

# Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick

Box 569, Cooper Station, New York, N.Y. 10003

Phone: 212-929-2122

**NATIONAL SECRETARY**  
CAROLINE LUND

June 19, 1968

**ATTORNEYS**  
VICTOR RABINOWITZ  
LEONARD BOUDIN

Dear Friends,

I have just finished an intense speaking tour of major cities across the country, speaking on my case and building support for my right to an honorable discharge. Everywhere I went I was struck by the intense interest in my case and in the problems GIs can have in expressing antiwar views.

On April 27, the day of international demonstrations against the war in Vietnam, I spoke to 1,500 people on the Boston Commons as part of a demonstration sponsored by 16 Boston organizations. In Minneapolis, Minnesota I spoke to a large rally held by Students Against the Selective Service at the University of Minnesota on April 3. Swinging over to the West Coast, I spoke at a Resistance rally of 150 people at the University of Washington in Seattle. At meetings all across the country I found overwhelming support for my right to free speech.

In San Francisco three GIs came to a meeting where I was to speak. Talking with them, I found that they knew many other GIs who were interested in participating in the San Francisco antiwar demonstration on April 27. On the day of the demonstration, the GIs I talked to and about 25 of their friends led off the San Francisco protest march of 30,000 people. Enclosed is a leaflet which shows some of the very good news coverage I got on my tour.

On April 21 I spoke before the Annual National Committee Meeting of the Committee to Abolish HUAC,

**SPONSORS** (partial listing)

Dr. Alexander Alland  
Mrs. Donna Allen  
Bettina Aptheker  
Irving Beinlin  
Prof. Eric Bentley  
Father Daniel Berrigan  
Julian Bond  
Prof. Germaine Bree  
Prof. Preston Browning  
Ed Chalom  
Prof. Noam Chomsky  
Prof. David R. Clark  
Ruth Gage Colby  
Prof. Ephraim Cross  
Kipp Dawson  
David Dellinger  
E. Dellums  
E. DeBell  
Ed Farley  
Thomas N. Gardner  
Armand Gatti  
Maxwell Geismar  
Prof. John Gerassi  
Mitchell Goodman  
William Gibson  
Prof. Donald Hopkins  
Prof. Lawrence C. Jennings  
Prof. Donald Kalish  
Murray Kempton  
Prof. Pierre Henri Laurent  
Ben G. Levy  
Denise Levertov  
Prof. Staughton Lynd  
Prof. Robert K. MacDonald  
Jack Minnis  
Rev. Maurice McCrackin  
Dr. Chaplin W. Morrison  
Linda Morse  
Prof. George L. Mosse  
Alex Munsell  
Prof. J. B. Neilands  
Prof. Jay Neugeboren  
Grace Mora Newman  
George Novack  
Robert Osborn  
Roger Pic  
Tom Paxton  
Prof. Sidney Peck  
Prof. Maxwell Primack  
Prof. Walter Plaut  
Pedro Juan Rúa  
Muriel Rukeyser  
Prof. Franz Schurman  
Laurent Schwartz  
Prof. Stephen Smale  
E. Swados  
M. Sweezy  
Jean-Pierre Vigier  
Rev. W. D. Walker  
Eric Weinberger  
Prof. Peter Weiss  
Prof. Paul Zitsel  
Prof. Howard Zinn  
Prof. R. E. Zelnik

which was held in Chicago. Many of the participants in the conference were already sponsors of the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick, and several more became sponsors of my defense after hearing about the current stage of my case.

Legally, my case is still at the same stage. An appeal of the undesirable discharge I was given has been filed with the Army Discharge Review Board, and this Board has still not ruled on the appeal.

I would still like very much to speak on my case and on my experiences in the army wherever possible. I will be living in New York now, but will travel anywhere to speak on my case if my travel expenses can be raised.

The Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick is still in debt. It has put out an up-to-date fact sheet on my case, which is enclosed. This leaflet is very good to include in antiwar mailings or in local fund-raising mailings. If you would like more of these leaflets, just let us know.

Hopefully this letter will bring more financial support, orders for leaflets, and speaking engagements. I wish to heartily thank all of you who have supported my case so consistently. We must continue the fight to establish the right of GIs to free speech definitively.

Sincerely,

*Howard Petrick*

Howard Petrick

# Defend the Right of GIs to Free Speech

## Support the Pfc. Howard Petrick Case

Do GIs have a constitutional right to hold and express political ideas differing from those held by the Administration in Washington? This is the key civil liberties issue in the case of Pfc. Howard Petrick, the antiwar GI from Fort Hood, Texas.

After being harassed and threatened with court-martial for almost a year, Petrick was discharged on March 15, 1968. This retreat from threat of court-martial on the part of the Army represented a victory in the fight to secure the civil liberties of Petrick and all GIs.

But it was not a complete victory, because Petrick was given an undesirable discharge on the grounds that he is a member of the Socialist Workers Party. He must now begin a fight, first through appeal to the Army Discharge Review Board, and then to the civilian courts, to obtain the honorable discharge he is entitled to.

Petrick did nothing to deserve an undesirable discharge. He obeyed all orders and performed all his duties in the Army. By giving him an undesirable discharge, the Army is attempting to punish him simply for exercising his constitutional rights as a citizen to express his views, which include opposition to the war in Vietnam. They seek to deter other servicemen from doing the same.

Here are the facts in the case. Petrick had been active in the Minneapolis Committee to End the War in Vietnam and the Young Socialist Alliance and Socialist Workers Party in Minnesota prior to being drafted in July, 1966.

When Petrick was called up for induction, he refused to sign the standard "loyalty" questionnaire. He, like many others, did so on the constitutional ground that such an oath violated his First Amendment right of free political association. Because Petrick did not fill out the questionnaire the Army conducted an investigation of his views and activities before taking him into the Army.

After basic training Petrick was assigned to the second Armored Division at Fort Hood, Texas, where he was a cook. After his induction he continued to exercise his rights as a citizen, expressing his views about the Vietnam war and on other political issues of the day. He openly circulated literature on the history of the Vietnam war, on the



**Pfc. Howard Petrick**

case of the Fort Hood Three (three GIs, also from Fort Hood, now imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth for refusing to go to Vietnam in the summer of 1966), on socialism, black power, and the ideas of Malcolm X.

During his service Petrick had an excellent record and there was never a single disciplinary action of any kind against him. He was well-liked by his fellow GIs and regarded as a good soldier by his immediate superiors.

However, on April 1, 1967, returning from a leave, Petrick found that his locker had been searched and all his literature confiscated. He also learned that his fellow GIs had been questioned about him and that their lockers had also been searched for antiwar literature.

That evening he was called in by Military Intelligence and asked to answer under oath a series of 70 questions regarding his political beliefs and associations, his possession of antiwar literature, and statements he had made while in the Army. Petrick declined to answer any of these questions at that time.

He was assigned an Army attorney, who advised him of the possibility of a court-martial under charges including "subversion," creating "disaffection" within the armed forces and making "disloyal statements." The maximum penalty for "disloyal statements" is three years at hard labor for each count.

The distinguished constitutional attorneys Leonard Boudin and Victor Rabinowitz of New York, immediately agreed to act as civilian counsel for Petrick. They were retained for him by the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee.

After that Petrick was transferred, with no explanation, to a new unit, thereby isolating him from the GIs he knew best. While his regular activities, until his recent discharge, were not restricted, he was not permitted any leave for several weeks and he was

denied normal promotions and pay raises. He was harassed by an almost continuous investigation of everything he did for over a year.

What has happened in the case of Howard Petrick is a blatant violation of the rights of GIs, as American citizens, to freedom of expression guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. The U. S. government drafted Petrick into the Army knowing full well he was a socialist and opposed to the war in Vietnam. Then, after keeping him in the Army for 19 months, they discharged him as an "undesirable," simply for expressing views which they knew he held. An undesirable discharge will make it very difficult for Petrick to find a good job, as well as entailing many other disadvantages.

However, the Army officials did not go ahead with their original threats to court-martial Petrick. This retreat was due in no small part to the efforts of his attorneys Victor Rabinowitz and Leonard Boudin, and the work of the many supporters of the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick.

Another significant factor in convincing the Army to discharge him was the support Petrick received from his fellow GIs. GIs on Petrick's base gave him overwhelming encouragement and GIs from other bases who heard about the Petrick case wrote in to the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick expressing their solidarity with him.

Three GIs from Fort Jackson, South Carolina, wrote to the Committee in November, 1967, expressing their support for Petrick's rights. Since writing these letters, two of them, Pfc. Stephen Kline and Pfc. Robert Tator have been, like Petrick, threatened with court-martial for their part in organizing a silent "meditation" by 25 GIs at the Ft. Jackson chapel to express their doubts about the war in Vietnam.

Pfc. Kline wrote a letter of protest to then Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara saying:

"I, being a soldier and sympathizing with Pfc. Howard Petrick, would like to protest the unconstitutional treatment being given him by the U. S. Army. The Bill of Rights guarantees free speech to all Americans. The highest military court has ruled that soldiers are also guaranteed. Why then is Petrick denied these rights and persecuted for practicing them? . . ."

Pfc. Robert Tator wrote: "Freedom of speech can only be exercised in the privacy of one's own mind

in the Army; for to raise one's hidden thoughts to vocal power would mean going against the establishment. And yet the Army's sole existence (supposedly, so we again are conditioned to believe) is to protect our *controlled* freedom we so blindly die for. In the Army servicemen are threatened by different means to keep their mouth shut about talking against the war in Vietnam to fellow servicemen. . . .

"I speak for the defense of Pfc. Howard Petrick. For he and others are fighting to keep our country free. It is beyond me to understand how the Army and the government can willingly sentence a young man for exercising the constitutional right to freedom of speech. . . ."

\* \* \*

During the past year the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick has received many statements of support from individuals and organizations across the country. The following statement is just one example of the support expressed for this case. It was made March 29 by Sylvia E. Crane, Chairman of the Civil Liberties Committee of the New York Council of the Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy.

"The New York Council of Sane joins vigorously to protest the punishment meted out by the U.S. Department of the Army to Pfc. Howard Petrick in giving him an undesirable discharge on March 15. . . . In view of Pfc. Petrick's impeccable record during his 18 month tour of duty in the Army, of rendering any service required of him, this punishment represents an infringement on his constitutional rights of free speech; it is punishment for holding and advocating dissenting views on the Vietnam war. New York Sane holds that an attack on any segment of the antiwar movement is an attack on all of it. We hold that our national security is better preserved by upholding our traditional liberties in all walks of life, and most especially in a free exchange of views."

Your help is needed to carry this case through to the end and win a definitive victory for the right of GIs to free speech. Please send contributions to finance this latest stage of the case and to finance continued publicity of the case until a final victory is won. Howard Petrick will be available to speak on his case. If you would like him to speak at your school or before an organization you belong to, please contact the defense committee.

**Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick  
Box 569, Cooper Station  
New York, N.Y. 10003**

- Please add my name to your mailing list and keep me informed of future developments.
- Please add my name as a sponsor of the defense effort.
- I would like to sponsor a meeting for Howard Petrick.
- Enclosed is \$ . . . . to help defray the legal costs of this case.

Name . . . . .  
(please print)

Address . . . . .

City . . . . .

State . . . . . Zip . . . . .

# AND WHAT KIND OF ASSETS DO YOU HAVE, PETRICK?

## trick, Pfc.

In nearly every Army post in the nation are GIs willing to work for the antiwar movement.

This information comes from Howard Petrick, an ex-GI who was threatened with a court-martial for speaking against the war. Petrick was eventually given an "undesirable" discharge when the Army found it had no case against him.

Ex - Pfc Petrick is currently on a nationwide speaking tour in an effort to have the "undesirable" removed from his discharge papers. In a Los Angeles interview he spoke of the withdrawal of Johnson and its impact on the GI.

"Many of the GIs question the whole thing," said Petrick. "After all, Johnson was the one who was laying the pattern for the war in Vietnam and he was the one who was telling the GIs to go off heroically and fight. Then when he turns around like this and just withdraws it means he is expressing a lot of doubt about the whole program he was carrying out in Vietnam."

Petrick also spoke of the attitudes of Black soldiers toward the war.

"They see it as racist. They know they don't have equality here and they know they will have the same problems when they return. When I went into the Army in July 1966 many black GIs didn't have a political understanding of Black Power but by the time I got out they had more respect for Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown."

"... the Mexican - Americans hang around with the blacks. They are aware of racism and they know it is against them, too. They see the blacks as soul brothers, al-

though they are not as politically aware as the blacks.

Petrick entered the Army with the intention of exercising his rights as a citizen. He spoke out against the war and refused to stop.

"Anyone who speaks out against the war gets a lot of support from among the GIs," he says, "both from the leftwingers and rightwingers. Certainly they are not given any answers from the military..."

He says that the GIs "... read anything they can get, especially the underground press. At Fort Hood, Texas, where I was stationed, they would read and pass around The Rag, from Austin; the LA Free Press and the BARB."

"There are GIs who participate in the civilian antiwar movement. Some of them got leave to go to Washington DC last October 21 and they went back to their posts and said, 'The antiwar movement is on our side.'"

"But what the GIs need most is

ST. PAUL DISPATCH  
Tues., April 2, '68 ★ II

## GI Wants Army To Clear Record

A former Minneapolis man who received an undesirable discharge from the Army after antiwar and Socialist literature was found in his locker held a press conference in the Radisson Hotel, in Minneapolis, today to explain his case.

Pfc. Howard Petrick was drafted into the Army in July, 1966. In April, 1967, while he was on leave, he said, his locker was searched and the antiwar and Socialist literature was confiscated.

Petrick said he was told that he was being investigated by the Pentagon to find out whether his staying in the Army was "in the interests of national security." He said he is active in the Socialist Workers party, which is listed by the Attorney General as a subversive organization.

He was given the undesirable discharge March 15 and is now on a national tour to explain his case. He said he intends to fight in the civilian courts for an honorable dis-

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.



charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

# AND WHAT KIND OF ASSETS DO YOU HAVE, PETRICK?

## trick, Pfc.

In nearly every Army post in the nation are GIs willing to work for the antiwar movement.

This information comes from Howard Petrick, an ex-GI who was threatened with a court-martial for speaking against the war. Petrick was eventually given an "undesirable" discharge when the Army found it had no case against him.

Ex - Pfc Petrick is currently on a nationwide speaking tour in an effort to have the "undesirable" removed from his discharge papers. In a Los Angeles interview he spoke of the withdrawal of Johnson and its impact on the GI.

"Many of the GIs question the whole thing," said Petrick. "After all, Johnson was the one who was laying the pattern for the war in Vietnam and he was the one who was telling the GIs to go off heroically and fight. Then when he turns around like this and just withdraws it means he is expressing a lot of doubt about the whole program he was carrying out in Vietnam."

Petrick also spoke of the attitudes of Black soldiers toward the war.

"They see it as racist. They know they don't have equality here and they know they will have the same problems when they return. When I went into the Army in July 1966 many black GIs didn't have a political understanding of Black Power but by the time I got out they had more respect for Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown.

"... the Mexican - Americans hang around with the blacks. They are aware of racism and they know it is against them, too. They see the blacks as soul brothers, al-

though they are not as politically aware as the blacks.

Petrick entered the Army with the intention of exercising his rights as a citizen. He spoke out against the war and refused to stop.

"Anyone who speaks out against the war gets a lot of support from among the GIs," he says, "both from the leftwingers and rightwingers. Certainly they are not given any answers from the military..."

He says that the GIs "... read anything they can get, especially the underground press. At Fort Hood, Texas, where I was stationed, they would read and pass around The Rag, from Austin; the LA Free Press and the BARB."

"There are GIs who participate in the civilian antiwar movement. Some of them got leave to go to Washington DC last October 21 and they went back to their posts and said, 'The antiwar movement is on our side.'

"But what the GIs need most is

the support of the antiwar movement. The movement could research the rights of GIs and get the information to them through leaflets. They can publicize and get legal support for any GI who is intimidated or harassed for expressing his anti-war views." -LF

as a socialist. Petrick worked hard in the Army and obeyed orders—but he would not be silenced.

It was a David and Goliath battle, and Petrick won. The military had threatened Petrick with

go into Riot Control classes, which are being taught continually by the military now. And what the Black GI learns is that the government is preparing to use violence against the Black communities. The troops are being trained to use bayonets and ammunition, and these are not non-violent weapons. I think the violent death of Dr. King will just increase the militancy of the Black GIs."

Asked about the attitude of Black and Mexican American GIs toward the war Petrick said,

ST. PAUL DISPATCH  
Tues., April 2, '68 ★ 11

## GI Wants Army To Clear Record

A former Minneapolis man who received an undesirable discharge from the Army after antiwar and Socialist literature was found in his locker held a press conference in the Radisson Hotel, in Minneapolis, today to explain his case.

Pfc. Howard Petrick was drafted into the Army in July, 1966. In April, 1967, while he was on leave, he said, his locker was searched and the antiwar and Socialist literature was confiscated.

Petrick said he was told that he was being investigated by the Pentagon to find out whether his staying in the Army was "in the interests of national security." He said he is active in the Socialist Workers party, which is listed by the Attorney General as a subversive organization.

He was given the undesirable discharge March 15 and is now on a national tour to explain his case. He said he intends to fight in the civilian courts for an honorable dis-



a court martial but by March 15 they had backed down and released him with an undesirable discharge. Petrick was glad to get out of the Army, but this wasn't enough. He immediately went on a national speaking tour to get the "undesirable" removed from his discharge. He feels this is important to protect both his political rights and the rights of the growing number of antiwar GIs in the Army.

With the continued support of the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick and the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, Petrick opens a new phase in his fight. The Petrick case has also been given support by Stokely Carmichael, on behalf of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee; Dr. Herbert Aptheker, Staughton Lynd, Dagmar Wilson, and Floyd McKissick of the Congress of Racial Equality.

"They see it as racist. They know they don't have equality here and they know they will have the same problems when they return. When I went into the Army in July, 1966, many Black GIs didn't have a political understanding of Black Power but by the time I got out they had more respect for Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown. They know Rap is in prison to keep him from talking.

"The Mexican Americans hang around with the Blacks. They are aware of racism and they know it is against them, too. They see the Blacks as soul brothers, although the Mexican Americans are not as politically aware as the Blacks."

There is a lot of White racism in the Army, even among the antiwar GIs," Petrick said. "But it has a different character now since Black Power has made an impact. The racists now show more respect for Black GIs. They have to be aware this is a human

charge if his current application for a reversal by the Army Discharge Review Board is denied.

Petrick was an active member of the antiwar movement in Minneapolis before being drafted.

The press conference was called by the Committee to Defend the Rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick, 116 W. Grant St.