

The G.I. Office in Washington, D.C. is presently undertaking a project that will serve to focus public and congressional attention on the systematic "legal" repression of servicemen and women. We intend to do this through the forthcoming hearings on military justice to be held jointly by the Senate Subcommittee on Constitutional Rights and a special subcommittee of the Armed Services Committee. We hope that G.I.'s and civilian support projects throughout the country will join us in the effort. We are preparing an input to those hearings, now scheduled for April, by compiling documented cases of injustice and repression which we will be able to point to in our testimony.

Specifically, we need as much documented evidence as possible for the following:

- People that have received General or Undesirable Discharges for unsuitability or unfitness and who, because of the nature of their discharge, have found it difficult to get a job in civilian life.
- People who have accepted Undesirable Discharges without a hearing because it was implied or threatened that they would be court-martialed if they did not accept it; or were in such miserable circumstances, (e.g., stockade) that they were willing to accept the Undesirable without a hearing, rather than wait the several weeks for the board to be convened.
- Cases of men discharged for unsuitability; when what they should have received was a medical discharge for physical or psychiatric reasons.
- People who have been discharged for unfitness or unsuitability on evidence or testimony that was illegally obtained and that would never stand up in a court-martial or any other place where Rules of Evidence would apply (e.g., drug busts).
- Any and all documentable incidents where the military has punished, harassed or coerced individuals in direct violation or circumvention of D.O.D. Directive 1325.6 (Guidelines for Handling Dissident and Protest Activities Among Members of the Armed Forces).
- People who have first-hand knowledge and can document specific examples of racist practices in the military.
- People who have received Bad Conduct Discharges for AWOL, dope or political offenses, or any combination thereof, who find it literally impossible to gain meaningful employment.
- Examples of physical brutality or poor conditions in stockades and correctional custody facilities.

These are only a few of the types of cases that we are interested in. If you have experienced or witnessed any act of injustice, send us as much information as possible. Individuals working with your local project or newspaper have more specifics on how you might best proceed.

There are currently three bills before the Senate that will serve as a discussion vehicle into the whole area of military justice. The first and most crucial would reform the administrative

discharge board procedures by making them more judicial. The second, which rewrites the non-punitive articles of the UCMJ, is a bold attempt to eradicate command influence from courts-martial. The third removes all but 19 of the current 49 punitive articles from the UCMJ (the remainder to be punishable only by local or Federal courts); makes violations of Article 133 (Conduct unbecoming an Officer and a gentleman) and Article 134 (General Article---the infamous catch-all) no longer punishable by courts-martial but by Article 15 only.

We believe that if any, or all of this legislation is passed, it will make no great fundamental difference to the G.I. facing military punishment. We do not pretend to hope that, through this undertaking, we can bring about the long-needed reforms in military justice in one step or to stimulate any revolutionary change in the minds of the military Brass or members of Congress with regard to the rights of soldiers, sailors, airmen and women in the Armed Forces. The hearings will provide us and all of you, however, the opportunity to present specific cases of outrageous acts by the military. We must dispel, once and for all, the notion that the atrocities performed in the name of military justice are isolated cases performed by aberrant individuals; but are instead, common policy.

One of our objectives is to convince representatives in Congress that they should be more sensitive and responsive to the needs of servicemen. Many of you who have written to Congressmen for help know well that they usually do not offer an adequate response. Secondly, our aim is to inform middle America of the injustices perpetrated on their "fighting men in uniform". We are trying to arouse families of servicemen and women, to raise their consciousness, if that is possible. Thirdly, we want the G.I. himself to sit up and take notice. We want to inspire him to think and to ask "why" he or his friend has not received justice. Finally, and most important, we are trying to create elbow room for members of the Armed Forces, elbow room that will allow each to become a normal human being and citizen, with the right to speak, think and question his role, the role of the military and the role of his country.

The G.I. Office still maintains its function of providing counseling and handling individual complaints from servicemen and women throughout the world. In the last six months, we have responded to the needs of several hundred people in uniform. We will continue to offer our services to individuals with problems. The G.I. Office is here for your benefit---use it.

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