



LABOR
DEFENSE
COALITION

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PRESS STATEMENT

On January 2, 1972, at approximately 2:30 a.m. Detroit police officer Michael Reggis shot and killed Charles Smith, an 18 year old unarmed youth who was trying to protect his mother from an assault by Reggis. The assault began after a minor traffic incident. This is the most recent in a continuing series of encounters between law-breaking law enforcement officers and innocent unarmed citizens.

By way of example we have the Algiers Motel murders of Carl Cooper, Aubrey Pollard and Fred Temple; the killings of Alphonso Smith, Chucky Howell and Charles Calloway; the dozen Stress killings, including those of Clarence Manning, Ricardo Buck and Craig Mitchell; the slaying of Edward Ritz; and on January 2, 1972 the murder of Charles Smith. Despite these many police killings not one officer has been brought to Court and convicted.

The Labor Defense Coalition in conjunction with concerned citizens, among them being eyewitnesses to this most recent murder, have called this press conference in order to further expose this systematic and accelerating pattern of police atrocity.

The Labor Defense Coalition is an organization that has fought injustice throughout the criminal system ranging from the lawless acts of police to corrupt courts and barbaric jails.

The Labor Defense Coalition is composed of the Black Workers Congress, the Motor City Labor League and members of the National Lawyers Guild.

In a few moments eyewitnesses to the January 2, 1972 murder of Charles Smith will tell what really happened in those early morning hours on Fulton Street. Now, 56 hours later, Michael Reggis is still at liberty. He is not in the Wayne County Jail charged with murder. But this is not unusual because as we have previously indicated Mayor Roman Gribbs, Wayne County Prosecutor William L. Cahalan and Detroit Police Commissioner John Nichols have consistently acted in such a way as to sanction and condone the needless taking of the lives of innocent citizens both black and white by lawless law enforcement officers.

The attitude taken by the Mayor, the Wayne County Prosecutor and the Police Commissioner toward the operation of the controversial Stress Unit over the past year has contributed substantially to the creation of an atmosphere in which police officers feel they are licensed to kill with impunity and need only say "I thought he had a gun."

The Labor Defense Coalition in conjunction with concerned members of this community and on behalf of the Smith family demand:

- 1) That all acts of police brutality and murder of citizens black and white end immediately;

2) that Wayne County Prosecutor William Cahalan resign from office due to the consistent pattern of prosecutorial whitewash in situations where police murder innocent citizens;

3) that a warrant for the criminal offense of murder be issued immediately against Detroit police officer Michael Reggis.