

Ft. Jackson Struggle Continues

Fifth Estate Collective

1969

The past week has seen an effort by the Army to give undesirable discharges to three anti-war GIs. All three are known for their anti-war views and their active struggle for the constitutional rights of American servicemen, and have been defended by the GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee.

At Fort Jackson, S. Carolina, where GIs United Against the War in Vietnam was founded, Pvts. Joseph Cole and Tommie Woodfin, two members of the famous Ft. Jackson Eight have been given official notice that they will receive undesirable discharges from the Army.

Pvt. Joseph Cole received orders Monday, July 14 to clear post no later than July 18. Unfitness hearings were convened on June 18-19 and Cole was charged with "frequent incidents of a discreditable nature with civilian or military authorities."

The only evidence of a discreditable nature the Army could offer was Cole's "sloppy dress," and his two Article 15's, one for failure to have a haircut, the other resulting from returning 13 hours late from his Christmas leave.

Also at Ft. Jackson, discharge hearings for unsuitability were convened by Col. Redfern for Pvt. Tommie Woodfin on July 10. The Army introduced two previous convictions each for one day AWOL as proof of Woodfin's undesirability.

Further damaging evidence used against him was the fact that he was known for distributing anti-war literature, his sloppy dress, and that "he always wore a filthy old hat tilted on the side of his head."

Al of the above charges have resulted in Woodfin being notified he will be discharged as undesirable.

On July 2, Woodfin had been acquitted of charges of assault and using provocative language.

Pvt. Edwin L. Glover was given an undesirable discharge July 10, at Ft. Benning, Ga. The socialist GI whose antiwar activities and "private war" with the Ft. Benning brass received national publicity last fall, was the subject of a field board hearing held on January 27. This hearing determined the nature of his discharge.

By giving undesirable discharges to GIs who have been brave enough to stand up for their constitutional rights in spite of continued intimidation, harassment and confinement, the Army has admitted that they refuse to allow GIs the same rights as civilians. The GI Civil Liberties Defense Committee is confident that the American public will continue to register strong disapproval of the Army's obvious attempt to silence dissent within the ranks.

The Defense Committee remains firm in its position that these GIs are entitled to nothing less than honorable discharges. A vigorous effort will be made on their part to insure these courageous young men the honorable discharge they deserve.

An offensive of appeals in both military and civilian courts will be launched to show the Army that it cannot arbitrarily discipline soldiers for exercising their First Amendment rights.

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Fifth Estate #84, July 24-August 6, 1969

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