

Statement of Michigan Committee Against Repression (Michigan CAR)

We come together as a coalition of blacks, browns, and whites of diverse occupations, political loyalties, economic and social backgrounds, and religious traditions.

We come together in the name of freedom and democracy to preserve an imperfect democratic form so that we and our heirs can perfect it.

We are united in our determination to resist the erosion of our liberties by the repressive, anti-democratic forces in our society.

We see this as a dangerous time in American history. Beginning with the vast military effort which was World War II, we have allowed the military-industrial establishment in our country to grow large and powerful. Behind the mask of anti-communism, our nation interferes in the internal affairs of many countries, destroying governments of the people and encouraging reactionary dictatorships. Here at home our nation is still doing for our minorities only what it is forced to do by the fear of disruption, while lavish military expenditures increase inflation--a concealed national theft from those least able to survive it. Increasing numbers of our youth, our minorities, and our poor as well as substantial sections of our middle class, are alienated by the failure of American society to live up to stated American goals, and our hypocrisy is open for all the world to see.

So it is not surprising that a national administration politically unable to solve the problems which lead to alienation and hostility, now yields to the temptation to focus blame on what it calls "revolutionaries" and "advocates of violence." There can no longer be any doubt that the federal government is making a systematic and aggressive effort to stamp out the Black Panthers by harassment, by illegal raids, by police murders--and also by forcing the news media to reveal confidential material to law enforcement agencies. Student activists, black and

white, are being widely harassed. Trade unions, which have long experienced strike-breaking and other repressive tactics by police and government, find that things have not changed. They are the same today as in the past.

In the effort to annihilate the Black Panthers we recognize that the real target is the black community, now demanding the rights which other Americans have long taken for granted. We also recognize that, behind the black community, another community is also a target--that growing company of dissenters who see the nation they love being twisted in its purposes and distorted in its goals by the drive for power and profit.

In these disturbing developments, we see government losing its credibility for many citizens. Police agencies which are used for repression are no longer seen as protecting all citizens, as witnessed by incidents at Kent State, Augusta, Georgia, Jackson State College, and here in Michigan. Courts used as public forums to discredit the radical and the dissenter, no longer command public respect.

But even more serious is the fact that in the creeping erosion of civil liberties and ordinary human rights, the civil protections of all of us are threatened. The lines of German Pastor Martin Niemoller are eloquent on this point:

In Germany, they first came for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't a
Communist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak
up because I wasn't a Jew.

Then they came for the trade unionists,
and I
didn't speak up because I wasn't a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Catholics,
and I didn't speak up because I was a Protestant.

Then they came after me - and by that time
no one was left to speak up.

We intend to fight, not a vague and shadowy giant called "repression," but rather repressive acts wherever found--in police systems, in the courts, among citizen vigilantes, and in the mass communications media. We intend to bring important facts to the public, so that no citizen who cares for freedom can miss the warning. We are resolved to expose the destroyers of American democracy and personal freedom before our society reaches the point of no return.

May 16, 1970