

Quakers Pursue Vietnam Relief Efforts

By Janis Johnson

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The American Friends Service Committee announced here yesterday it will defy the U.S. government and proceed to purchase and ship humanitarian aid to North and South Vietnam.

The Quaker group said that on July 18 the Treasury Department denied it some of the required licenses for the proposed aid for the first time since it began relief and rehabilitation work with Vietnamese civilians in 1966.

Wallace T. Collett, chairman of the Philadelphia based Friends board, said he and other officers are prepared to go to jail and pay fines for any violation of government policy.

"Because of the significant responsibility of the United States in the unprecedented destruction of Indochina, now that the war is over, we have a

profound moral obligation to provide our share of reconstruction aid," he said in a press conference.

"To my knowledge, it is the first time the AFSC has disregarded government policy and law to side with religions, moral and humanitarian bases for its decisions," Collett said.

The Friends organization has provided over \$2.3 million in humanitarian aid to North and South Vietnam, following a tradition it established after World War I in Europe.

In 1947, the committee was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize jointly with the Friends Service Council of London in recognition of relief activities after World War II.

The AFSC applied in March and May for licenses to ship \$900,000 worth of medical supplies, food, school, agricultural and fishing equipment, a workshop to repair hospital instrument, and machines for

mechanical cooperative workshops.

The Treasury Department approved licenses for \$575,000 in food and medical supplies in South Vietnam and school equipment in Hanoi, but denied the other licenses as "not consistent with the present policy of this government with respect to North Vietnam."

Collett said that in 1973 the Quaker group was licensed to send \$100,000 worth of fish nets and agricultural equipment to the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam for programs similar to those now being denied.

Collett also charged that the United States seemed to be "hardening" toward humanitarian aid to Vietnam.

On June 24, the Internal Revenue Service denied tax deductibility for contributions to the Cambridge-based Bach Mai Hospital Emergency Re-

lief Fund established to help rebuild a Hanoi hospital but later the IRS reversed itself.

Stanley L. Sommerfield, director of the Treasury Department's Foreign Assets Control Division, said federal law prohibits a non-governmental group from sending goods to Vietnam without a license. The Treasury Department's policy has allowed humanitarian, but not economic aid, to be sent, he said.

Sommerfield said the licenses denied to the Friends were not for "humanitarian" items but for items he considers "economic"—such as lathes, fish net materials and machines for making wood screws.

"It is true that in 1973 someone—who is no longer in this office—approved items like diesel tillers and hand tractors for the Friends, but I would consider these also closer to economic aid," he said.