

Box 471
Cooper Station
New York, N.Y. 10003
April 10, 1967

TO ALL LOCALS:

Dear Comrades,

Last week we learned that the army's secret police were conducting an investigation of Pfc. Howard Petrick. Howard Petrick is a member of the Twin Cities YSA, and also a member of the SWP, who was drafted into the army. The investigation is for the purpose of preparing court-martial charges of "subversion," "disaffection" and "disloyal statements." According to the lawyer assigned Howard by the army, each charge carries a maximum penalty of three years in prison.

Comrade Petrick was drafted July 13, 1966, though he had refused to fill out and sign the unconstitutional questionnaires dealing with personal belief and political affiliation. Howard has consistently and properly fulfilled his army duties. He has never been disciplined for any offense, and has received "excellent" ratings from his superior officers.

Howard has, at the same time, not concealed his opinions, his reading material, or his political beliefs and affiliations within the armed forces. On the contrary, he has continued to exercise his constitutional rights of free speech and thought as a citizen-soldier.

Upon his return, April 1, from a ten-day leave -- during which he attended the YSA convention in Detroit -- Howard discovered that his quarters had been searched and literature and other personal property confiscated during his absence. He was then held for five hours of questioning and material in his suitcase was also confiscated. He has since been subject to some official petty harassment.

The actions taken against Howard represent the contradiction between freedom of thought and the ruling class's need for a monolithic army to carry on an unpopular war. His defense will revolve around the right of G.I.'s as citizens to freely hold and express their opinions, and around their right to learn the truth about the war in Vietnam.

Howard has retained the law firm of Rabinowitz and Boudin as civilian counsel and has gained the support of the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee. We are not certain of the future course his case will take, but we must begin now to mobilize support for our comrade. An initial large response from the antiwar movement will play a large role in determining future developments. A temporary provisional defense committee has been established and its address will be announced in the next issue of the Militant.

The April 17 Militant (appearing April 12) will carry a lead article and headline about the case. It will also contain a biographical sketch and interview with Howard. Fact sheets and leaflets will be available in New York at the time of the demonstration.

All comrades should become thoroughly familiar with the facts of the case. A major aspect of our participation in the April 15 Mobilization will be the defense of Pfc. Howard Petrick. It is now more important than ever to gain the widest possible distribution of the Militant at these demonstrations.

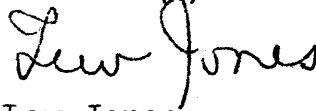
Each area should assign an experienced comrade to take charge of the defense work. We must take the facts of this case to the antiwar movement and begin a campaign to win broad support for Howard, and to defend the constitutional rights of all G.I.'s.

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Two comrades immediately flew to Texas to talk with Howard after hearing of his predicament. He is in fine spirits and ready for the campaign -- and counting on us. He can receive mail at the following address:

Pfc. Howard Petrick US 55 851 166
Headquarters of the Hqtrs Company
2nd of the 41st Infantry
2nd Armored Division
Fort Hood, Texas

Comradely,



Lew Jones
National Chairman