

John Bagely “Resist! Non-Cooperator Ball Stater” – Vol. I No. 4 December 01, 1968

You can sit for hours and wonder how to start an article like this. How can I say very delicately and nonchalantly that I expect to spend the next two to five years of my life in prison?

I reckon delicacy fell by the wayside one rainy day last June and drowned in the flooded side ditch.

My name is John and I refused induction into the armed forces last June. Everything which has led up to that statement is too snarled and complex for me to try and figure out here before your very eyes. Today some things stand out in my mind which seem to have been pointing toward the place I am now; I'll try to tell you some of those things.

I returned to Ball State in the fall of 1967 after serving a year with VISTA in New Mexico. I had enlisted in VISTA because I felt that I could no longer profess to believe in something without somehow trying to activate that profession in some appropriate manner: I joined VISTA. I returned to Indiana weary, discouraged, and longing for the complacent womb of Ball State, but I found that the 2S security of studentom was oppressive in its guiltiness. “Why should I be exempt from the burden of that war?” kept ragging and nagging my restless mind.

And to escape from myself, I dropped out of school in winter quarter and applied for re-admission to VISTA and re-assignment to my former project site. I was re-admitted to VISTA, but my re-assignment to mora became involved in my former sponsor's battle with his own state office. The state office, wanting to get rid of the local director, refused my re-assignment because the local director had requested it.

Thus, I lost my student deferment and found my answer: I did not request another 2S when I was readmitted to Ball State (even though I was legally entitled to it) and I began planning my refusal.

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A friend went with me to the induction center at Indianapolis. I drove down, figuring to drive back after my refusal; in case I was arrested immediately, my friend would return the car to my parents. A cold day for June, the muddy, gray clouds drizzled down onto the corn and the windshield. What kind of omen is this? What does this dreary day and its drifting drizzle mean.

I remembered that it had rained on St. John the Baptist's day, too (June the 24th). I had taken that as a good sign: the whole unwilling world had been blessed. And the turtle doves along the way; according to some old, vaguely-remembered Indian legend, "when the voice of the turtle is heard throughout the land, then there will be peace."

I reminded Dave that "they" didn't have much more time—only a few more hours. That was my lame joke of the day: I had warned the government that I'd give them until today to end the war and if they hadn't done it by then, that I would refuse induction. I think we both knew that my ultimatum would not be met: though the doves were very encouraging...

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My last contact with "them" was early in September. Back then, F.B.I. agent Braver interviewed me and told me that a grand jury would be convened within 60 to 90 and that at that time, it would be determined whether a crime had been committed or not. If they found that a crime had indeed been committed, the next steps in the process would be my arrest, trial, and if convicted, I will be able to look forward to (at the maximum) a five-year sentence and up to a 10,000 dollar fine.

Ed. Note: John Bagely has again left Ball State. At last word he was in Chicago.