

**SPEAKER 1:** A citizens lobby group was formed in Minneapolis and Saint Paul 3 and 1/2 years ago to try to encourage Honeywell Incorporated, which is headquartered in these cities, to stop its manufacture of war materials, especially of the anti-personnel fragmentation bomb.

Recently, the Honeywell Project, as the citizens group is called, held a week-long series of hearings on the part that American corporations play, those corporations that manufacture war materials, the part they play in the Vietnam War and in American foreign policy throughout the world. From 25 hours of testimony, reporter Bob Potter produced this report for National Public Radio's *All Things Considered*.

**BOB POTTER:** Most Americans are tired of the involvement in Indochina. Many are numb to endless news reports about the war. For Minnesota poet Robert Bly, however, the horror is still real.

**ROBERT BLY:** This is what it's like for a rich country to make war. This is what it's like to bomb huts afterwards described as structures. This is what it's like to kill marginal farmers afterwards described as communists. This is what it's like to watch the altimeter needle going mad. Beyond 25, this is 81. Are there any friendlies in the area? 81 from 25, negative on the friendlies.

I'd like you to take out as many structures as possible located in those trees within 200 meters East and West of my smoke mark. Then diving, the green Earth swinging, cheeks hanging back, red pins blossoming ahead of us, 20 millimeter cannon fire, and the rice fields shoot past like telephone poles, smoke rising, huts' roofs loom up huge as landing fields, slugs going in, half the huts on fire. Small figures burning, palm trees burning.

Up again, blue sky, cloud mountains. Artillery shells explode. Napalm canisters roll end over end. 800 steel pellets fly through the vegetable walls. The six hour old infant lifts his fists instinctively to his eyes to keep out the light, but the room explodes. The children explode. Blood leaps on the vegetable walls. Yes, I know, blood leaps on the vegetable walls.

**BOB POTTER:** The niece of a former South Vietnamese ambassador to the United States knows well what the war has done to her country. [? Leigh-Ann ?] too was also arrested last week for her part in a demonstration at the Vietnamese embassy in New York.

**SPEAKER 2:** The Nazis may have invented genocide, but the Americans have gone beyond to ecocide and many other forms of killing that even the dictionary has no words for. What name do you give to the willful destruction of a culture or the forced separation of a people from their roots? 3,750,000 people dead, at least 700,000 people have been wounded.

As of December, 1969, four million Vietnamese have been driven from their land, which is equivalent to the combined and total populations of Michigan, Kentucky, Missouri, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, Kansas, Indiana, Idaho, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, Utah, Nevada, and Washington.

President Nixon who promised a generation of peace has dropped over four million tons of bombs on Indochina. In 1971 alone while the war was winding down, the Senate subcommittee on refugees reported that more civilians are being killed and wounded in the three countries of Indochina and more made refugees than at any time in history.

**BOB POTTER:** Several people presented evidence that only the nature not the extent of the war is changing. Ground troops are leaving and are being replaced by the automated battlefield, remote control war. Electronic sensors dropped from airplanes detect the movement of troops or civilians.

Data is relayed back to airfields, and pilots dispatched to bomb from 20,000, keeping track of the exact location with the help of computers. The result is what Fred Branfman calls The Third Indochina War, a total war, which destroys everything beneath it. And Branfman, who spent four years in Laos with the International Volunteer Association insists that most of the casualties are civilians. The assignment of guilt is not easy.

**KEVIN BRANFMAN:** If you trace it back, you find out that the pilot who dropped the bombs never saw the people below. And of course, the photo interpreter who took the photo recon, pilot who took the pictures of the village so that it could become a target, he just took pictures of roofs if he saw anything. And when he landed, somebody just took cameras off the planes, brought him to the photo shed.

The photo interpreters looking at the film, they just saw huts. They didn't see any people. Go a little further, American ambassador, he's the guy who okays every bombing flight in Laos, the ambassador gets a piece of white paper and it says something like, one [INAUDIBLE], 2730 by 5720 enemy bivouac area.

So he just checked that off. He didn't really know, but probably was. And then, of course, you take it back, who made the bombs? Who made the napalm? Back here, these people, of course, have never seen civilians. What it all comes down to, one expression for it is an age of a humanity.

My first reaction when I would go through these refugee camps and I would talk with these mothers who had lost their children and these grandfathers whose sons and daughters and grandsons were on the other side and families who had been disrupted and the was that, wow, this must have been what it would have been like to have walked through Dachau or Buchenwald or Auschwitz.

Well, it wasn't. It wasn't. I mean, Hitler went after the Jews with a very personal kind of envy And hatred and spite. I was in Laos for four years. I never heard a Laotian called a gook. When I visited those airbases, no one even knew what a Laotian was like. They'd ask me, hey, what are those people over there like? I heard they're kind of nice people.

It's not the kind of inhumanity that the Nazis practiced against the Jews. It's a kind of a humanity. It's an expression of a culture, a culture which is taught all of us that what is most important is to produce to be effective. Do your job well, and don't think about the consequences.

It's not important when you go to school whether you study history or geography particularly. The main thing is whatever you're studying, get good grades. And these people who drop the bombs and make the bombs and load the bombs, they're just expressions of this kind of culture of a humanity. Nobody hates Laotians. They simply weren't considered.

**BOB POTTER:** Lengthy arguments were developed to show that American economic interests are closely tied to the war. Minneapolis attorney Richard Oakes who has worked on defense contracts for both UNIVAC and Honeywell commented on the profitability of making weaponry.

**RICHARD OAKES:** I guess the one way to describe the relationships of a defense contractor both to its customers and to its competitors, if you can use that word, is that it is at base, an incestuous kind of business relationship. I think we all envision defense contractors as waiting dormant for government to say what government wishes in terms of weapons and weapons platforms.

This was probably true someplace back in the '40s. It is no longer true. It has not been true for a generation. It is the defense contractor who tells the government what the government wants to buy. The question arises very often, do the people who work in these industries really know what they're doing?

Do they have an overall concept of what's happening? Why are they doing what they're doing? Have they made a moral, political, or economic decision to do so? Without excusing anything that goes on, I would have to respond in the negative. What happens is that sometimes and most of the time by government direction, the tasks required in order to complete a contract are broken down into such minute, measurable quantities that an engineer, for example, can be working on a question of stress in a piece of metal.

And it is very easy for that person to imagine that he is or not really know whether he's thinking about a commercial aircraft or a military aircraft or perhaps the outer skin of an anti-personnel weapon. The internal workings of a defense contractor are unlike any other business that you can imagine.

What a defense contractor does is he formulates proposals to the government in which he claims that had it not been for the contract that he is presently bidding on, he would never purchase the following items of equipment. Then he goes on to list things that are so mundane as to be shocking including adding machines, oscilloscopes, all sorts of things that had the customer been anyone but government, you'd be absolutely astounded at a producer demanding it.

If you can imagine going to your TV repairman to get him to repair your television set and having him say, as a part of my bid, I wish you to share in the cost or I wish you to purchase an oscilloscope for me in order to do this, or I want you to purchase a tube tester for me to do this with. Well, what happens is that billions of dollars worth of buildings, land, equipment, vehicles, test stands, oscilloscopes, every conceivable piece of technical equipment you can imagine is amassed and remains in the hands of contractors.

**BOB POTTER:** MIT professor Noam Chomsky said the war goes on to provide the Japanese and American corporate structures with eventually profitable investment opportunities. Chomsky said the top 80 US corporations derive as much as 50% of their profits from overseas investments.

Economist Michael Tanzer charged that US foreign policy has through history been largely a means to promote corporate interests. And William Domhoff, a sociologist at the University of California, Santa Cruz said a corporate elite unduly influences US foreign affairs. While the hearings were termed a war crimes investigation, they had no force of law.

And the results were predictable in advance as all participants had substantial anti-war credentials. It was the kind of event which critics might call divisive. Yet Fred Branfman, the man who spent four years in Laos emphasized that big corporations and big government are not monolithic. They are run by human beings. And his challenge to the Honeywell Project was to learn how to talk to the leaders of business and government.

**KEVIN BRANFMAN:** I mean we have to develop a vocabulary which explains the political vocabulary which explains how we could be living in an age where our leaders are not like Hitler, not foaming maniacs. They're rather decent men to their friends, their associates, their family. They're affable. They're civilized. They're restrained. And yet they're mass murderers.

**ROBERT BLY:** Why are they dying? I have written this so many times. They are dying because the president has opened a Bible again. They are dying because gold deposits have been found among the Shoshone Indians. They are dying because money follows intellect, and intellect is like a fan opening in the wind. The marines think that unless they die, the rivers will not move.

They are dying so that the mountain shadows will continue to fall east in the afternoon. They are dying so that the beetle can move along the ground near the fallen twigs. But if one of those children came near that we have set on fire, came walking towards you like a gray barn walking, you would howl like a wind tunnel in a hurricane.

You would tear at your clothes with blue hens. You would drive over your own child's wagon trying to back up. If one of those children came by burning and you were on your suburban lawn, you would leap into the air tearing into your cheeks. You would ram your head against the wall of your bedroom like a bull pinned too long in his moody pen.

If one of those children came towards me with both hands in the air, fire rising along both elbows, I would suddenly go back to my animal brain. I would drop on all fours screaming. My vocal cords would turn blue. So would yours. It would be two days before I could play with one of my own children again.

**BOB POTTER:** For National Public Radio, this is Bob Potter in Minneapolis Saint Paul.