

2495 Redding Road, Fairfield, Connecticut, February 1, 1966

Miss Janice Campbell,  
Unitarian Universalist Register Leader,  
25 Beacon Street,  
Boston, Massachusetts.

Dear Miss Campbell:

I am sorry to have been slow in answering your letter, but it came while I was in the crisis of term papers and grades and similar matters. Meanwhile, even before your letter came I was in the midst of some soul-searching of my own, and perhaps for different reasons from those of John Updike, have come out at the same end.

I have been deeply by the noble record of SNCC, and on the matter of civil rights and race I am totally with them. Among other things, they have done a great service in affirming the essential nature and law of our society. I sympathize, too, with the concern over Vietnam, for I have been deeply disturbed -- enough any way to do a little marching, which is quite a lot for a sedentary character like myself. I can respect a pacifist, and can respect the courage of a person who, out of conscience and in willing acceptance of the consequences of his act, will destroy a draft card. But I myself would not destroy a draft card -- not unless I thought myself in a society which did not provide means of protest and unless I were prepared, on the particular point in question to destroy that society. For such an act is, symbolically at least, an act of total confrontation, one on which discussion and compromise are impossible. There are societies, of course, in which one should burn one's draft card. I do not think that this is one of them -- at least not yet. And I trust that it will not come to that point. Since I would not destroy my own draft card, I do not think that it would be honest of me to sponsor, as it were, the destroying of draft cards. So, with real sadness, I must withdraw from your program. I should like to give any help I can on the other phase of the activities of SNCC, and when and if you find some use let me know.

Very sincerely yours,

Robert Penn Warren

PS. As a kind of footnote, I may say that I think it was outrageous and stupid to expell Bond from his seat.