

Acquittals

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Editor — The acquittal of the eight Vietnam war veterans in Gainesville, Fla., adds one more to the list of cases brought by the U.S. against anti-war and other activists — and lost by the prosecution. Last May it was Daniel Ellsberg and Anthony Russo, accused of endangering national security. Before that it was the Camden 12, tried for destroying draft records; Tom Oliphant, a Boston Globe reporter who accompanied a mercy mission to Wounded Knee; Leslie Whitten, a member of Jack Anderson's staff who reported on the occupation of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; Father Philip Berrigan and six others accused of plotting to kidnap Henry Kissinger; Leslie Bacon, charged with involvement in the bombing of a restroom in the capitol; and, in May of 1971, 12,000 young people who were swept off the streets of Washington, D.C., during a peace demonstration, jailed for several days and later freed by the courts.

In many of these cases defendants have suffered imprisonment before trial and crippling financial burdens before they could be freed. The acquittals mean that citizens who serve on juries still have a sense of justice. But it is clear that for the past three years the judicial system in this country has been used, not to administer justice, but to harass and silence political dissenters. This is precisely the function of the court in a police state.

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