

# NEW YORK ENTERTAINMENT PERSONALITIES TURN OUT FOR VIETNAM MORATORIUM DAY

by brian steeves

The crowd was growing at the rate of 50 persons a minute. All these people had suddenly materialized from nowhere and were cramming into the small park space which was Times Square. The Square quickly filled up and the crowd continued to spill over on to Broadway.

The sidewalks were jammed and two lanes of traffic on either side of the square were closed to allow yet more people near the speakers podium. The day was fairly cool nevertheless all these people turned out to experience democracy at work. Even all the office windows were full of people viewing the spectacle below.

The crowd stood quietly and patiently waiting. Some circulated handbills and leaflets decrying the war in Vietnam and pushing the weekend marches on Washington. The occasional policeman sauntered by, politely asking persons to climb down from the lamp posts or to stand clear of the traffic. They were unobtrusive and not noticed by me until after the demonstration and then by accident. In anticipation of calamity they were well equipped with full riot paraphernalia, mace, helmets, shotguns and their usual long night sticks.

These police were never needed, the crowd waited and continued to listen throughout the demonstration with a determined calm. The talk was of peace and they practiced it.

the American entertainment industry had come to say what they thought of the war in Vietnam, and as events come to show all those on the platform were against it.

Bernstein started by throwing Spiro Agnew's own words back against him. He said he was proud to be an "effete snob" but an "effete snob for peace." He decried the war in Vietnam and raised his hand in the customary 'V' of the peace sign. The crowd responded with the same sign almost to a man.



The air was informal, and after his short speech Bernstein introduced the next speaker, a close friend (and a black man), Ozzie Davis. Davis didn't speak as a black man but as a man who wanted the war to end. He was angry because Nixon wasn't doing anything about it. A "Black Panther" alongside me cheered him as he spoke.

Next came the group of Peter, Paul and Mary, followed by Pete Seeger. The trio didn't talk much, they just sang, The Great Mandello and Blowing In The Wind. Their songs didn't have the polish of the concert stage but they came on really heavy and the crowd ate it up. Seeger sang "This Land is Your Land" and the crowd joined in, full throated and singing with a deep and genuine love for their country radiating through. Seeger spoke of democracy and how it was being denied. He was dressed in denims, a logging shirt and an old red peak cap.

He had a beard which was long and tangled and he looked like something from the north woods. He talked of democracy in a simple and rustic way and the sophisticated New Yorkers understood and believed what he said. As he spoke more than 100 white doves were released as a symbol of the peace movements beliefs. One dove circled in the air and landed on the peak of Seeger's cap as he started to sing a new song of his composition about peace and war. The sight was melodramatic, but it was taken as a sign by the crowd and as they cheered they lifted their hands in the 'V' again.

Dr. Benjamin Spock spoke next. His tongue was vitriolic and it was directed against the Nixon administration. He halting way. He tried to start the singing



Times Square was the scene of a mass demonstration protesting the war in Vietnam on November the twelfth. Some of the more youthful members of the crowd cheer as Pete Seeger comes on stage to sing "This Land Is Your Land".

risked jail again by exhorting people to civil disobedience, and joining the march on Washington.

When he finished Sam Browne stepped up. Sam Brown started the whole Moratorium and his speech was that of a rational, clear thinking young man. He spoke on the reasons for the Moratorium and reiterated the need for going to the Washington demonstration. As he spoke, for the first time, a voice from the crowd shouted "communist pig". Brown didn't even pause in his speech

of Give Peace A Chance but confused the words. Someone corrected him and he proceeded on, with the crowd joining in.

After the song he introduced the rest of the people on the platform. There were many and it took a long while, but the audience waited and cheered everyone of them. There were top producers and struggling playwrights, directors, actors and stagemanagers, a cross section of the whole theatrical community. They all held their hands aloft for peace. The whole demonstration ended with a chant "We want peace" and the crowd gradually dispersed.

The majority of the crowd were middle-aged and middle-class, not all long haired as might be expected. One little old lady dripping mink walked by with a peace button pinned to her lapel. Another group of dowagers came by sporting the same button. Three black panthers walked by with peace buttons in their black berets. Four middle-aged businessmen were overheard to be agreeing that the Nixon policy was wrong.

This wasn't the new left at work, or the communists or the SDS. These were average middle class people testifying to what they believed was representative democracy. Much of the talk on stage was of democracy, the age-old cliches and the same old themes but these people believed in them and loved them.



The first speaker came as a shock to the crowd, Leonard Bernstein, the darling of the New York elite stepped forward to speak, and the initial response was a stunned surprise. The silence quickly became cheers when they realized who he was and what he was supporting. Leonard Bernstein in his Brooks Brothers suit and his distinguished silver grey hair, stood amongst one of the oddest assemblies ever on any stage. They ranged from black to white, hippy to the severely dressed. Young, long hair was seen alongside middle age baldness. The wealthy and famous sat alongside the poor and unknown. The strugglers sat with those who had made it. Members of



The entire cast of Hair came forward and sang 'Aquarius' and '3,5,0'. They were followed by Tony Randall and Shirley MacLaine. Randall the soft spoken man from television and the cinema reiterated the theme of peace and exhorted the audience to keep the demonstrations peaceful.

Shirley MacLaine damned Nixon in a space of 15 seconds and retired from the platform with her hand in air, the peace sign for all to see.

Last to speak was Mitch Miller, a man from another generation and era. He was a bit confused by the proceedings and he



## POTPOURRI ... ON MORATORIUMS N' SUCH...

