

DEFENSE BULLETIN

During the International Women's Year Conference in Houston last November, the FBI arrested Judith Bissell, Leslie Mullin, Michael Justesen, Marc Perry, and a PFOC leader, Clayton Van Lydegraf, on conspiracy charges. The busts were the result of a years-long government campaign to infiltrate and disrupt revolutionary anti-imperialist political activities. The escalating attacks on oppressed nation people, particularly on national liberation leaders and P.O.W.'s, is the context for the bust of these white anti-imperialists. Since the busts, the FBI and legal system have continued a series of legal, physical, and media attacks on the five comrades and their politics.

Since their arrests and in subsequent hearings, the five defendants have fought for their legal rights based on a strategy of defending anti-imperialist politics, to counter the state's efforts to portray them as criminals. In court appearances and written documents, the comrades have exposed the counter-revolutionary legal system as a state tool for smashing national liberation and women's liberation.

Free the Five Comrades!

Supporters on the outside have begun to respond by building support for the comrades and their politics, beginning with the first court appearance in Houston, when women attending the IWY conference packed the courtroom to oppose the frame-up arrests.

The two women, Judith and Leslie, and Van were removed to Los Angeles, where the other two men were being held. Federal charges have been dropped for the moment, because of a speedy trial requirement, although they could be reinstated at any time. All five are being held on California state charges, kept in prison by extremely high bails.

The five defendants have been representing themselves, and on January 3rd the state was forced to grant full and meaningful pro per rights (to self-representation) to all five comrades, including the right to obtain co-counsel from attorneys. Judith Bissell and Leslie Mullin led a struggle on behalf of the five defendants against the overt male supremacy of the judicial system, which has denied all women the right to effective self-representation by withholding access to legal materials and books. As a result of this struggle, the state is being forced to provide a law library at Sybil Brand Institute (SBI, the L.A. County women's jail). This is a victory for all women, especially for women prisoners.

The ability of the five to fight collectively and with the leadership of the women was also strengthened by winning court orders that grant weekly collective meetings, additional meetings on days of court appearances, three phone conferences a week between the women and men, and the prompt receipt of legal materials for the women while the SBI law library is being built.

Fight Attacks on National and Women's Liberation!

The five defendants also won a four week suspension of court proceedings which will allow them to prepare their legal defense. This stay was won despite tremendous pressure from the prosecution, which attempted to force the hearing to the earliest date possible in order to undercut the pro per rights that had just been won.

The issue of bail has also been the subject of much struggle. Currently bail for Judith is \$750,000 and for Marc, Michael, Leslie and Van is \$500,000 each. In mid-December the women presented a strong argument for bail reduction for all five defendants, exposing the white and male supremacist use of bail by the courts. The women contrasted their case to that of Whitten and White, where "the defendants were two admitted white supremacists charged with 11 counts of assault with a deadly weapon and conspiracy to assault with a deadly weapon, all in shootings of 11 unarmed Black people. After pleading guilty, these racist killers were immediately released on five years probation." They also cited the case of Chester Cathay, "a man with two prior convictions for assault with a deadly weapon, who was arrested for attempted murder of his wife and bound over to Superior Court to stand trial. He was then released on bail of only \$2500". There is a sharp contrast between the court's handling of murderous assault on Black people and women and the sky-high ransom and forced incarceration of the five comrades, who are accused by agents and informers of thinking about breaking the law.

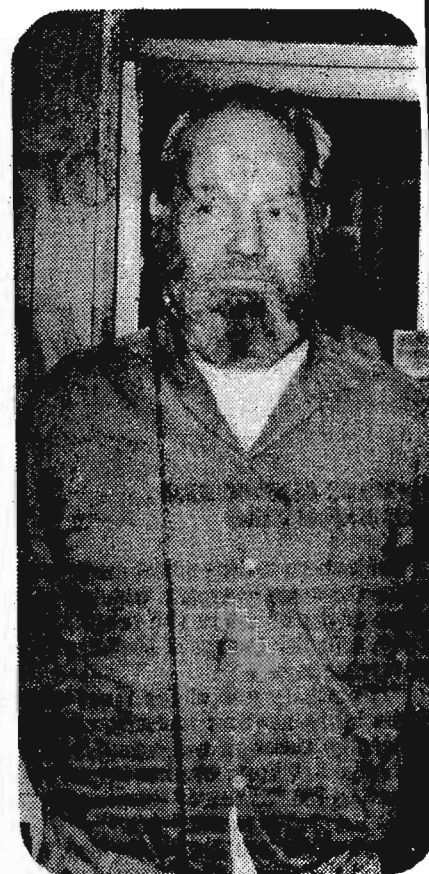
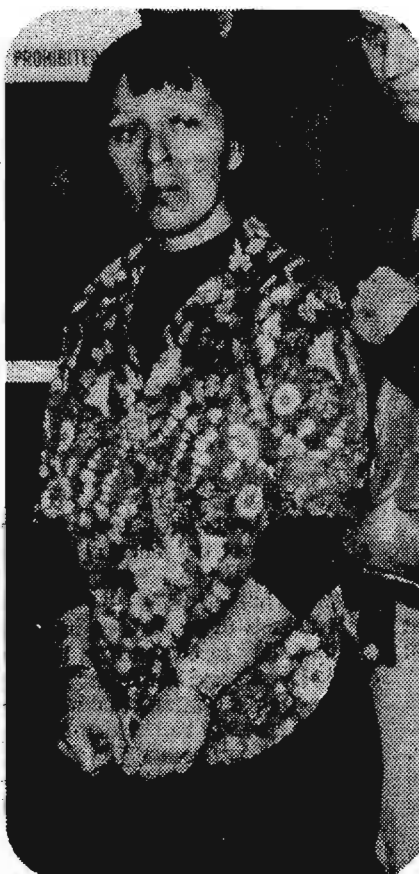
The women also contested the state's argument that high bail was necessary to prevent flight risk. "We are absolutely committed to appear in court to fight these charges. We intend to appear in court, Judge, because we see the charges against us as an attack on revolutionary principles and peoples with whom we are in solidarity. We see the purpose of these charges as intimidation, to frighten those who would commit themselves to Black liberation, Native American sovereignty, Puerto Rican independence, Chicano/Mexicano self-determination, women's and gay liberation, and the world wide struggle against US imperialism.

"We will appear in court to expose that those who prosecute us, the government and FBI, are the people and institutions responsible for the murder and genocide of peoples of color from My Lai to Wounded Knee. We will appear because we wish to show that they have historically encouraged, justified and enforced the enslavement of the Black nation, lynching, Attica and San Quentin. They are the people who stole the land this court sits upon from Native American and Mexicano peoples. We will appear because we want to expose that that US government is directly responsible for the degradation and mutilation of millions of women, particularly women of color thru forced sterilization, hunger and rape.

"We will appear to show that the government and FBI are responsible for COINTELPRO, the deliberate infiltration, and sabotage of progressive and revolutionary organizations of oppressed nations, and anti-imperialist struggles. This is the counter-revolutionary strategy of which these charges are a part.

"We will appear because we charge that the US government and FBI are the real criminals; those who resist US imperialism are not. Therefore as revolutionaries we are uncompromisingly committed to appear in court to expose the white and male supremacist strategy of the state and the FBI's role in it."

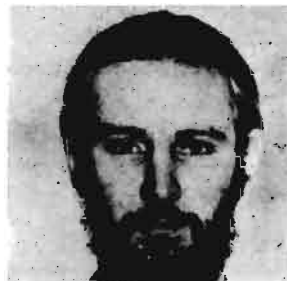
A further hearing on the defendants' demand to be released on their own recognizance (without bail) or on low bail is scheduled for February 3rd. At this same hearing, the comrades will make discovery motions to force the state to bring forth all the evidence on which it is basing its case. While



The photographs above from the Houston Post show Leslie Mullin (left), Judith Bissell (center) and Clayton Van Lydegraf being taken to jail by the FBI after their arrest in Houston at the IWY conference. The comrades pictured below, Michael Justesen and Marc Perry, were arrested in Los Angeles by the FBI at the same time.



Michael Justesen



Marc Curtis Perry

the state has already disclosed a 224 page document purporting to substantiate the charges, the prosecution has so far withheld a 750 page FBI report which the government claims supports the charges against the five. A preliminary hearing is scheduled on February 27th, which will determine whether the state has a sufficient case to warrant holding a trial on the charges.

Meanwhile, the state is seeking to try the case in the media. The FBI version of the arrests was in the papers even before charges had been brought. FBI lies and misinformation, including false claims of criminal charges against another PFOC leader, and lurid accounts praising the heroism of FBI undercover pigs, have appeared in Time, the NY Times, and in a syndicated L.A. Times article which "leaked" the FBI's case.

In portraying these comrades as criminals and terrorists, the state continues to lay a basis for attacks on the primary target - oppressed nation leaders and POW's. The charges of "terrorism" and "conspiracy" have always been used to justify the state's assassination and torture of national liberation fighters.

The government's classification of the five comrades as "high security" prisoners is an attempt to justify isolating them from the general jail population and from outside support. For the men this means frequent handcuffing, rough handling and jail transfers. At one point Van was held for a protracted incommunicado period of 24-hour-a-day lockdown. The women have been subjected to illegal searches of their law materials, sudden removal from their cells at night, denial of access to exercise or the day room, and the prohibition of communication with other women prisoners, in an attempt to prevent solidarity among women prisoners from developing. In an effort to intimidate supporters, the women's visitors are fingerprinted and photographed upon a first visit. Visitors are given a thorough pat-down and/or metal detector search on every visit. Visits for all five comrades and the other prisoners in these jails are only 20 minutes, over the phone through a glass partition.

However, efforts are being made to combat this isolation. People are visiting, writing, and attending court appearances. Oppressed nation revolutionaries have responded to the bust with militant solidarity and politically leading analysis of how these busts fit into imperialism's strategy for attacking national liberation. On December 19, 1977 in San Francisco, 200 people attended a public forum on fighting the state's attacks on national liberation and women's liberation sponsored by PFOC. The main contents of one speech are contained in PFOC's public statement on the arrests (attached). A second speech exposed the history of opportunism on armed struggle within the white left. A speaker from the African People's Socialist Party denounced the continuing COINTELPRO attacks on the Black Liberation Movement.

There are several specific things you can do to express solidarity in this struggle. Financial contributions to the defense effort are urgently needed. The information contained in this bulletin should be shared and reprinted. Writing letters to the five comrades is an important way to combat the state's attempt to isolate and weaken them.

We hope that this bulletin and future materials on this case will help build a broad movement in support of these five comrades and of all political prisoners and prisoners of war.

For more information, please contact:

P.F.O.C.
P.O. Box 42
Altadena Ca.91001

The five imprisoned comrades can receive mail; write to them at:
Clayton Van Lydegraf, No. 4614177, P.O. Box 54320, Los Angeles CA 90054
Michael Justesen, No. 4605786, P.O. Box 54320, Los Angeles CA 90054
Marc Perry, No. 4605785, P.O. Box 54320, Los Angeles CA 90054
Leslie Mullin (Grace Fortmer), No. 4610250, P.O. Box 54320, L.A. CA 90054
Judith Bissell, No. 4610251, P.O. Box 54320, Los Angeles CA 90054

- Donations to the defense fund may be sent to
Prairie Fire Organizing Committee
P.O. Box 40614 Station C,
San Francisco CA 94110