

Conflict of Interests

Liberation News Service

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WASHINGTON, D.C. (LNS), — In an unprecedented lawsuit filed in Federal Court May 11, the Reservist's Committee to Stop the War moved to expel 122 Congressmen from the Armed Forces Reserves and the National Guard.

Claiming that it is an unconstitutional conflict of interest for a congressman to hold any military position, the Committee cited Article 1, Section 6 of the Constitution: "...no person holding any office under the United States shall be a member of either house during his continuance in office."

The split loyalties of a legislator-reservist to both his local constituency and the Pentagon was, until cold war times, generally recognized by Congress. In several Civil War cases, both the Senate and the House forced members to choose between their seats in Congress and their military commissions. In 1916 the House Judiciary Committee ruled that any Representative who became a National Guard officer must leave the House.

In pressing their suit against the Defense Department, the Reservists' anti-war group noted that those Senators and Representatives who might be affected by the case "tend to be hawks on Vietnam and military issues—such as former Reserve Major Generals Barry Goldwater and Strom Thurmond."

Closer to home National Guardsmen have shown another face besides the one seen at the Kent State massacre.

A member of the Michigan National Guard and a philosophy student at Michigan State, Charles Harper, is asking fellow Guardsmen to sign a petition stating that they will not participate in any "brutal or inhumane" acts.

He said he probably would go on a college campus if ordered, but would not carry bullets.

About 50 guardsmen have signed the petition.

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