

# Antiwar Lawyers Surprised As ABA Unit Listens to Them

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NEW YORK, July 6—A key committee of the American Bar Association listened skeptically — but attentively — today as Rep. Paul McCloskey (R-Calif.) and a band of antiwar lawyers argued that the bar should take a stand on the Vietnam war.

For three hours the ABA's resolutions committee gave a hearing to the lawyers' call for a policy statement on a Vietnam troop pullout, a legal study of presidential war powers and an investigation into war crimes charges.

Committee members, most of them elderly, white-haired and conservative, voiced broad opposition to organized bar involvement in what some considered a political thicket.

This reaction did not surprise the young members of the Lawyers Committee to End the War, but the bar's willingness to listen did surprise them.

The young lawyers complained over the weekend that they have been denied a chance to bring their views to the association's attention. They said they were refused space in the Manhattan convention hotels and had been reduced to using the standard ABA lobbying technique of inviting members to a cocktail party.

But today, leading members of the ABA conceded that some of the issues raised by McCloskey, former U.N. Ambassador Francis T. P. Plimpton and the young lawyers fell, at least technically, within the competence and objectives of the 150,000-member bar organization.

And committee member Robert W. Meserve of Boston, who is slated for the ABA presidency a year from now, rejected a late-afternoon suggestion that he had more pressing bar business.

"I have nothing more impor-

"politically hot" that Presidents often appoint expert commissions, McCloskey added.

Plimpton said the Association of the Bar of the City of New York, of which he was president last year, specifically endorsed an end-of-the-war resolution calling for maximum feasible speed in troop pullouts and rejection of President Nixon's phased withdrawal approach.

Chairman Henry L. Woolfenden of Birmingham, Mich., said the resolutions committee would announce Wednesday whether to recommend action by the ABA assembly at the closing business session of the bar's 94th annual convention. Approval by the assembly, made up of the convention's 5,000 registered lawyers, is the only way the antiwar group can get any of its resolutions before the bar's 297-member House of Delegates.

Meanwhile, the delegates approved a study of the consequences of a move in several states to demand a constitutional convention that would propose an amendment requiring federal-state revenue sharing.

Many constitutional scholars fear that such a convention would be an open invitation to wholesale restructuring of government and scrapping portions of the Bill of Rights.

Rep. Wilbur D. Mills (D-Ark.), the man whose stance against revenue sharing has helped give impetus to the constitutional amendment drive, was the principal speaker at the annual ABA dinner at the New York Hilton. Mills, a friend of outgoing ABA President Edward L. Wright of Little Rock, spoke on the need to increase federal outlays for improved law enforcement.

tant than this," said Meserve, adding that he was prepared to spend all the time needed to air the matter.

McCloskey, an honor graduate of Stanford Law School, rejected committee members' contentions that the bar had no business telling the President or Congress about the war. He said the nation's political branches were paralyzed by past involvements in Asia and needed the kind of expert legal advice the ABA could provide.

Recent history shows that it is just when issues get too