Remembering the Good Old Days

'Messiah Of Protest Era' Has Nothing New To Say

BY VIVIAN COOPER
Editorial Page Editor

The Bob Dylan concert of Thursday, Jan. 17, in Charlotte, had all the earmarks of a religious ceremony. The messiah of the protest era of the sixties was awaited with hushed expectation and was welcomed excitedly as the symbol of a time when we were concerned about the world and were willing to fight for it.

But that time has passed. And though the crowd strained to hear Dylan's words to recapture the spirit of the sixties, Dylan had nothing new to say.

The ceremony was performed befitting the occasion. The crowd listened attentively and smoked the usual dope. Girls with sticks of incense walked through the audience to fool the many "pigs" that had invaded the sanctuary. At the start of "Like a Rolling Stone", hundreds rushed to the foot of the stage and clapped wildly. Dylan often raised his arms over his head to welcome the rushing crowd. They flocked to him much like a different crowd rushes to Billy Graham when he calls to them to come up and accept Christ.

But the excitement was only temporary because the protest religion of the sixties has gone the way of most religions. The central figure is glorified and deified, but his words and the spirit of the teachings are forgotten.

We've become the wise cynics. No one can fool us again into thinking we can do anything. Oh, yes, we're still liberal, but who has time or energy to get angry anymore?

In private circles we talk dejectedly or sarcastically about Nixon, the so-called energy crisis, extreme corruption in politics, the still outrageous inequality of blacks, minorities, and women, but we don't do anything about it. Sure the world is in bad shape, we say, but it has always been that way and I'm only one person... We've been beaten and we've allowed the spirit to get knocked out of us.

But we still remember those good old days fondly. The time when anger and desperation drove us to drop what we were doing, forget the risks and let ourselves be heard. The days when we had a suggestion of pride and self-respect in us.

So we flock to Bob Dylan...