

Statement by Fred Halstead

The reason I opposed the motions to have the Fort Hood 3 Defense Committee initiate and play a central role in anti-draft conferences and a particular antidraft campaign is as follows: I consider these motions to be a serious departure from the original statement of aims of the committee, on the basis of which sponsors have been obtained and funds raised. I do not believe it is proper to collect funds for one purpose and then use them for another.

There is already too much work for the Committee to do in publicizing the Fort Hood 3 case, collecting money for legal fees, family travel, etc, and seeking the broadest possible support for the case itself. Of course, the more effective the anti-war movement in general is -- including perhaps its anti-draft aspects -- the more effective the Fort Hood 3 defense will be. But it doesn't follow that it is proper, effective, or wise for the Committee itself to attempt to act as a center for the anti-war movement as a whole or of the anti-draft movement. There are other groups already engaged in anti-draft work. They are elaborating and working out various anti-draft programs. There is much discussion and disagreement within the movement as to just how effective an anti-draft program can be, and as to what an effective anti-draft program should be. It is not wise, in my opinion, for the Fort Hood Three Defense Committee to put itself in the center of this controversy. That will not lead to broadening the effectiveness of the committee, but to narrowing it.

I have no objection to the Committee sending representatives to general anti-war or anti-draft conferences. But I do object to the committee centering its activities around student anti-draft activity. That is just not what the Committee was set up to do. And I do not believe that it can do that and at the same time do justice to the Fort Hood Three defense and the unique aspects of this case, which include reaching G.I.'s with the message of the case.

It seems to me that those people on the committee who feel the need for an anti-draft campaign around the Congressional debate on selective service, should get together with others who feel the same need and constitute themselves a committee for that purpose and proceed. If one or more of the defendants themselves wishes to sponsor or support such a campaign that is their right and would be perfectly proper.

Personally, I question the effectiveness of such a campaign. Even if I were strongly in favor of this particular tactic, however, I would not favor the Fort Hood Three Committee initiating it for the reasons stated above. On the tactic itself, I don't believe there is a ghost of a chance that Congress is going to make any change in the draft law that the Pentagon doesn't want, and I don't think this is an effective focus for mobilizing anti-war sentiment. That is my opinion. I could be wrong. Let those who want to try this tactic try it. But let them do it in their own name.