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Editor of the Editorial Page
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Dear Sir:

We're hearing a lot these days about the need for unity, about how we should close ranks behind our President and his Secretary of State, rally together, join hands, march together, pray together and work together.

There is one little difficulty with unity. I hesitate to mention it because it seems so quibbling but maybe someone can reassure me. It gives me a slightly queasy feeling like the feeling I had years ago when an evangelist put it to us boys: "Surely you must want to join me in doing God's will".

Presidents Johnson and Nixon put it to me in much the same way: surely you will support your government in fighting for peace. They talked also about fighting for the right of self-determination, Chinese (or was it Soviet) domination of Southeast Asia, sanctity of treaties, American credibility and all things sacred. These sacred obligations got a bit blurred as time passed. It was insisted, however, that even though mistakes had been made (it may have been wrong to deceive the public about the Tonkin Gulf incident), still we must stick together, be unified and do right by those G I's who had given their lives so that

Then came Ford. Kissinger stayed on. They were Nixon men from the start but when defeat (without honor) came, they gave no thought to resigning. Instead, they asked me to join with them in strengthening old commitments and forging new ones they have in mind.

What troubles me about this is that the Vietnam War wasn't just a single mistake in a vast array of mostly good policies. War is never that.

Handwritten note:
and support

War, as Clausewitz said, is not divorced from the political life of the nation; it's "a mere continuation of policy by other means", as he put it. We had better realize that something is very wrong with our political life that produced one of the greatest acts of violence in the history of mankind. We had better examine the past, not try to forget it.

I was never all that fired up by peace -- the kind that's achieved by killing people to save Southeast Asia from Communism -- and I'm not gungho on unity either. Too often, unity is a euphemism for suppression. If unity means settling for one code, one viewpoint and one voice, and if that code and viewpoint is Mr. Ford's and that voice is Mr. Kissinger's. . . well, I'd prefer a bit of disunity even at the risk of being out-of-step and being called unpatriotic.

I wish Tom Lehrer would bang out a ditty on this theme of unity and I offer him a lame first draft:

Unity, unity, that's the way Hitler planned it,
tribal chiefs and admirals of the fleet demanded it;
too many heads make for disunity and views heretical,
so let's cut off a few, it's so ecumenical --
and it will also save on rice --
Unity, unity, it's beautiful, it's orderly and so very nice.

Forget about Senators Gruening and Morse
and those war resisters, still abroad of course;
it's divisive to talk about the past and not see eye to eye;
those that got killed had to die sometime, if not at Mylai,
and let's not forget that making all those bombs
gave jobs to a lot of Ameri-cawns.

The generals were all honorable men and sincere
and might have won with bombs nuclear,
so let's give them and hawkish Ford and hush-hush Kissinger
another try, a show of unity on the eve of our *Bi-centennial* *kick*
. . . unless, of course, we choose in the spirit of '76
to dissolve the political bands with those that got us in thi
fix.

Philip S. Brown