

ACLUVa NEWS

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF VIRGINIA / 1205 West Main Street / Richmond, Virginia 23220 / 703-355-3021

Philip J. Hirschkop
Chairman

Robert P. Dvoskin
Legal Panel Chairman

T. Burwell Robinson, Jr.
Executive Director

Press Release #72-10
For Release: Friday, April 21, 1972

The ACLU of Virginia today released a report in connection with the organization's Mental Health Project. The report is the result of a three month investigation by ACLU cooperating attorneys, psychiatrists, and other member-volunteers.

In the State of Virginia defendants suspected of being incompetent to stand trial and charged with crimes are committed to Southwestern State or Central State Hospital for observation. If he is not competent to stand trial, he remains in the hospital until he is competent with no periodic reviews required by the Statutes of Virginia. These criminal commitment procedures are, in effect, the same as imprisonment without trial.

As the ACLU report substantiates, these procedures often condemn a person to indefinite commitment, whose mental state may be such that, had he been an ordinary patient, he might have been released or paroled to his home or private hospital.

The ACLU of Virginia's emphasis at the present level of the investigation is liberating those people being held more than one year without trial. The Union has succeeded in getting criminal charges against the people incarcerated dropped so they can be transferred to the civil side of the State Mental Hospital, where they are eligible for release or parole.

ACLUVa NEWS

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION OF VIRGINIA / 1205 West Main Street / Richmond, Virginia 23220 / 703-355-3021

Philip J. Hirschkop
Chairman

Robert P. Dwoskin
Legal Panel Chairman

T. Burwell Robinson, Jr.
Executive Director

Executive Director of the Virginia ACLU, Shalom Barron, says of the Project:

"Our efforts to expose and alleviate the injustices and abuses in the State's treatment of citizens incarcerated in mental hospitals will continue in both the courts and the legislature. These people are entitled to due process and equal protection under the law. The ACLU intends to insure that they are not denied their basic rights and are not forgotten by the State of Virginia."

Copy of the report enclosed for your information.

For further information please contact: Shalom Barron 355-3021