as well as the continued involvement in Vietnam.¹⁹³ Although this column, being in a much smaller newspaper than much of the earlier Vietnam coverage, would not have been as widely read, it shows that the framework used for international issues before Sterling Hall, that of criticizing the remnants of colonialism and America's modern-day capitalist empire, remained useful after the bombing. While it was often thought that Americans turned inward after 1970, there were radicals who continued to look out and espouse the virtues of self-determination for all nations.

¹⁹² "In Madison Last Week," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, February 17, 1971, page 2.

¹⁹³ "Hour of the Wolf News," *Madison Kaleidoscope*, April 28, 1971, page 2.

One aspect of the radical community in Madison that became more pronounced after the bombing was the search for a more complete radical lifestyle. The co-op movement began to gain steam in Madison around this time, and local radicals held a two-day seminar on the subject in February 1971. They noted that the seminar “was based on the concept that Madison needs a basis for more radical activity and that co-ops can provide this basis... with a sound economic and social framework, an organized, functioning community can effectively promote radical change through communication and co-operation.”¹⁹⁴ This statement effectively portrayed the organizers’ goal in starting the seminar but also the fact that people were searching for a way to continue their radicalism after Sterling Hall. The seminar included talks about both the practical side of establishing a co-op as well as their social significance, again emphasizing building a community as a means of living out one’s radical beliefs. Madisonians did not shy away from continuing to experiment and try to improve their world; while this may have appeared through large rallies against the war before Sterling Hall, it now sometimes also manifested itself in experimental living much closer to home.

Although Sterling Hall shocked many Madisonians, it did not signal an end to the radical movement or to the discussion of violence, whether as an analysis of society or as a protest tactic. People, whether or not they were part of the small group that originally supported the bombing, continued to be active in issues of varying scopes, including a sustained interest in the War in Vietnam. Some radicals continued to have something of an adversarial relationship with authority figures, especially the police. Others, though, shifted their focus away from large rallies and protests in favor of a more day-to-day radicalism reflected in their lifestyle. While the conversation around violence changed in some ways, in others it remained remarkably similar

¹⁹⁴ “Big Conspiracy to Take Over the World! A Gathering of the Co-ops,” *Madison Kaleidoscope*, February 1, 1971, page 13.

and showed a pragmatic, rational approach to all tactics in the radical movement. Sterling Hall did not end the protest movement in Madison, but rather served as a catalyst for change. It may have bent the movement toward an analysis of the pros and cons of using violence, but it did not break the movement away from its role in a community that continued to care about social and political issues.

Conclusion

Madison, Wisconsin, had a long history of progressivism and social activism well before the tumultuous years surrounding the bombing of Sterling Hall. That said, the community participated enthusiastically in the social movements of the 1960s, committed to racial equality and peace in Vietnam. African American students at the University agitated militantly for equal rights in 1969, and the Dow Day protests in 1967 served as a statement against the war and also against the presence of corporations on university campuses. The antiwar movement especially occupied a central focus in the minds of community radicals even early in the War, and the Madison student movement continued to grow as the war escalated. Newspapers, especially the *Daily Cardinal*, helped keep its student readers informed about the war and the antiwar movement through near-constant coverage of both.

At the same time that newspapers and other sources were helping further social activism, another conversation was developing- one centered around more militant and violent ideas. Seeing the ineffectiveness of a nonviolent strategy and growing more aware of the destruction happening in Vietnam, radicals began to feel that violence could serve as a legitimate tactic against a system that they increasingly viewed as corrupt and inherently flawed. However, this conversation did not erupt spontaneously out of sheer rage but was philosophical and analytical;

it was also pragmatic, with radicals taking up specific ways that violence might further their ends as well as methods for handling guns and other tools they might use.

The bombing of Sterling Hall in August 1970 had a profound impact on this ongoing conversation about the place of violence in politics and social change. Radicalism and its more violent arm now existed in the shadow of the bombing and it provided a lens through which to view all activism that came afterwards. However, contrary to the assumption of much of the historiography, the conversation around violence was not cut short by the bombing. Radicals in Madison continued to hold marches and rallies, and they continued to talk about violence as well. Many activists chose to express their radical ideas through their day-to-day lifestyle, while others continued to have an adversarial relationship with the police and to plan for self-defense. Overall, the bombing shows us the resilience of ideas. Although ideas about the strategy for social change may change through a baptism of fire, the desire to improve one's community- as well as a willingness to consider violence as a tactic for change- remained a profound force in Madison even after the destruction of Sterling Hall.

Furthermore, the dialogue around violence that developed prior to the bombing of Sterling Hall, although it may have fragmented in the 1970s, remained a potent political force throughout the decade. As historian Dan Berger writes, "For those radicals who remained strongly identified with the antiwar and antiracist movements of the 1960s, the 1970s was a time when they felt they had to walk their talk. Unable to hide further in their rhetorical pronouncements of impending revolution, these people readied themselves for the task at hand."¹⁹⁵ Although a full-out war never came to fruition, there were a number of armed attacks on state institutions during the 1970s, including the Attica prison riot in 1971 and the standoff between the federal government and the American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee in 1973.

¹⁹⁵ Dan Berger, *The Hidden 1970s: Histories of Radicalism* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2010), 5.

These events show that the conversation around violence continued to change in step with the changes in politicization of the 1970s; just as the radical community fragmented, with different groups focusing on different issues, each developed its own dialogue, and in some cases justifications, for violence. While radicals may have spent less time in large protest marches or even in the planning of violent acts, they continued to act in keeping with their political beliefs, a conviction that for some meant a continued dedication to violent action.

However, the high levels of radicalism in Madison even after Sterling Hall did eventually decline. The violent context in which these radicals operated and to which they often reacted subsided with the end of the Vietnam War in 1975 and the rise of often-vitriolic law and order rhetoric and the accompanying policies that were part of the conservative resurgence of the 1970s and 1980s. This did not mean that radicals' energy had been wasted or that the radical movement had no impact on subsequent social activism in Madison. The historian Mike O'Donnell notes that, for radicals, "initially the focus was on the integration of culture and politics through a consistency of values and practice," and this combination continued to be important after the tumult of the 1960s, even for those who continued to attempt violence against the state.¹⁹⁶ In fact, the student and antiwar movements provided a reference point for the social movements that came after them. One of the most important lessons learned by these younger radicals was that "radical lifestyle is intrinsic to social transformation."¹⁹⁷ The coops that arose in Madison after Sterling Hall were thus both a desire to return to the consistency many radicals sought at the beginning of the decade and an early predecessor to the "lifestyle politics" of subsequent decades. It should be no surprise that Madison remains a liberal city with a radical

¹⁹⁶ Mike O'Donnell, "Nineteen Sixties Radicalism in the United States: Its Rise, Decline, and Legacy," in *Sixties Radicalism and Social Movement Activism: Retreat or Resurgence?*, ed. Mike O'Donnell and Bryn Jones (New York: Anthem Press, 2010), 92.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

subculture, given the resilience of its radicals even in the face of a dramatically violent event like Sterling Hall. The bombing was by no means the proudest moment for many radicals, but the radical community's continuation well beyond its supposed death provided an important building block in the politics of American society in the last half of the twentieth century.

Why, then, does the current historiography in large part focus on the violence of the late 1960s and early 1970s as marking the end of an era? There are several possibilities. First, former Sixties radicals, like Todd Gitlin, Richard Flacks, and Michael Kazin, have written a significant number of the more foundational works on the subject. Their own involvement in radical activity largely curtailed with the end of the decade: Gitlin, for example, wrote that he and the student movement both lost their "forward motion" at the same time. He argues that the student movement "marched into a cul-de-sac and disbanded" in 1969, when SDS dissolved into warring factions.¹⁹⁸ These historians' own experiences, coupled with the search for events that allow such a tumultuous decade to "go out with a bang" fitting of its volatility, could contribute to the allure of a framework that gives the 1960s a swift, neat ending. Even the relatively new historiography around the "long sixties," which defines the decade more thematically and tries to include the entirety of the major 1960s social movements (beginning with their genesis in the mid- to late-1950s and ending in the mid-1970s with the takeoff of the women's and gay liberation movements), still often implies that the era effectively ended with the turn to violence, albeit violent incidents that took place later than 1969, even up until the "White Night" riots after openly gay politician Harvey Milk's assassination in 1978. Another reason could be based on the fact that the historiography of the 1970s, according to historian Dan Berger, is one based on limits. After the affluence and idealism of the early 1960s created problems that could not be solved through the social action of the middle of the decade, Americans in the 1970s had to learn

¹⁹⁸ Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 12.

to stay within their limits, politically, socially, and economically.¹⁹⁹ Such a narrative does not leave room for unpleasant parts of the Seventies, especially those with origins in the previous decade, to be explained or reported upon as a continuing form of social activism. Instead, it marginalizes them outside a historiography that places strict limits on the use of violence as something that belonged to another, more volatile decade.

Instead of trying to conceptualize Sterling Hall and other such acts of violence as merely a relic of the chaos of the 1960s, we should realize that the 1970s were a decade very much up for grabs and that these early acts of violence were part of a conversation that continued throughout the decade. Although this violence declined as the decade wore on, the dialogue around it, in both official and radical quarters, continued. Thus, Sterling Hall should not only be part of a story about the end of the 1960s, but also part of one about the more diffuse and local legacies of the 1970s.²⁰⁰ Although there is a less coherent national narrative of social action in the 1970s, events like Sterling Hall and the radicalism that continued after them show a shift toward a more local focus in the scope of social change. Just because there were fewer violent episodes in the 1970s does not mean that a conversation around violence ended in the 1960s. Instead, events like Sterling Hall and its aftermath show that protest tactics, including the use of violence, continue to be, not the cause of their ultimate destruction, but rather a space of evaluation and change. The radical fight to improve society remains dynamic, even after the volatile and at times destructive campaigns of the 1960s.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 10.

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