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134 Wall Street Lawyers Criticize Behavior of Judge Hoffman

By LINDA CHARLTON

A group of 134 young lawyers from Wall Street firms have signed a petition asking for an investigation and possible censure and removal of Federal Judge Julius J. Hoffman, who conducted the Chicago 7 conspiracy trial. The petition, according to Howard C. Buschma, a 26-year-old lawyer who drew it up and initiated its circulation, was sent to the Judicial Conference of the United States.

The Judicial Council of the Courts of the United States for the Seventh Circuit, which includes Illinois and the New York City, New York State and American Bar Associations, Mr. Buschman said the signers were mostly "younger lawyers" who signed as individuals and not as representatives of their law firms. They described themselves as "members of the legal profession in New York City dismayed by the conduct" of Judge Hoffman at the trial.

They called upon the legal community "to make known its abhorrence and condemnation of Judge Hoffman's overt prejudice, intimidation of counsel and repeated abuse of the processes of justice."

The petition asked the Judicial Conference "to investigate and consider the censure and condemnation of the misconduct of Judge Hoffman and his abuse of judicial discretion, and asked the Judicial Council to "exercise its supervisory authority and to initiate appropriate proceedings to consider the censure, suspension and removal" of the judge.

The petition added: "The wrongs committed at this trial cannot be rectified by appellate review. Even if the defendants had been acquitted, or if a new trial should be ordered, the wrongs of prejudice and intimidation suffered in the judicial process itself. While we may not condone entirely the conduct of all the defendants, we believe that we must register our shame at the court's conduct of fair proceedings."

Mr. Buschman said that only such action, directed not at the outcome of the trial but at the "nature of the proceedings," could restore the "tremendous confidence in the Federal courts" that had been "shaken by the Chicago trial."

The 4½-month-long trial ended in February, when the jury found five of the seven defendants guilty of crossing state lines to promote disorders, acquitted two of them on all counts and acquitted all seven of the conspiracy charges. While the jury was still out, Judge Hoffman sentenced all the defendants and two defense attorneys to varying terms for contempt of court. They are free in bail pending appeal.