

# Professor wants to confront machine

By Roy Larson

"How can a man under surveillance confront his accuser when his accuser is a machine?"

That's the question bothering Prof. Laud Humphreys these days.

It's an intensely personal, not academic question. Mr. Humphreys, 40, is an Episcopal priest and professor of criminal justice at the State University of New York in Albany. He formerly taught sociology on the Edwardsville campus of Southern Illinois University.

Last December, in a District Court in Springfield, Ill., Mr. Humphreys pleaded guilty to a charge of destroying government property — ripping up a President Nixon poster and a draft board memo. He was

sentenced to one year's imprisonment in a federal penitentiary (eight months of the sentence was suspended), and placed on probation for three years. While his appeal is pending in the U.S. 7th Circuit Court of Appeals, Mr. Humphreys is free under a \$30,000 bond.

The charge goes back to the student uprisings on the Edwardsville campus last May after the United States entered Cambodia and National Guardsmen shot and killed four students at Kent State University, in Ohio.

This is how Mr. Humphreys recalls the events leading up to his arrest, sentencing and "continuing surveillance" by federal officials:

"On May 5, about 1,800 SIU students gathered on the campus. Administrators were

attempting to engage in dialog with the students. The students were angry and began talking about 'trashing' the administration building.

"At this point I grabbed the microphone and said: 'Don't do that. Let's take our gripes to the right places — to the courthouse and the draft board.'

"For one thing, I thought this would disperse the crowd — and it did. Only about 100 students went into town, and the others scattered.

"In the draft board office, some of the students began talking about burning the draft files. They started yelling, 'Do it, do it.' I thought some cathartic act was needed to release the tensions.

"I grabbed and tore up a mimeographed memo saying that the draft quotas were being increased. Then, I ripped from the wall a 50-cent picture of Nixon and smashed it over a chair. I distributed the pieces of the picture to the students.

"Shortly afterward, I said, 'Now, let's clear out and go home.' The students did, and the immediate threat of violence was over.

"The next night, vigilante activities started up. Flares were thrown on the lawn of our home, and some shots were fired. After my wife and I received 50 or more threatening phone calls, I got the family out of town.



LAUD HUMPHREYS

"On May 7 I was arrested by the FBI. As I was being taken to Alton, Ill., by FBI agents, I was amazed to discover that the agents knew a great deal about my academic research. . . . My doctoral dissertation, which later was published as a book, was based on my observations of homosexual behavior in public restrooms.

"Apparently, my arrest activated my whole dossier.

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"Over the years I have been involved in all kinds of activities that are offensive to the leaders of government social-control agencies. I had been active in civil rights, in the peace movement, and in trying to protect the rights of those in the Gay Liberation movement.

"During my trial, I was told that the charges would not be dropped because J. Edgar Hoover (the director of the FBI) had informed the court that he had a personal interest in the case.

"As it turned out, an agreement was reached that a felony charge against me would be dropped if I would plead guilty to the misdemeanor. And that's what we did."

During the last several months, Mr. Humphreys has spent a lot of time reflecting on what had happened.

Two trends, he believes, are on a collision course in American society, and he thinks he is caught at the point where they will meet.

On the one hand, he sees a "freeing up" of the nation's social mores. As the mass media make people aware of many

life styles, Mr. Humphreys says, it is no longer possible to maintain a standard pattern of living.

Countering that trend, he believes, is the "noticeable tightening up of the nation's social-control agencies — increased surveillance, the piling up of discrediting data on individuals and groups."

President Nixon, FBI Director Hoover and others, he is convinced, are trying to use the social-control agencies to revise social mores.

Professionally, Mr. Humphreys says, he is hemmed in as a result of his sentencing and probation.

What angers him the most is that he doesn't know what is in his government dossier.

"How can you disprove a charge," he asks, "when you have no way of knowing what accusations have been made?"

"How can you confront your accuser when your accuser is a machine?"

"If we don't get legislation enabling a person to have access to his own file, we won't be leading up to George Orwell's 1984 anymore; it'll be here."