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President Responds To Pickets for Peace

By MARJORIE HUNTER
Special to The New York Times.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 15—Several thousand women from Eastern cities picketed the White House today to protest nuclear fall-out.

The picketers, their hair and their clothes soaked by a heavy rain, were seen by President Kennedy from a White House window. He said later that he knew what they were trying to say to him.

Asked at his news conference if he thought the demonstration was useful, the President replied:

"Well, I think these women are extremely earnest and that they are concerned as we all are of the possibility of a nuclear war.

"They talked this morning to Mr. [Adrian] Fisher, who is deputy director of our Disarmament Agency. We stressed the effort we were going to put into the disarmament conference coming up in March."

"I saw the ladies myself [through the window]. I recognized why they were here. There were a great number of them. It was in the rain. I understood what they were attempting to say and, therefore, I considered that their message was received."

Mr. Kennedy said the most disappointing event during his first year in office was failure to get an agreement on a nuclear test ban.

2,000 on the 'Peace Train'

Most of the women picketers arrived on the "Peace Train Special" from New York City. There were nearly 2,000 women from New York, Philadelphia and Trenton aboard.

Even before the train arrived, many women from the Washington area had set up picket lines in the driving rain. More than twenty-five policemen were on duty to keep the women moving, and sloshing through the puddles on the sidewalk.

There have been "Women Strike for Peace" picket lines at the White House before, but today's demonstration was the largest.

There were so many women and signs and umbrellas that police directed the overflow to Lafayette Park, across the street from the White House.

One woman, huddled in a wool coat, carried a sign: "Never Say Die."

A little girl waved a poster: "When it rains, it pours—strontium 90."

The lettering on the posters faded in rain. Some women used their signals as umbrellas. Umbrellas were blown away by gusts of windy rain. White balloons on sticks danced merrily.

One woman in a long fur coat pushed a stroller in which two of her children—aged 10 months and two years—were sitting. Her third child, 4 years old walked beside her.

Letters to President

A White House guard stood at the gate and held a cardboard box in which the women deposited letters to President Kennedy. The improvised mailbox was soon filled with soggy, ink-streaked letters.

The women later gathered at a Negro church to drink coffee and listen to speeches.

Rabbi David Z. Ben-Ami of Temple Emanu-El, Rochester, N. Y., paraphrased Shakespeare by saying, "The quality of fall-out is not strained, it droppeth like the gentle rain from heaven * * *"

Mrs. Ruth Gage-Colby of New York, international coordinator of Women Strike for Peace, was applauded wildly when she said that in a democracy, the power of the government derives from the consent of the governed.

"We must refuse to give consent," she said.

She told of peace rallies being held by women in other parts of the world. British women were to meet in Westminster Hall tonight and rallies were scheduled for Paris and Rome and Vienna and other places, she said.

Among the cablegrams that she read were ones from women in East Germany, West Germany, the Soviet Union, Hungary and Bulgaria.

The cable from leaders of the Institute of Soviet-American Relations in Russia read, in part: "We are happy to inform you that the strike of Soviet women for peace is wholeheartedly supported by the Soviet Government."

After the church rally, the women fanned out in all directions. Some visited the Soviet Embassy. Others went to the French Embassy. Hundreds went to the Capitol to talk to Senators and Representatives.

At least three groups attempted to call on Dr. Carl Kaysen, deputy special assistant to the President for national security affairs. Only two of the groups were admitted.

Mrs. Dagmar Wilson of Washington, founder of Women Strike for Peace, said later that Dr. Kaysen had assured the women that "what we are doing is a good thing."

Dr. Kaysen said that he told the women that the President welcomes concrete and responsible criticism and is anxious to know what the people think.

U. N. Also Picketed

Special to The New York Times.

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Jan. 15—New York city members of the Women's International Strike for Peace picketed United Nations headquarters today, protected from a drizzle by placards reading "Peace Is the Only Shelter," "Peace or Perish" and "Stop Bomb Tests."

United Nations officials estimated that 500 women demonstrated here between 1 and 2 P. M.

The United Nations also announced today that a scroll was presented to the secretariat last Thursday by Mr. Ruth Gage-Colby, head of the Women's Peace Organization. The scroll called upon the General Assembly to direct its efforts "only toward negotiations in the troubled areas of the world."

March Before Embassy

Groups of women also demonstrated yesterday in front of the Soviet Embassy, Sixty-eighth Street and Park Avenue, and at the Atomic Energy Commission building, Hudson and West Houston Streets.

Fourteen women accompanied by several children marched in front of the Soviet Embassy for a half hour beginning at 1 P. M. Shortly after 2 P. M., a group of eight women and girls picketed briefly.

The demonstration at the A. E. C. building began at 3 P. M., when six women arrived with umbrellas and placards. Their signs protested the resumption of nuclear testing and called for a ban on such tests. The protest ended at 3:35 P. M.

Scheduled demonstrations in front of the American, French and British missions to the United Nations were canceled because of rain.

In Mineola, L. I., a group of 175 women paraded in front of the Nassau County Administration Building from 11 A. M. until 12:30 P. M. The women, who called themselves "Nassau Women for Peace," carried signs urging "Peace for Our Children."

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