

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

July 3, 1967

Dear Friends,

This is the second report to inform you of the progress of the campaign to defend the constitutional rights of Pfc. Howard Petrick. The Committee to Defend the Rights of Howard Petrick now has more than 300 sponsors. Prominent sponsors which have come in since the last report include: Julian Bond, Georgia State Legislature; Prof. Noam Chomsky, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Prof. Howard Zinn, Boston Univ.; Jean-Pierre Vigier, Paris Secretariat of the International War Crimes Tribunal; Harvey Swados, writer; William Gibson, writer; Tom Paxton, folksinger; Robert Osborn, cartoonist; Jack Minnis, SCEE; Prof. J.B. Neilands, Univ. of California at Berkeley; Roger Pic, French film maker; Ron Dellums, Berkeley City Council member; Muriel Rukeyser, poet; Denise Levertov, poet; Mitchell Goodman, writer; Father Daniel Berrigan, Prof. Donald Hopkins, Univ. of California at Berkeley; Prof. Maurice Zeitlin, Univ. of Wisconsin; and many others.

A letter asking for support to the case signed by Prof. Eric Bentley and Murray Kempton was sent out in a mailing from New York. In Boston Professors Howard Zinn and Noam Chomsky signed a similar appeal.

A high school girl in New Jersey sent a very encouraging letter to the defense committee. She wrote that she has been trying to start a committee to defend Pfc. Petrick, despite strong disagreement from many people. She writes: "I went to the local newspaper, but I'd hate to repeat what he called me. I'm afraid that in Fair Lawn adults just won't listen to kids. However, I've managed to scrape up a few dollars. I got a few little kids together on my block and we put on a puppet show for 25¢ a ticket. Fifteen people came so the result was \$3.75. I'm enclosing that, plus \$2.25 donated from my friends and from myself...."

Many people have written letters to Secretary of Defense McNamara protesting the infringement of Petrick's constitutional rights. The Pentagon has been answering these protests with a deliberately misleading letter, which attempts to mask the Army's methods of intimidation of GIs with dissenting views. The Pentagon's answer says that the Army's investigation, to date, has revealed "insufficient evidence to warrant the preferring of charges" against Petrick for "distributing subversive writings." The letter is misleading because it does not mention the confiscation of Howard's literature or that the Pentagon is continuing to investigate him. The threat of court-martial or other action against Pfc. Petrick remains. The Army is clearly watching Howard closely and looking for some pretext to silence him and make him an example to other GIs who may want to exercise their constitutional rights.

At Fort Hood, Howard Petrick reports that many GIs are interested in his case and support his rights. Several soldiers have written to the defense committee expressing their support and their desire to help defend him, with such comments as, "I've known Howard since I've come into the Army, and his defense against the Army's persecution is of great importance to me.... I too have begun to talk to other GIs about their opinions of the Vietnam war. Most soldiers are against the war, but are afraid to voice their opinions for fear of being punished...." Some GIs request more literature on the case. "The faster the public learns of the case the stronger Howard's defense will be," was one comment.

Still another former GI, Robert King, who was a friend of Howard's wrote: "During Howard's interrogation, all my possessions were searched and left scattered about the room. I asked what they---the Military Intelligence---were looking for, but I was ignored in receiving any answer. Not until my 3-hour interrogation was I informed what and why it was all about...."

"I believe people in a free country should be able to read whatever they like---it's perfectly legal to print it."

Howard has been invited to speak for several antiwar groups in Texas. On June 23 he spoke on his case for the University of Texas Committee to End the War in Vietnam. The antiwar committee described the meeting in a press release as follows: "Before a full house, he, Howard Petrick, discussed his reasons for opposing the Vietnam war (he is not a pacifist) and the dilemma of his fellow servicemen who are forced to subdue native Vietnamese in revolt against the corrupt and oppressive Saigon regime....Although the audience was somewhat disconcerted by the presence of Austin detectives, two FBI agents and an Army officer in civilian clothes, spunky Petrick could not be intimidated. He wore a freshly starched uniform with shiny brass and shoes, his Good Conduct Ribbon and training proficiency badges...."

On the same weekend he spoke to 50-100 people at a "peace picnic" held in Austin. At this picnic he ran into several other Fort Hood GIs who were against the war. He has also been invited to speak at Houston and at the University of Oklahoma.

In a recent letter Howard reports: "Many GIs, when they know who I am, come up to me and introduce themselves and ask me to tell them more about my case. I have run into about 10 GIs who have said that someone had written them about me. One GI came up to me the other day and said that his sister, who is in SDS up in the New England states, had written him and told him to look me up. He acted very interested in the case and took some pamphlets and fact sheets to give to other guys he had talked to.

"Almost every guy I've talked to takes some literature back to his billet for other guys to read....In general the response to my case has been wonderful."

Victor Rabinowitz, Howard's attorney provided by the Emergency Civil Liberties Committee, has inquired of the army why

Howard's literature has not been returned to him. All of his antiwar and socialist literature was confiscated by Military Intelligence on April 1. Howard himself has also demanded his literature be returned, but Military Intelligence has refused, saying he is still under investigation. An officer told him, "I don't think you will ever get your literature back unless we can watch you pack it up and send it all right back where you got it."

Many antiwar groups have subcommittees concerned with reaching GIs with information on the war or with defending rights of GIs. At the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Wisconsin at Madison, Petrick defense committees are now recognized campus groups. The Madison group has been passing out the fact sheet on the case to GIs. A person from the committee wrote in, "The reception was friendly. Comments went like, 'Keep up the good work,' or 'Pass them out over here,' etc. Only one busload of artillerymen were hostile." The Minnesota CEWV has held two street meetings in downtown Minneapolis on the Petrick case. Both drew sizeable crowds.

In a short time, GI subcommittees of the Boston Student Mobilization Committee and the Cambridge CEWV have amassed over 400 signatures on a petition to the army to cease its attempts to intimidate Petrick.