

Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick

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Lord Bertrand Russell, Honorary President of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation, initiator of the International War Crimes Tribunal, and renowned philosopher, mathematician and civil libertarian, has agreed to become honorary chairman of the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick.

The Committee now has nearly 500 sponsors. Recent new sponsors include David Dellinger (Liberation magazine) Dagmar Wilson (Women Strike for Peace), and Prof. Robert Greenblatt (National Mobilization Committee). The Committee recently received statements of support from the Berkeley Student Mobilization Committee, the Oklahoma University CEWV, and New York Veterans for Peace in Vietnam.

Last month Pfc. Petrick spoke before a meeting of the Houston CEWV. The same evening he spoke on a radio call-in show in Houston. The program was scheduled to last 40 minutes, but because of the great interest in the topic the show was extended another 40 minutes. Howard is scheduled to speak for the University of Oklahoma antiwar committee when the fall term opens.

Howard meets more people every day who have heard about his case and are interested in literature on it.

Recently he went to the base library to check out the new book on Vietnam (The New Legions) by ex-Green Beret Donald Duncan. When he gave his name to the librarian to add to the long waiting list for the book, she said, "I've heard of you! I've read a pamphlet on your case." Also, another GI told Howard that he had seen a defense committee button ("Free Speech for GIs; Defend Pfc. Petrick") lying on a cash register in a large department store in the town near Ft. Hood. Word of the case is spreading.

Five months have passed since this case began and it is time to look back over what has happened. When Howard was first questioned and his literature taken, he was told by Military Intelligence that it would be one or two months before they would act on the results of their investigation. It has now been five months, and the army has taken no action against Pfc. Petrick, although they refuse to return his literature, and continue to investigate him.

One important factor in staying the army's hand was the immediate response to Howard's appeal for help from the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, Victor Rabinowitz (Howard's attorney), and the many individuals who helped publicize the case by supporting this defense committee and writing letters of protest to Secretary MacNamara. Although there is always a chance that the army will decide to carry out its threats, it now appears that Howard is not in immediate danger.

However, there are still some tasks which must be performed by the defense committee. The Committee is still about \$1,000 in debt, and this must be erased through fund-raising benefits, individual contributions, and mailings of the fact sheet on the case by antiwar committees and local defense committees. A full financial report will be issued by the Committee in the near future.

Also the case must be kept very much alive through circulation of leaflets, pamphlets, and buttons. Nearly 5,000 of the pamphlets have been sent out by the Committee, and, as Howard reports, they even find their way down to Ft. Hood, Texas. Keeping the case before the public in these ways will continue

to put pressure on the army. We must show them that if they take any steps against Howard there will be thousands of people who know about the Petrick case and who will raise their voices in protest.