

The present version is an emergency measure. Cranston's original idea was better, but he had to transform it to get bipartisan support and important sponsors. The compromise is the best thing of its kind in sight, and should receive top priority. And if it reaches the President and he still has his benighted notions about WPA, it should be passed over his veto.

Winter Soldier

The veterans coming home from America's latest war are more complex than the old types, disillusioned, haunted by questioning. Thanks to Sen. George McGovern and Rep. John Conyers, a black Congressman from Detroit, official Washington may soon get to know them in sizable numbers.

One of the new vets is Tim Butz, 23, of Monroe Falls, Ohio. He looks like the typical neighborhood hippie—medium-length hair, mustache, granny glasses—and he hopes that an organization called Vietnam Veterans Against the War will be the “viable alternative to the VFW” that he is seeking.

“I think we have the foundation here for a group that can stop the war,” he said. “America has always identified with Johnny-comes-marching-home. Well, this time he's coming home with the peace sign and love beads and he's probably had dope experience over there. We're not hippie freaks, we're vets. We're America.”

The VVAW was the moving force last week behind a long, somber hearing largely ignored by the national media, and called the Winter Soldier Investigation. For three days, in the improbable setting of a Detroit Howard Johnson motel, more than 100 veterans testified about such excesses of American war as throwing prisoners out of helicopters, cutting off Vietcong ears, impaling decapitated heads along jungle trails, shooting women and children, and making sly and secret incursions into the supposedly neutral ground of Laos.

Only one major network, CBS, touched on the hearings at all, and that briefly. The wire services filed short stories; *The New York Times* sent reporters, but they filed no spot stories. The vets and their followers muttered about a “national news blackout” that they suppose the Nixon Administration engineered. (See “Horror Takes the Stand” by James Higgins, *The Nation*, January 4.)

The reasons for the meager coverage seem to be three: the Winter Soldier Investigation was pushed by Mark Lane and Jane Fonda, both widely distrusted by the media; many editors think readers and viewers have had a surfeit of horror stories from Vietnam; and many newsmen still seem to think that a young man who looks like a guitarist for Jefferson Airplane is a dubious witness.

The VVAW is still comparatively small: founded in New York in June 1967, by three Army and three Navy veterans, it now has forty-four chapters and claims a mailing list of 5,000. Despite the thin news coverage, the Detroit hearing may have provided the impetus it needs to get the organization rolling.

McGovern and Conyers have called for Congressional investigation of the Winter Soldier charges. Conyers seemed most moved by the atrocity stories, McGovern by sworn testimony from ex-Marines that they had probed

into Laos on search-and-destroy missions as long ago as February 1969. The executive commander of the VVAW, Jan Crumb, 28, of Brooklyn, said at the close of the Detroit Winter Soldier hearings that his group was dispatching eight witnesses to Washington immediately, to be available for whatever comes up.

So the next move is up to Congress. Serious charges by apparently qualified witnesses are available, if the legislators don't mind a little long hair around the witness table.

LEE WINFREY, *Detroit Free Press*

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