Abe Fortas to speak at UM January 29

University of Montana--Missoula. Office of University Relations
MISSOULA--

The Honorable Abe Fortas, ex-Justice of the Supreme Court, will speak at the University of Montana Jan. 29.

Fortas will speak at 8:15 p.m. in the University Center (UC) Ballroom. His lecture, entitled "Civil Disobedience," is sponsored by the Program Council of the Associated Students at UM. The lecture is open to the public without charge.

Fortas resigned May 14, 1969, from the Supreme Court under mounting criticism from Congress for his connection with the Wolfson Family Foundation. The foundation had offered Fortas $20,000 for his services as a research consultant. After Wolfson had been indicted for violating the securities laws, Fortas returned the fee. The connection between Fortas and the Foundation was disclosed by Life Magazine.

While on the bench Fortas generally followed the liberal position of the Warren Court on issues pertaining to civil rights, school segregation and treatment of suspected criminals.

This is Fortas's basic judicial philosophy according to Fred Rodell, author of "Nine Men," a history of the Supreme Court--"The courts may be the principal guardians of the liberties of the people. They are not the chief administrators of its economic destiny."

Following lecture visits to college campuses in 1968, Fortas wrote "Concerning Dissent and Civil Disobedience," a 64-page booklet.

In the publication, Fortas states that there is a moral right to protest by violating the law when the law is unjust and unconstitutional. But he argues, "Violence must not be tolerated.....Rioters should be arrested, tried, and convicted."

On the war in Viet Nam, Fortas contends, "The state cannot acknowledge an individual's right to veto its decision that a particular war is right and necessary."

After graduation from the Yale Law School, Fortas taught for four years there. In 1939, at age 29, he became the general counsel of the Public Works Administration. He was Under Secretary of the Interior when he left the government in 1946 to help form the law firm of Arnold, Fortas & Porter. In 1965 Fortas left his private law practice when he was appointed to the Supreme Court by President Johnson.