

The Dangers Of Dissent In Pentagon

By Cal McCrystal
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A civilian employee of the joint chiefs of staff in Washington sent this postcard to his boss: "Add another notch to your gun handle. My brother killed in Khe Sanh."

The Defense Department reacted quickly, as it does to any sign of dissent within its ranks.

It sent the man, who is the father of three children, to a psychiatrist. He was told that refusal to submit to examination would mean loss of his job.

It is now a fact of life that any civil servant in the Defense Department who criticizes U.S. policy in Vietnam — or elsewhere, for that matter — stands to lose not only his job but a reasonable chance of getting another one.

REPORT

First of all he must be examined by a psychiatrist on whose report the patient's supervisor will determine his fitness for duty. If he is fit, it means he no longer disagrees with U.S. policy. If he isn't fit, then he must leave. And on his record permanently is the fact that he received psychiatric treatment, as a result of which he was declared unfit for duty.

In the case just quoted, the victim went to a psychiatrist who refused to cooperate fully with the Defense Department. The psychiatrist said that medical records were something which should not be seen by anyone except the doctor and patient. He was prepared only to give a ver-

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dict on the fit for duty question.

The trouble about this is that a psychiatrist does not get paid if he does not reveal all the information requested by the Defense Department.

BROTHER

The man whose brother was killed in Vietnam was allowed to resume his duties only because the case came to the attention of Senator Samuel Ervin (Dem.-N.C.), chairman of the Senate's Constitutional Rights Subcommittee. Ervin delivered a wrathful letter to Defense Secretary Clark Clifford, who decided to investigate.

However, as recently as Thursday, a young girl made a tearful visit to the office of the constitutional rights subcommittee and her story did not indicate that the Defense Department had radically revised its policy.

She is 22 years old and was employed by the defense department to inspect the quality of film material. She was due for promotion.

PROMOTION

To obtain that promotion, she submitted to a 2½-hour

interview followed by a lie detector test. Every intimate detail of her sex life was checked. The truth came out: she had, for a time, lived with a man to whom she was not married. Her superiors showed her affidavits sworn by her apartment neighbors. One neighbor testified to seeing a man opening the girl's apartment door with a key.

As a result of the interview, she lost her security clearance because, they said, she was immoral. This, they told her, would be on her record for 100 years. Promotion was out of the question.

COMPLAINTS

Many complaints, similar to and worse than these, have been received by the constitutional rights subcommittee.

Last year, Senator Ervin introduced a bill designed to protect civil servants from invasion of privacy. The Senate passed the bill by 90 votes to four — the four being also on the CIA watchdog committee. The bill went over to the House of Representatives where it has lain untouched, since last September.