

# GIs Picnic for Peace

Bob Lynetter

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The American Servicemen's Union (ASU) at Selfridge Air Force Base is inviting the peace movement to join them on the base in a "Picnic for Peace" on Memorial Day, May 30.

This is an excellent opportunity for the entire anti-war movement in the area to give support to and show solidarity with a vital faction of the movement, the GIs who are standing up to be counted.

The importance of this action cannot be stressed enough. Our brothers in the service are in a dangerous position. With the exception of the Black Panther Party, GIs are experiencing the most intensive repression of any group in the movement.

Activist GIs are constantly open to harassment. They refer to the UCMJ (Universal Code of Military Justice) as the Universal Code of Military Injustice. They are "legally" persecuted for exercising their Constitutional rights, as was exhibited in the recent trial of Seaman Roger Priest. They are forced to fight in a war they don't believe in, to break labor strikes and to put down their brothers and sisters on the campuses and in the streets.

Ever-increasing numbers are starting to ask why and many are starting to say no! But they can't do it alone!

Solidarity between GIs and civilians is vital if the movement has any hope of victory. They are leading the struggle from within the belly of the monster and the success or failure of their struggle will have a powerful effect on the success or failure of the entire movement.

The Picnic for Peace May 30 at 1:00 p.m. is an answer to a call from the GIs who attended the National Anti-War Conference in Cleveland this past February. On May 16 GIs will be leading actions at about 40 major military installations across the country. That is Armed Forces Day and these bases are open to the public.

At Selfridge that open house date is Memorial Day, May 30, the same day national leaders of the anti-war movement have called for massive demonstrations in response to Nixon's escalation of the war.

The ASU brothers at Selfridge are coordinating their plans with about a dozen anti-war groups in the greater Detroit-Ann Arbor area. These groups represent the entire spectrum of the political left and their leadership has recognized the importance of supporting the GIs.

The action itself will be peaceful in nature, but because it is on a military installation the politics and effect of the action will be heavy. A spokesman for the group said they are asking people in the Detroit area to take part in the mass rally downtown and then follow the GIs back to the base. These brothers are putting themselves on the line since the brass will hold them responsible for whatever occurs that day at Selfridge. This is why we must follow their direction.

One of the ASU guys outlined the day's actions. "A member of our ASU group will speak toward the end of the rally downtown and ask people to join us at the base afterwards. What we're asking is that people come to the base to peacefully protest and show solidarity with the large numbers of GIs who oppose the escalation of the war and are deeply troubled by the murders at Kent State.

"We believe that show of support will encourage a lot of GIs to become active in the movement and show the brass and the public that GIs are against the war and the political direction of the Nixon administration. We ask

people to come to the base to rap with servicemen and those who come to see the air show. We don't believe war should be glorified by showing off the jets which are destroying a country and people in Indochina.

"People should wait until they get on the base and then put on black armbands, buttons or other outward signs of anti-war sentiment. It is very important that people employ this type of tactic since a formal rally or demonstration is impossible due to legal restrictions.

"The reason they should wait until they are on base is to avoid any unnecessary hassles at the gate. The impact of having large numbers of people on base flying colors of peace instead of patronizing war will be felt from the command headquarters here at Selfridge all the way up to the Pentagon.

"We want to assure the base commander, Col. Gunnarson, the Navy Cmdr. and the other commanding officers of the base that we are coming legally and peacefully, but that we are coming to be heard.

We have invited the American people to Selfridge, and the ASU is going to be sure they come. We hope the brass here are ready to welcome the public and that the military leaders all the way up the chain of command are ready to listen to their voice."

The Fifth Estate urges all those in the anti-war movement to answer this call for support. Take your lunches, blankets, guitars, arm-bands, buttons and bodies to Selfridge May 30 and show your solidarity with our brothers in the military. Take the eastbound Edsel Ford (1-94) to the Utica exit and follow the signs to the base.

## **Protest Rally (text box)**

The Detroit Coalition to End the War and the Student Mobilization Committee have called for a mass protest rally on Memorial Day to demand that all U.S. troops be withdrawn from Southeast Asia.

The rally, to be held at Kennedy Square, May 30 at 11:30 am, will be part of an international day of protest and demonstration; organizers are predicting the largest turn-out in the history of the Detroit anti-war movement.

Prominent national, as well as local speakers are being scheduled, although as of this writing none have been confirmed. Following the rally, participants will drive out to Selfridge Air Force base to take part in the GIs Picnic for Peace.

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