

PROF. FRANKLIN'S POLITICAL TRIAL INTENSIFIES

Stanford University's shaky effort to fire Bruce Franklin, member of the central committee of Venceremos and Associate Professor of English, is shattering in the face of the "People's Offense." Stanford President Richard Lyman is trying to fire Franklin for his political activities on and off the campus.

The Stanford administration has ended its side of the case in a hearing before the faculty Advisory Board, seven professors elected by the faculty to judge the case. Bruce is leading the presentation of the defense, which has been renamed the People's Offense.

The People's Offense began with a noon rally at Stanford's White Plaza on Oct. 11. After the rally, 200 people marched to hearing room and jammed in with red flags and banners. When the members of the Board were afraid to show up, the people took their places. In a spontaneous guerilla theater presentation, they showed how the Board is really doing the dirty work of the Stanford Trustees.

Most of the trustees run corporations which are in to electronic warfare, aerospace, banking and oil. Bruce's anti-war activities directly threaten their interests, and that is why they have been trying to get rid of him. The people really dug the show, but they left after 45 minutes, because they knew that Bruce's defense would hurt Stanford much more than disrupting the hearing.

Bruce then picked up on the offense and moved for dismissal of the charges. After the long and rather complicated argument, a reporter for the Stanford Daily said that he had talked to a lot of people in the hearing room and couldn't find anyone who thought that the administration had a case. But the Advisory Board was not impressed, and they did not drop the charges.

Franklin faces four charges: disrupting a speech of Henry Cabot Lodge (U.S. Ambassador to South Vietnam, 1963-4 and 1965-7), inciting the occupation of the Stanford Computation Center during the invasion of Laos last February, resisting a police order to disperse after the Computation Center was cleared by the police, and inciting violence that night.

The defense began with the Lodge incident. Testimony was taken from 20 witnesses with widely differing political positions, from apolitical to revolutionary. Some of them knew that Lodge was a war criminal, and they were supporting their Vietnamese brothers and sisters by visibly demonstrating their opposition to the pig who was responsible for the major escalation of the Indochina War. Others did not agree with the heckling at all and thought that Lodge should have been allowed to speak.

But all the witnesses agreed that Bruce only called out comments two or three times, that he did not stomp, chant or clap. Taking the stand himself, Bruce explained that this was a political decision. He knew that the administration was looking for an excuse to fire him, and he did not want to give them that chance, even though he also wanted to attack Lodge.

Franklin said that this will be the strategy for the rest of the People's Offense, the defense against the remaining three charges. He will demonstrate that Stanford is in fact a tool of U.S. imperialism. He will show that the police occupation of Stanford is similar to the police occupation of ghettos and barrios, even though it is not nearly so serious. He will also prove that the remaining charges are factually false.

The hearing will probably last another 3-4 weeks.