



"If Crockett Goes—Detroit Goes"

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**NEW BETHEL INCIDENT SPARKS SOLIDARITY**

# BLACK UNITED FRONT FORMS IN DETROIT

*Unprecedented Coalition of Black Groups*

*Forms for the Defense and Control of the Black Community*



—Photo by GERALD SIMMONS

Demonstrating an unprecedented solidarity within the Black community, representatives of more than forty (40) Detroit organizations joined with a number of private citizens to announce a concerted drive against police oppression on Tuesday, April 1, 1969.

The group, which has identified itself as the **BLACK UNITED FRONT (BUF)** symbolizes the solidified concern against police action at New Bethel Baptist Church on Saturday night, March 29, 1969.

**DAN ALDRIDGE**, widely known activist, member of the All-African People's Union and of the National Staff of SNCC, was named Acting Chairman by acclamation as more than 200 persons gathered at the Architects Building, Cass at Brainard, Tuesday night.

"We are not involving ourselves now in a discussion about who fired the first shot Saturday night," Aldridge said.

"We are concerned with the inexcusable conduct of a police force who indiscriminately fired into a church and upon defenseless women and children."

"We are also concerned about the

complete disregard of the constitutional rights of Black citizens and the subsequent castigation of Recorder's Court Judge George Crockett by the mass media and the police department. He is a duly elected representative of the people, who acted in accordance with the Constitution and sought to protect the rights of the people."

"We don't intend to stand by and allow continual disregard of citizen's rights as was demonstrated in the inexcusable firing upon women and children in the New Bethel Baptist Church and the willful destruction of property for which Black people have given their life blood to attain."

"This solidarity of Black citizens stems from the indignation at the continued demonstration of racism not only on the part of members of the police department but on the part of the Prosecutor in his attempt to usurp the authority of Judge Crockett."

**THE BLACK COMMUNITY IS GIVING NOTICE THAT IT CANNOT STAND BY AND TOLERATE THIS CONTINUED DISREGARD OF ITS RIGHTS.**

**BLACK UNITED FRONT — Members:**

- ALL AFRICAN PEOPLE'S UNION
- ASSOCIATION OF BLACK STUDENTS, Wayne State University
- ASSOCIATION OF BLACK SOCIAL WORKERS
- ART CENTRE DEVELOPMENT
- INTERNATIONAL AFRO-AMERICAN MUSEUM
- BEREA METHODIST CHURCH
- NEW CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
- BLACK PANTHER PARTY
- CITIZENS FOR COMMUNITY CONTROL OF SCHOOLS
- L.E.S.C.R.O.
- IFCO
- GUARDIANS-BLACK POLICE OFFICERS FOR EQUAL JUSTICE
- DENMARK VESEY SOCIETY
- Office of Congressman Charles C. Diggs
- OUTCRY
- AFRO CLUB—Central High School
- BLACK STUDENT VOICE
- ASHANTI CORPORATION
- SOUTH END
- YOUTH DEVELOPMENT, INC.
- BROTHERS & SISTERS UNITED
- BLACK CONSCIENCE LIBRARY
- SPAIN JUNIOR HIGH AFRO CLUB

- FREDERICK DOUGLAS GUN CLUB
- BLACK CLUB FOR UNITY
- MOORS
- EASTSIDE VOICE OF INDEPENDENT DETROIT (ESVID)
- GHETTO SPEAKS—Newspaper
- LEAGUE OF REVOLUTIONARY BLACK WORKERS
- BLACK TEACHERS WORKSHOP
- NECO
- NORTH WOODWARD INTERFAITH CONCEPT EAST THEATER
- WOLVERINE STUDENT LAWYERS ASSOCIATION
- URBAN DESIGN, INC.
- WEST CENTRAL ORGANIZATION (W.C.O.)
- P.E.P.
- Black Caucus of MCHRD
- EASTSIDE TENANTS UNION
- UNITED BLACK APPEAL
- BLACK STUDENT ASS'N
- NORTHEASTERN HIGH SCHOOL
- BLACK LIBERATORS OF KING HIGH SCHOOL
- STATE REPRESENTATIVE JAMES DEL RIO
- STATE REP. JACKIE VAUGHN
- BLACKS AGAINST RACISM

# THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF THE BLACK UNITED FRONT (BUF)



Dan Aldridge (seated second from the left) delivers the statement of the Black United Front (BUF) at a recent press conference.

GERALD SIMMONS/UOLOZI Photographics

By DAN ALDRIDGE

Acting Co-Ordinator Black United Front

The Black United Front (BUF) is composed of over sixty (60) Detroit Organizations, representing the broadest possible cross-section of the Black community. BUF does not represent or project the (ideological position) or ideology of any particular political tendency within the Black community, but symbolizes our solidified concern against the police action at New Bethel Baptist Church on Saturday night, March 29, 1969, and the subsequent castigation of

Recorder's Court Judge George Crockett.

The members of the front range in ideological perspective from Revolutionary Pan Africanist, to Marxist-Leninist to Black Nationalist, to moderate.

**The purpose of BUF is to form a liason so that we can come together when emergency situations arise in the Black Community. The objective of any united front is to unite all elements of the population, who can be united, against a common enemy for a specific struggle.**

The Black United Front was organized to specifically deal with (1) the failure of police to respect our religious institutions, (2) the failure of police

to respect Black women and Black children, (3) the failure of police to respect our constitutional rights i. e. freedom of assembly, (4) the unanimous racist position taken by Governor William Milliken, Mayor Jerome Cavanagh, Police Commissioner Johannes Spreen and the news media, particularly the Detroit News, and (5) the failure of police to respect Black people's right to seek a solution to our oppression unmolested.

**THE BLACK COMMUNITY IS GIVING NOTICE THAT IT CANNOT STAND BY AND TOLERATE THE CONTINUED DISREGARD OF ITS RIGHTS.**

## STATEMENT OF JUDGE GEORGE C. CROCKETT

By JUDGE GEORGE C. CROCKETT

The distortions of fact and the confusion over this Court's action in the recent events at New Bethel Church compel me to make certain facts clear. I am personally deeply affronted by reports and stories which have clearly and deliberately twisted the truth and the law in this matter.

More serious than any harm to me personally is the profound damage being done to this Court and to our entire community by those who would use this tragic affair to intensify community hostilities which are already so deep and divisive.

The actions taken by me in my capacity as presiding judge, following the New Bethel Church shootings and mass arrests, were legal, proper and moral. Indeed, it is precisely because I followed the law, equally and without partiality, that questions and accusations are being raised. If I were to have reacted otherwise, if I were to

have ignored my judicial and constitutional responsibilities and followed the often accepted practices of condoning long police detentions, of ignoring prisoners' rights to counsel and of delaying the hearing on writs of habeas corpus, possibly the adverse publicity about Judge Crockett may have been averted. But in doing so, justice would have been denied.

I deplore the senseless shooting of the policemen. I also deplore the armed assault on a church, particularly a church occupied by men, women and children, whom we must presume to be innocent until and unless evidence to the contrary is presented. I deplore too, that so many innocent people were rounded up by the police, incarcerated for many hours in violation of their rights as citizens, and that some officials who are sworn to enforce equal justice have complained because I have done so.

Michigan law requires—does not suggest, but requires—that “any judge who willfully and corruptly refuses to con-

sider an application action, or motion for habeas corpus, is guilty of malfeasance in office.”

Moreover, “any justice of the Supreme Court and any judge of a Circuit Court may issue a writ of habeas corpus . . . upon his own motion whenever he learns that any person within his jurisdiction is illegally restrained of his liberty.” By statute, Circuit Court, as used in this rule, includes Recorder's Court.

**Justice last Sunday demanded a prompt judicial examination and processing of the persons arrested. If there was any sound legal basis for their detention, they were detained; otherwise they were entitled to be released and they were released upon reasonable bond.**

Let us review the sequence of events following the shooting of the officers and the storming of the church by police, which occurred some time before midnight Saturday.

At 5 A.M. I was called—not by the police but by Representative Del Rio

and Reverend C.L. Franklin, the Church's pastor, who came to my home and awakened me. As presiding judge of this Court for the day, I went immediately to the police station. I requested a list of the prisoners and was told—about six hours after they were taken into custody—that police didn't know whom they were holding.

I then talked with Commissioner Spreen who agreed to furnish a list. He also agreed to set up a courtroom on the first floor of the police station. I requested that the Prosecutor be called, and Assisatnt Prosecutor Jay Nolan arrived. The press was present. Mr. Nolan, the police and I agreed on the processing of the prisoners. They were to be brought immediately outside the temporary courtroom in groups of 10, beginning with women. But they appeared before me individually and each was interviewed separately by me in open court.

The cases of 39 arrestees were then heard and determined as follows:

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# Statement By Judge Crockett



***“I have condemned the Prosecutor’s action as not only contemptuous, but also as having racial overtones.” — Judge Crockett***

—Photo by GERALD SIMMONS

(Continued from Page 2)

15 Detroit residents were released on \$100 personal bond to reappear at noon.

1 man (the church janitor) was discharged with consent of the Prosecutor.

1 man from Ohio was released on \$100 personal bond and ordered to reappear at noon.

22 persons from out-of-town were remanded to custody until noon.

All persons released on personal bond appeared at noon as directed.

Further hearings were terminated by the entrance of the Wayne County Prosecutor who, in the presence of the Court, issued verbal orders to the police countermanding a court order. The Prosecutor, in the presence of the Court, prevented the police from producing any further arrestees for the hearing.

I have condemned the Prosecutor’s action as not only contemptuous, but also as having racial overtones.

Subsequently, in a letter to presiding Judge Robert E. Demascio dated April 1, I declined to press the formal contempt charge. To pursue the contempt proceeding, I felt, would aggravate the already tense community confrontation.

Moreover, the Prosecutor himself, after the contempt incident, and after the Court reconvened at noon, himself released or requested the release of some 130 arrestees.

It is essential to emphasize that the

vast majority of those released, approximately 130 persons, were released with the Prosecutor’s concurrence. Despite this fact, the press has several times referred to my actions in terms of “unwarranted leniency.” There was no unwarranted leniency.

By noon, the number of prisoners whose disposition was under question had been reduced sharply. Out of approximately 42 persons arrested, only 12 remained to be processed. Two of these prisoners I ordered held without bond because there was evidence to do so. Another I released on \$1,000 bond after his attorney said he would vouch for him.

The other 9 prisoners were those who, police said, had positive nitrate tests. On this question, I hold that such tests are unconstitutional when taken without the presence of counsel or at least upon advice to the prisoner that he is entitled to counsel at this critical step in his interrogation. For me to have held those nine men, without objective evidence and under those circumstances, would have been improper. The police had many hours to identify those nine men. They should know who they are. If those men committed a crime, the police must gather evidence to make a case that will hold up in court. They still can do so if their investigation warrants it.

I am most anxious that criminals be

apprehended, tried and brought to justice. But I will not lend my office to practices which subvert legal processes and deny justice to some because they are poor or black.

I understand, of course, why the hue and cry arose. An angry Prosecutor, lacking police evidence or testimony which might produce a probable suspect, and resentful that ordinary and undemocratic police practices were challenged, chose to divert public attention to Judge Crockett. And some of the media, particularly the Detroit News, picked up that lead and began their campaign to help the police and the Prosecutor’s office continue their efforts to dominate and control the courts and legal processes. The judiciary cannot allow its independence to be threatened in this fashion.

Finally, and regretfully, let me repeat that this whole case does have racial overtones.

Can any of you imagine the Detroit Police invading an all-white church and rounding up everyone in sight to be bussed to a wholesale lockup in a police garage? Can any of you imagine a church group from, let us say, Rosedale Park, being held incommunicado for seven hours, without being allowed to telephone relatives and without their constitutional rights to counsel? Can any of you justify the jailing of 32 women all night long when there was ad-

mittedly not the slightest evidence of their involvement in any crime? Can anyone explain in other than racist terms the shooting by police into a closed and surrounded church?

If the killing had occurred in a white neighborhood, I believe the sequence of events would have been far different. Because a terrible crime was committed, it does not follow that other wrongs be permitted or condoned. Indeed, constitutional safeguards are needed even more urgently in times of tension than in ordinary times.

The best guarantee to avert the kind of social disaster that occurred in Detroit in 1967 is prompt judicial action with strict observance of constitutional rights.

I intend to continue to maintain law and order in my court by dispensing justice equally and fairly, by protecting each individual’s rights, and most importantly, by upholding the independence of the judiciary and the dignity of this court.

If the real dangers to our community are to be uprooted, let the news media and all other forces of truth and justice concentrate on the undelying causes of crime and social disorder as described by the Kerner Commission and as identified by virtually every responsible commentator in America. The causes are steeped in racism . . . racism in our courts, in our jails, in our streets and in our hearts.

# SHOVED INTO CHURCH BY POLICE

## She Was Eyewitness To Night Of Horror

"Even my mother would not believe what I told her had happened."

So spoke a well known black woman who was innocently involved in the police action at New Bethel Church Saturday night. She was arrested and subjected to continued harassment by police.

Her identity is not being revealed at this time, but she will testify as to what happened at any time before any authorized investigative body seeking the facts in the action.

A highly respected wife, mother and working woman, employed as secretary to a top executive in one of the nation's leading industries, she has told of what turned into a night

of horror.

She was waiting in front of the Church with a friend who's husband was attending the meeting. Suddenly, shortly after 11 p.m., she said police seemed to come from nowhere.

*"It was just as the meeting was being dismissed and people were coming out of the church, when from the street, a phalanx of police rushed forward, pushing me and my friend into those people coming out of the church.*

*I found myself crawling under the pews in the church when the shooting began."*

Q. "While you were in front of the church did you hear any shots?"

A. "No, I heard no shots until after I was pushed into the church by the police."

After this, she told of the fright which gripped her after she crawled under the pews of the church.

She told of her arrest, the refusal of the police to hear her explanation and later being crowded into the cell with a number of other women and children, several under five, subjected to abusive remarks from the police.

"It was unbelievable, the horror of it. Judge George Crockett was the only ray of decency throughout the entire proceedings.

Yes, I was an eyewitness. I saw everything, and I am willing to tell what happened."



This black sister, who had her foot broken when a police deliberately stomped on her foot after her arrest, was one of the many black women, several pregnant, and children subjected to all forms of humiliation at 1300 Beaubien Sunday morning. Many feel that even further abuses would have been inflicted if Judge Crockett had not intervened.

—Photo by GERALD SIMMONS

### Statement Regarding Judge Crockett —BAR Associations

Last Sunday morning, following the tragic events at the New Bethel Baptist Church, Judge George W. Crockett, Jr., in the performance of his judicial duties, made determinations and took actions that have subjected him to both commendation and criticism.

The basis of his actions, he says, was to fulfill his constitutional obligations as a Judge to release individuals too long detained by the police, without counsel and in ignorance of their rights. The police, on the other hand, contend that they were entitled to detain some of the individuals pending the completion of normal police procedures. This conflict has raised serious legal and factual issues.

Several years ago, a distinguished Pennsylvania judge made a simple but profound statement. Said he: "In the whole history of law and order, the longest step forward was taken by primitive men when, as if by common consent, the tribe sat down in a circle and allowed one man to speak at a time. An accused who is shouted down has no rights whatsoever."

In this country, we long ago developed a term to describe the ancient custom of allowing one person to speak at a time, of allowing the accused to speak without being shouted down. We call it "due process of law." Due process represents procedural decency and fair-

ness; it came down to us from the Magna Carta through the common law; and it is embedded in the Constitution of this nation. Due process means that an accused is entitled to be faced by his accusers and to have the charges made against him tried in an appropriate tribunal and not in the marketplace, where rumor, hearsay, passion and mass emotion so easily hold sway.

Under Michigan law, there is an appropriate tribunal in which charges of misconduct against any judge may be tried, and of course his judicial decisions may be reviewed in an appellate court. Meanwhile, he is presumed to have acted in good faith and in accordance with the law and his obligations as a judge, and his decision is entitled to be respected. Pending any proceeding to test the conduct of Judge Crockett or his interpretation of the law, we earnestly urge that in the interest of fairness and decency and due process of law, the citizens of this community renew their faith in the judicial process by refraining from conduct that would interfere with the orderly administration of justice.

**WILLIAM T. GOSSETT**  
President

American Bar Association

**GILBERT H. DAVIS**

President

State Bar of Michigan

**MYRON H. WAHLS**

President

Wolverine Bar Association

**ARNOLD W. LUNGERSHAUSEN**

President

Detroit Bar Association

## STATEMENT BY REV. FRANKLIN

We have called this press conference, because we feel along with other leaders of the black community that an incident occurred here outside and inside of this church on this past Saturday night, April 29 of grave significance, which could result in limitable consequences unless we view and deal with this incident objectively, realistically, factually and with great understanding.

Regretfully and unfortunately, this incident to which I refer, involved the slaying of one white police officer, the

wounding of another, the shooting up of this church in the heart of the black community (on Detroit's west side in the district where the 1967 riot began), the wounding of four black attendants of the affair inside the church on Saturday night, the flagrant shooting into the crowd which included approximately 150 persons: men, women and very small children.

The over reaction on the part of the police in carrying out the arrests of approximately 140 persons who obviously could not have all been guilty, the abusive handling of some of the men and women who had lost their shoes in their scrambling to fall on

the floor and get under the benches out of the line of fire, the shooting into the organ and pulpit, the pastor's chair, the shooting into the pastor's office, breaking into the church office and confiscating church records and church money and some of those arrested were made to walk bare of foot in 15 degree weather.

Ladies and gentlemen, we the black community do not think that this kind of police activity makes for good police-community communications in the black community or any community. We submit that the news media has not given the public a true picture of what happened here last Saturday night, but rather a

biased and slanted one which results in giving the white community and the black community a distorted and misleading view of the incident which can only lead to the ever widening gap between blacks and whites and add to the many brutal experiences that the black community has suffered in the past.

We further believe that Judge Crockett acted right morally and judicially in releasing most of the people involved in the arrests because the women and the children are not likely to have participated because they were on the floor under the benches with most of the men and the others who were in the basement.

# Black Police Officers Speak Out

## Statement by the GUARDIANS--Black Police Officers for Equal Justice

On April 3, 1969, the Guardian Organization, "Black Police Officers for Equal Justice," stood magnificently tall and proud as we led the "Black United Front" in a victorious triumphant rally and march in support of the Honorable Judge George C. Crockett of Recorder's Court.

As Guardians we also made it known publicly that black officers will

**"Black officers will no longer close their eyes and ears to abusive use of the law being applied to the black community or any other citizen."**

no longer close their eyes and ears to abusive use of the law being applied to the black community or any other citizen who is confronted by the law in the City of Detroit.

**Let it be recorded and brought to the attention of all members and all other black police officers, to the executive body of city hall and other law agencies throughout this**

**"Guardians -- organized to combat injustice and racist police tactics."**

state, "That the Guardians is an established member of the Black United Front (B. U. F.) organized to combat injustice and racist police tactics."

Henceforth, the black police of the City of Detroit, Wayne County Sheriff Department and other departments throughout the State of Michigan will no longer consider themselves representatives of the mayor of any city, their respective departments, or the government per se, for it has been verbally and visually demonstrated by these offices that their concern lies only with the existing oppressive structure of the system.

**Our ALLEGIANCE is now pledged to the professional enforcement of the Constitution of the United States, the rights of all persons as given under the constitution, the laws of the land and the LIBERATION OF BLACK AMERICANS.**

Finally, the black community of this city has witnessed with their own eyes and have heard with their own ears (as did their brothers and sisters of this country) the establishment admits that the constitution of the United States is not meant for minorities or the poor.

Since the incident at New Bethel Baptist Church, which occurred Saturday evening, March 30, 1969, the City of Detroit stands witness to hearing the mayor of this city condone the beastly actions that the white police officers of his police department administered on helpless women and children inside the church that Saturday evening and their mercenary mutilation of the church itself.

**After remarking and condoning such tactics, he dares on April 3rd address the news media and use the names of Brother Martin Luther King, Jr. and Jesus Christ to tell black people to be calm and give way to the Easter meaning.**

Need we remind the mayor that his problem does not lie with the "Southern Christian Leadership Council." And if need be, also remind him of certain words of Dr. King's, which were and we quote, "There will come a time when nation will rise against nation."

Nevertheless, the Mayor of Detroit does not stand unsupported. We must not fail to recall the dubious attitude displayed by the governor of the state when confronted with the problem of deciding whether or not justice was served.

So obvious are the issues of injustice.

- (1) **Failure of police to respect our religious institutions.**
- (2) **Failure of police to respect black women and black children.**
- (3) **Failure of police to respect our rights to free assembly.**
- (4) **Failure of police to leave their racism home in their vaults.**

Our sympathy lies with the pitiful frightened white community who presently are sitting in their homes trembling over the sudden acceleration of racial tension in this city. We pity you because your hearts cry out for answers to many "whys" for the continuing high tension in Detroit.

**Many of you probe your brains like surgeons in search for an antidote to what appears to be a hidden sickness among the people. The illness appears before you daily in one way or another.**

One of the most influential organizations in this city helps to maintain the high racial tension which

**"One of the most influential organizations . . . helps to maintain the high racial tension which threatens Detroit. This organization -- happens to be the DPOA."**

threatens the safety of your city. This organization, unfortunately, happens to be "THE DETROIT POLICE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION" (D.P.O.A.) a union of white policemen. **Let em-**

**phasis be placed on White policemen.** Let it be understood and retained that this very tight group which has so successfully managed to gain great influential power over this city's

**(The DPOA) -- "does not and has never represented or accepted black officers in its ranks as first class members."**

administration and the police department does not and has never represented or accepted the black police officers in its ranks as first class members. D. P. O. A. has brain-washed the white residents of this city into believing that its first concern is the safety of Detroit. We ask, "how can this possibly hold true with the deplorable, unprofessional conduct which these men have demonstrated so clearly through their disrespect for constitutional justice? When the

**(The DPOA) "promotes and endorses persons and policies such as George Wallace for President and stoner rifles, stop and frisk laws, as methods of riot control (ideal persons and materials to make up a police state)."**

members of D. P. O. A. promote and endorse persons and policies such as George Wallace for president and stoner rifles, stop and frisk laws, as methods of riot control (ideal persons and materials to make up a police state).

These endorsements only agitate the already angry black community.

D. P. O. A. has displayed its fake sincerity many times over in virtual disrespect for black administrators and lawmakers such as, John Conyers, Robert Tindal, George C. Crockett, James Del Rio, and Jackie Vaughn, men who recognize the problems and injustices which oppress the black community.

This fake concern is again polarized when one stops to realize that never has a black police officer served

**"Never has a black police officer served on the planning committee or executive board of DPOA."**

on the planning committee or executive board of D. P. O. A. in order to recommend ways for improvement of police-community relations.

On April 2nd, just three days after the monstrous attack on New Bethel Baptist Church, the D. P. O. A. issued a list of demands for such war like materials as "bullet proof tires, armour plated cars, bullet proof

windshields, etc.," which openly admits that their dogmatic actions may very possibly cause a crisis.

**If only possible, the D. P. O. A. should be forced by concerned politicians and the authorities to produce the results of a secret survey taken which reportedly shows that 46% of the white cops are residing outside the City of Detroit.**

**"46% of the white cops are residing outside the City of Detroit."**

These men have no important interests or stakes within the city's boundaries, therefore, nourishing their disinterest for Detroit and namely the inner-city.

This organization has never once enacted programs or made recommendations to the city in an effort to improve race relations, reduce racial tension or rid oppression to minorities.

**All blacks are seeking a solution to black oppression and we should be allowed to seek that solution unmolested.**

However, it appears that in so long as D. P. O. A. ascertains the strength of persuasion (which is provided by not only policemen but public support) it shall continue to apply klanish views and endorsements which

**(The DPOA) "continues to apply klanish views and endorsements which will magnify anger and increase the possibility of another civil disturbance."**

will only magnify anger and increase the possibility of another civil disturbance.

**With this as fair warning to the president of the Detroit Police Officers Association, we state that you are faced this day even more seriously than before with a separation movement by black officers. It is quite impossible for a black man in today's NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENT to ignore the truth and allow himself to support financially or be associated with (what in truth is) a "tight knit, John Birch, Racist Society."**

To those white police officers who recognize the sickening truth but fear to speak out due to the pressure which will enhance you, we can only say this. **"FOR ONCE, TRY BEING YOUR OWN MAN."**

**Guardian Organization  
Black Police Officers for  
Equal Justice  
of  
The Black United Front**

# Demonstrations In Support of Judge Crockett

A series of demonstrations involving a total of about 3,000 persons, were launched in support of Recorder's Court Judge George C. Crockett last Thursday in downtown Detroit.

Members of at least 50 organizations joined hundreds of individuals to voice indignation at the totally unjustified castigation of Crockett by the local news media politicians.

Though there have been larger demonstrations for other causes, the people who marched in support of Judge Crockett displayed a black unity unprecedented in Detroit in recent years.

The march from Kennedy Square to Recorder's Court began at 7 a. m. and was led by a contingent

quarters were joined shortly after they arrived by dozens of passers-by. The marchers included Congressman John Conyers, militant organizer Frank Ditto, several prominent black clergymen, students and professional people.

*(It is interesting to note that when Crockett first sought election to the Recorder's Court bench, he was bitterly opposed by factions within the first congressional district, which Conyers represents.)*

The first group of protesters was primarily black, with only a handful of whites joining in. Later in the morning, the Ad Hoc Action Group, a predominantly white organization headed by Sheila Murphy, picketed in front of police headquarters in support of Crockett and in protest of police actions at New Bethel.

They were joined by representatives of People Against Racism, another white group, noted that Crockett had upheld the constitution and his oath of office in making decisions which caused the local power structure to bitterly oppose him.

"He should be commended by us all and not subjected to the racist critique of persons who really know that he upheld the law violated by the police and by William Cahalan," the group declared.

Though earlier picketing had taken place in

front of Recorder's Court as well as police headquarters, demonstrators were prohibited from marching in front of the court building in mid-morning by an injunction issued by Recorder's Court Judges then on duty, including Crockett.

When the injunction was issued, Dan Aldridge led the pickets from Recorder's Court to the Traffic Court building several blocks away. Here they were joined by about 1,000 more persons who had gathered on the campus of Wayne State University in protest of the war in Vietnam and to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King.

That group, primarily high school students, had marched from the WSU campus to downtown Detroit upon learning that the pro-Crockett demonstrations were going on.

By 2 p. m., all of the demonstrators had dispersed without incident.

The only anti-Crockett demonstration which took place that morning had been sponsored by the Detroit Police Officers Association and involved 150-300 off-duty Detroit police. That group had been led by Carl Parsell, president of the DPOA. They had dispersed when the injunction was issued by the Recorder's Court Judges.



Demonstration of Support to Judge Crockett.  
—Photo by SIMMONS

of black law enforcement officers from the Detroit police department and the Wayne County Sheriff's department.

By 8:30 a. m., the block containing Recorder's Court and Detroit Police headquarters was completely surrounded by a line of pickets. Signs proclaiming "Crockett for Mayor," "Black Cops Support Crockett," and "Crockett—Soul Brother No. 1" were among the dozens displayed.

The first group of 500 demonstrators had been organized by the newly-formed Black United Front, a coalition of black people with representation of all political views and socio-economic levels.

Revolutionary activist Dan Aldridge was elected to chair the ad-hoc organization, formed for the purpose of supporting Crockett and opposing the police racism and oppressive tactics which resulted in the recent violent attack on 150 persons attending a public meeting at New Bethel Baptist church.

The first group of demonstrators at police head-



A 7:30 a. m. rally of support for Judge Crockett in Kennedy Square.

—Photo by SIMMONS

WHERE THE PRESIDENT OF THE DETROIT POLICE OFFICER'S ASSOCIATION STANDS — OVERT RACIST

*'If Crockett is right we should change the law. If Crockett is wrong, we should change Crockett.'*

*—Carl Parsell*

# An Analysis of Anti-Crockett Forces

The entire power structure of the State of Michigan pounced heavily upon Recorder's Court Judge George Crockett last week as the controversy manufactured and spread by Detroit's daily papers grew to include the state capital and the legislators and governor who preside there.

The mass hysteria began with the Detroit News, which, upon learning that Judge Crockett had moved swiftly to uphold the constitutional rights of some 140 persons swept up in a police dragnet operation following the death of a police officer, decried Crockett's actions as a display of "unwarranted leniency."

The News, joined shortly by the Detroit Free Press, began a campaign to paint Crockett as a judge who lacked knowledge of the law and who went busily about setting killers and dope fiends loose on the good citizens of Detroit.

The daily papers, reflecting the attitudes and purposes of the powers on whose behalf they act, set about a blatantly racist campaign to remove Judge Crockett from office.

Under the prodding of the daily papers, a group of backwoods legislators in Lansing, apparently lacking

any conception of the true turn of events in Detroit, immediately wrote and passed a pair of resolutions censuring the judge for his actions.

Not to be outdone, Governor William Milliken called for an "investigation" of Crockett's decisions by the State Judicial Tenure Commission.

That commission, set up during the 1963 State Constitutional Convention, has the power to recommend to the State Supreme Court that a judge be suspended, censured, retired or removed from office.

The grounds upon which the commission can recommend such actions, however, are strictly defined by law ("intemperance," commission of a felony while in office, etc.) and none of the grounds listed seem to apply to Crockett.

That move on the part of the daily papers—it was the papers which began the talk of a Judicial Tenure Commission probe—is viewed by observers not as a move to immediately remove Crockett from office—they can see there are no grounds for that—but to attempt to initiate a voters' recall movement or, at the very least, insure Crockett's defeat the next time he is up for re-election.

The papers were joined in their denunciations of the noted constitutional lawyer by the Detroit Po-

lice Officers Association, the Detroit Detectives Association and a number of other bastions of right-wing political ideology.

The vast majority of anti-Crockett sentiment comes from two areas, the rabidly anti-communist right wing and the out-and-out racists. These forces are backed primarily by a conservative white middle class which has been duped into believing that Crockett represents some sort of nebulous threat to their collective security.

The anti-Crockett stance of the News is traceable to the right-wing elements for which the paper fronts. These forces oppose Crockett because of his associations with known or suspected communists during the McCarthy era.

It was at this time that Crockett proved his knowledge of the U. S. Constitution as he defended persons accused of communist activities. Though never a communist himself, Crockett believed that if the government were allowed to persecute persons for their political ideologies, it would not be long before they were persecuted because of their skin color.

It was at this time also that events occurred which resulted in his later being opposed by another segment of the local establishment—the UAW and Walter Reuther.

In 1948, the conservative Reuther moved to "clean house" and rid the UAW of its "pink" elements. Among those who were swept out of the union was an attorney named Sugar who had been a close friend and associate of Crockett.

Though not threatened himself, Crockett followed Sugar out of the union and the two set up the state's first inter-racial law firm. Reuther has never forgiven Crockett and vice-versa. The two have not spoken a word to each other in 20 years.

Despite the powerful opposition of the UAW, the Detroit News and myriad local politicians and would-be politicians, Crockett has emerged as one of the most respected and strongly supported Black men in the state.

If up for re-election tomorrow, Crockett would regain his court seat by a greater margin than ever before.

The Michigan power structure, in a move to squash black judicial independence and equal application of the U. S. Constitution has thus not only failed miserably, but has, in fact, caused a greater strength to develop among those who fight for freedom in the courtrooms, in the auto plants, in the state legislature, in the streets, and everywhere else.

All power to the people!

## SUPPORT THE BLACK UNITED FRONT

Once again, the lap dogs of the white, racist, power structure have decided to violate the constitutional rights of black citizens, by their continual engagements in acts of police brutality, and their general unheralded harassment of this same community. It has therefore become necessary for any self-respecting black citizen, who wishes to gain power in his or her community, and who wishes to maintain his or her constitutional rights, to unite under the banner of the Black United Front, and support one of the leading, black citizens of this city, Judge George Crockett. This united support is a must.

Let it be known that the black community did not kill that white policeman, and Judge Crockett did not let hundreds of black murderers loose onto unsuspecting policemen in the city. The real issues can be listed as the following:

(1) There was a definite failure on the part of the police to provide protection to life and property of

the Black community. This protection was not given to the church, New Bethel Baptist, in spite of a police stake out in the community before the shooting incident.

(2) There was an invasion by the police into a black church, which pointed out the failure of the Detroit police to respect Black religious institutions. Therefore, a similarity can be drawn between the bombing of Black churches in the South, and the riddling with bullets of this Black church in the North.

(3) There was a failure of the police to respect Black women and children. Since, the police had surveyed the area, and had seen women and children leaving the church, one can only conclude that the police fired on the church with intent to murder. A similarity can be drawn between the shelling of a village in Vietnam, the American and South Vietnamese forces bomb and burn whole villages, in which women and children are counted among the dead. In Detroit, if heroic Black police had not pulled their guns on the racist whites, a whole church of women and children could have been killed.

(4) According to the first amendment, American citizens are given

the right of free assembly, which is guaranteed by the constitution, yet police are always seen surrounding Black meeting places, harassing Black assemblies, and putting their noses to the ground, like dogs trying to sniff out a hunting trail in the Black community.

### BLACKS AGAINST RACISM

So, the Black United Front is inviting all Black moderates and militants, to join the long climb, toward an end to white racism, and a beginning to the black control of the black community. And it should be noted that the Black United Front has made it clear that it would not tolerate the dismissal of Judge Crockett, and that it will continue to fight for your constitutional rights. A victory for Judge Crockett is a victory for your constitutional rights. A victory for Judge Crockett is a victory for the dignity of the black race all over the world. So, let us move to unite together and defeat the evil forces of white racism, and move ahead to overthrow those people who dare get in our path. Victory to the black community and its allies.

BLACK UNITED FRONT  
9094 Oakland  
873-2550

Former Councilman  
and  
New Detroit  
Committee member  
cites  
Crockett as Hero

WILLIAM T. PATRICK, JR.  
1818 DETROIT BANK & TRUST BUILDING  
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226

TELEPHONE  
224-1900

March 31, 1969

The Honorable George W. Crockett, Jr.  
Judge of Recorder's Court  
Recorder's Court Building  
Detroit, Michigan 48226

Honorable Sir:

I have been intending to drop you a line for some time to commend you on the fine judicial leadership you have been providing our community during your brief tenure as a Judge. I join with many others in expressing my admiration for the courage and integrity that you have brought to this important function of our democratic system. It is apparent that such a thing as political expediency has never occurred to you. This awareness on my part increases my pride.

From this background of appreciation, I view your historic actions of yesterday in connection with the New Bethel Church incident as being another peak of achievement, or you. Your insistence on the full utilization of the law as a servant of the community in a time of great stress was most remarkable. I think you may well have spared our community of most disastrous consequences as the result of your forthright stand. Of course, we shall never know, but your actions do stand as a beacon light for all of us to seek and bring real change and reform in our system in order to make it work as being responsive to the crying needs of all of our people. That you have made this system in your sector relevant to the needs of those who feel most alienated is especially noteworthy.

I salute you as an authentic hero of these trying times.

Sincerely,  
William T. Patrick, Jr.

WTP:mv

# Eyewitness Testimony



The New Bethel Baptist Church—" . . . The beastly actions that the white police officers administered on helpless women and children inside . . . "

—The GUARDIANS

## ONE WITNESS

March 29, 1969 the Republic of New Africa was holding a conference here in Detroit from about 9 to 11. Up until 11 everything was going along smoothly. The conference went along and was ended and everyone was asked to leave the lobby. As the people began to leave someone opened fire on them. Women and children were running around screaming, panicing—and myself, I was a little shaken up by seeing the sisters and the little babies huddled down on the ground. One sister just stood there and panicked by a cigarette down the alley. As we ran down the alley squad cars were already in the alley waiting for blacks, I guess. I broke through a yard and went back out on the street to get this other fellow that was with us, when they opened fire again and we ran through this yard. As we were going through the yard the police hollered, "Stop, you're dead." Then I jumped under a porch and laid for a while—for about an hour or so. The man was all up and down the alleys. They had brothers—black, Negro cops in plain clothes, looking like, you know, down brothers, every day brothers. Evidently they were inside the meeting also. They had police in uniform looking like the gas man or telephone man or something—you know, plain-clothes police.

I laid dead for about an hour. About 15 or 20 minutes after I was hiding under the porch I heard gun fire then a crash. Evidently a squad car or someone had crashed into something and all I could hear—you know the man was standing out front. I could see the lights from the car. I could hear them out talking and clicking their guns. About an hour after I was there I decided to make a move out to the street and myself and another brother crept down the alley on to the street. The neighborhood was just crawling with police. We took a cab out of the area and that's when I seen plain-clothes policemen directing traffic and so on. I made it out of the neighborhood and contacted certain brothers that I could find and explained the situation.

## ANOTHER WITNESS (Partial Transcript)

**QUESTIONER:** Tell me, John, how did the incident start last night at the National Conference of the Republic of New Africa?

**JOHN:** The incident started—it was really started by the Detroit Police Department because they broke in and opened fire on the brothers and

sisters and without a notice or telling the people to come on out. They just broke in and started shooting. So quite naturally the brothers and sisters went for cover and scattered all around and the Police Department—I have to correct them on this—they said we opened fire first, which is wrong. They opened fire on us and



Revolution is not a choice; it's a necessity.

then they called in for reinforcements which brought the whole thing about.

**QUESTIONER:** Did you see the policeman get killed?

**JOHN:** Yes, I did. I seen him get shot. I don't know whether I saw him get killed or not but I saw him get shot.

**QUESTIONER:** What happened, was he going for his gun? Had the gun fire already started when he got shot or was that the first gun fire when he got shot?

**JOHN:** The gun fire had already got started before he got shot. Because they opened fire on him with punk shot-guns. Then he ran up to the building with a revolver and was shot.

**QUESTIONER:** What about . . . were there any other policemen you saw shot?

**JOHN:** No.

**QUESTIONER:** How many brothers and sisters did you see get wounded?

**JOHN:** Well, I only can recall that I seen one brother get wounded. Then I saw another one carry another brother out; he was wounded too. So that was two that I can recall.

**QUESTIONER:** Did you see any instances of police brutality after you were arrested?

**JOHN:** Yes, for instance myself—I was dragged handcuffed through the alley by the policeman. He told me that if I blinked an eye he would blow my brains out.

**QUESTIONER:** Did you see any other instances of police brutality?

**JOHN:** Well, one other incident. They put a police hat on a brother and stuck his head up, making like he's the man that said that he was coming up so if there were any snipers on the roof, the brother would get killed.

brothers stand up on the wall and hold their hands up in the air. They had no regard for age whatsoever.

**QUESTIONER:** What about women?

**JOHN:** They handcuffed some of the women. I seen one that was handcuffed and they didn't let the women sit down either. They made them stand and put their hands up, and when we got down to the station they brought the women and the children down to a garage which was very cold and they didn't let them come out.

**QUESTIONER:** We have heard a report that policemen put a gun up beside the head of a young fellow about 15 years old. Were you around at that time?

**JOHN:** Well, I wasn't actually around but that's what a brother told me that they put the gun up beside his head and told him that if he said anything they were going—you know, they wanted the brother to talk—they asked him to rap and if he didn't they were going to blow him away.

**QUESTIONER:** Were there any other threats—threatening to kill people?

**JOHN:** There was a threat to kill a sister down in the basement because the sister—she must have been in a stage of fright when the officer asked her to come out of the basement. he asked her were there any other persons downstairs, and she said no, and he said, "There were." And he said, "If there were he was going to kill her."

**QUESTIONER:** Previous to starting the tape you said something about your personal involvement. How did you like—when did you actually encounter the gun fire, when did you know it? How were you involved? How did you encounter it and what kind of experience did you have with it?

(Continued on Page 9)



"A similarity can be drawn between the bombing of Black churches in the South and the riddling with bullets of this Black church in the North"—B. U. F.

—All Photos on this Page by KEN HAMBLIN

*“ . . . he hit me with the butt of a rifle and then he put the cuffs on my hands and he made me walk in front of him . . . ”* —A Witness



The main entrance to New Bethel Church. Police fired more than one hundred rounds into this church filled with men, women and children. Four Black people wounded—one cop killed. —Photo by SIMMONS

(Continued from Page 8)

JOHN: When the gun fire first started I was in my car and quite naturally I jumped for cover and Mark told me he was on the opposite side of my car, to get out of my car with this shot. So I came out of my car and there was a young lady and a little girl, she was sitting on the pavement in front of my car and I grabbed her and told her to move on. She must have been in a state of fright and didn't want to move. Me and Mark, we ran for cover and I encountered a police officer in the alley and he told me to get my hands up or he was going to kill me.

**QUESTIONER:** What happened to Mark?

JOHN: Well, I didn't see Mark after that. He must have left—you know.

**QUESTIONER:** Were there any racial names?

JOHN: Well, they called us pigs, dirty niggers, meat heads—all kinds of racial names.

**QUESTIONER:** Tell me, what kind of treatment did you receive at the jail after you got there?

JOHN: Well at the jail, I myself, I kept the cuffs on my hands for at least three hours, me, Cindiata, and several other people. There was a woman with cuffs on her hands, and they made us stand out in the cold in this garage with our hands up in the air.

**QUESTIONER:** Was that 1300 Beaubien?

JOHN: Yes.

**QUESTIONER:** Did they inform you as to your rights?

JOHN: Well, about four hours later we were informed of our rights.

**QUESTIONER:** I want to know, did they allow you to make a telephone call?

JOHN: Not everyone was allowed to make a telephone call because there were so many of us, so they said we would have to get around to it some other time.

**QUESTIONER:** Did they ask you any questions of any kind before they informed you of your rights?

JOHN: No.

**QUESTIONER:** Did they take any tests of any kind? Were you tested?

JOHN: In what sort of way do you mean?

**QUESTIONER:** I mean paraffin tests for gun powder burns or—

JOHN: Yes, I was tested for gun powder burns and I was also tested for—I forgot what they called it—nitrate or something.

**QUESTIONER:** What about your finger prints?

JOHN: Well, they took several sets of finger prints—the whole palm—they took even a photographic picture of each prisoner.

**QUESTIONER:** We understand that some new equipment in terms of television equipment was used.

JOHN: Yeh, they brought each brother in front of the television equipment to make a statement. They asked each brother their name, where did they live, what were they doing at the conference, things of that sort.

**QUESTIONER:** When you were caught what type of experience did you have then? You said you were caught running in the alley.

JOHN: Well first off, he hit me with the butt of a rifle and then he put the cuffs on my hands and he made me walk in front of him and he told me to lay down on the pavement and told me if I moved he was going to blow me away. Then after that they brought me and put me into a squad car with other fellows. This car was in the line of fire and we asked the officers to move the squad car and they refused.



The freedom of our people will come as a direct product of our struggle. Students at a recent Malcolm X Day rally. —Photo by SIMMONS

# Mass Media — A Racist Institution

## Coverage of the New Bethel Incident

By the **DETROIT FREE PRESS** and the **DETROIT NEWS**

By People Against Racism (PAR)

*Along with the country as a whole, the press has too long basked in a white world, looking out of it, if at all, with white men's eyes and a white perspective.*

(Kerner Report, p. 389)

### INTRODUCTION

The headline of the **Free Press** editorial of April 1 reads, "Keep Isolated Incidents Within Narrow Limits." This is a typical example of the racist distortion of reality practiced by Detroit's major newspapers. There is nothing isolated about assaults on the black community by the white police. There is nothing isolated about attacks on Judge George Crockett for dispensing true justice to black people. The only isolated aspect of the New Bethel incident is that a white policeman died and no black people did.

The New Bethel Incident and its aftermath is a study in white power and racism. This is particularly evident in the reporting and interpretation of the incident by the **News** and **Free Press**. In a case which is confusing at best, neither of the city's major papers has presented a balanced and clarifying account. Their coverage, instead, has been characterized by one-sidedness and inflammatory innuendo.

### THE MEDIA CREATES RACIAL HYSTERIA

The questions omitted by the **News** and **Free Press** are as significant as what is reported. With only the testimony of officer Worobec, the papers assume there is a basis for describing the New Bethel Incident six times as an "ambush" or "slaying" and once as a murder. Ambushes and murders are proven in court, not in the racist imaginations of the white press. Reiterating eight times the police assertion that Czapski and Worobec had their revolvers in their holsters makes police provocation no less likely. Is it reasonable to believe two white policemen would approach 10-12 armed black men with no weapons in their hands? With ample precedent for police officers drawing their weapons on black people in less provoking situations, surely the press is being presumptuous in its conclusions.

The **News**' and **Free Press**' unquestioning support of the police action allows them to also accept police charges that they were fired on from inside New Bethel Church. While reporting the police version of the story over 20 times, the papers report the Republic of New Africa (RNA) denial of any such provocation only 5 times. Once again, the police side of the story seems sufficient evidence for the **News** and **Free Press**. They assume, more-

over that their readers are similarly uninterested in the testimony of the black people involved.

While summing up the incident in an editorial April 1 as an "irrational act" by an "irrational extremist organization," the **Free Press** is unconcerned that the police involved might have acted irrationally. Yet what other expectations could we have of a police department infamous for its abuse of black people in the Algiers Motel executions, during Cobo Hall I and the Veterans Memorial Incident, during the July '67 rebellions, the Howard King case, the harassment of Negro police officer Kenneth Johnson? There is clearly more historical evidence of irrational behavior on the part of the police than on the part of the 135 black members of the RNA subjected to gunfire and arrest.

The press is unwilling to even question the possibility that the police, in their need to justify their acts, could distort testimony. The only justification for firing into the church is that the police were fired on from the church. Therefore, since the church was fired on, the justification logically follows. Could we expect the police to admit firing into the church with no justification—have they ever admitted to conscious or unconscious error?

In their editorial of April 1, the **Free Press** exhorts the black community to "Sort Out the Separatists," while the **News** "questions the silence of moderate black leaders." Assuming that the black community is susceptible to this sort of 'divide and rule' psychology, one wonders what the purpose is of this separation. The **Free Press** suggests that separatists attempts by the RNA will parallel the experience of the "American Indians." The **Free Press** forgets, of course, that the white man's armed strength was responsible for the "Indians'" experience of "physical separation into designated areas." (In case the RNA misses the message, however, Commissioner Spreen's recommendations are loud and clear: Detroit policemen in the 10th precinct will carry either M1 rifles or their own weapons.)

The press view of the black community is further revealed in headlines such as "Ambush slayers of policeman hunted," "Killer hunt feared ruined," and "Church ambush slayers of patrolmen (sic) are hunted." We assume journalists realize that PEOPLE are searched for, ANIMALS are hunted. White racist mentality is fed by such nuance. The same is true of the **News** statement that some of the people inside New Bethel were wearing "African garb," and the **Free Press** labelling of the RNA as "black separatists" a total of 13 times on Monday alone. The latter is clearly intended to delegitimize the RNA, as is the labelling of

their program for a black nation as "an empty doctrine." Even the **Free Press** is forced to acknowledge, however, that some blacks "feel a vague sympathy with the extremists" and that a good many black men . . . describe themselves as 'black nationalist' or even 'separatist' . . . It is white racism that denies legitimacy or respect to the desire of black people to separate from a racist white society which has enslaved, oppressed and attempted to dehumanize them for nearly 400 years.

The hysterical response of the **News** and **Free Press** to the death of one white cop is reasonable if one shares the racist view of the police as the 'thin blue line' between the ghetto and the white community. As Monsignor Canfield declared at Czapski's funeral, "If it were not for these brave men (police), how quickly we would crawl back to the cave and the jungle." Such response is an indication of the extent to which the normal expectation of whites is that only black people will die in confrontations between them and the police. When the possibility opened that such results can be reversed, racist fears are bound to surface. An additional assumption carried in the press' frenzied response is that white life is worth more than black life. **News** and **Free Press** coverage of past incidents reflects this assumption.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF RACIST "NEWS" COVERAGE

Although the media's coverage of the New Bethel incident has been at best confusing and at worst rampant with racial hysteria, it is not exceptional. This is not the first violent confrontation between members of the black community and the white police and white community. The significance of this incident is that whites were killed or injured instead of blacks.

Both the **News** and **Free Press** have a tradition in their coverage of crimes committed by blacks against whites as compared to crimes committed by whites against blacks. Murders and other crimes of violence by whites against blacks receive second-page coverage, minimal follow-up and are generally reported as isolated incidents. Murders and other crimes by blacks against whites receive front-page, top headline coverage for several days, human interest stories on the victim's family, and editorial comments on the "rising crime rate."

Early Sunday morning, June 25, 1967, a black man attempting to protect his pregnant wife from a gang of white youths was shot in the head at Rouge Park. The eyewitness story of Mrs. Thomas, the victim's wife, appeared only in the **Michigan Chornicle**—a Negro newspaper. She and her husband had been spending the evening in the park with

another couple. They were joined by several white youths. Mrs. Thomas reported that after the other couple left, her husband "said he heard the word 'rape' and heard that these guys were after a woman, any woman." The Thomases attempted to leave but found that their car would not start. According to the **News**, "Police found several wires had been pulled loose from the engine." Thomas was shot in front of the park recreation center to which they were refused admittance. Mrs. Thomas lost her baby the following week, a point of 'follow-up' reported in neither the **Free Press** or **News**.

The **News** reported the Rouge Park Incident on page 2; the **Free Press** put it on page 15. The only further coverage within a full week of the incident appeared in the **Free Press** of June 27: an article regarding the release of all but one of the men held for investigation.

On Wednesday evening, November 31, 1966, a white store clerk in the downtown Hudson's was stabbed by a black shoplifter. The incident was reported on the front page of both the **News** and **Free Press**, with an additional human interest story on the front page of the **News**. The **News** followed with a front-page, top headline story on December 2, a story on page 3 December 3, front-page on December 4, and an editorial on December 8 entitled "What's the Answer to Crime in the Streets? — It's More Policemen." The editorial read in part: "The fatal stabbing of a salesman by a shoplifter in Hudson's downstore simply drives home the gravity of a crime problem which seems to grow deeper each month."

Why is one stabbing more indicative of a growing crime rate than the fatal shooting of a man in a park?

On Thursday evening, April 21, 1967, the 15-year-old son of a policeman was stabbed to death at Cobo Hall. The **News** devoted its front page, often with a top headline, to the incident for six days; the **Free Press** covered it for five days. Several 'human interest' stories appeared throughout the week, regarding the boy's family and the band he was playing with at Cobo Hall the night he was killed. On April 22, the **Free Press** titled an editorial "Cobo Hall Murder Shows Need for Fight on Crime."

Again we must ask — Why does the murder of a white boy by two black teenagers indicate the need to fight crime and the murder of a black man by a gang of white youths does not?

The coverage of confrontations between black people and the police is also revealing. The white policeman killed in the New Bethel Incident is called a "Police Hero." Blacks killed by white police

(Continued on Page 11)

# Racist Role of the Mass Media

(Continued from Page 10)

and guardsmen during the July 1967 rebellion are called "rebellious." The coverage of the Algiers Motel Incident is particularly significant. Many of the headlines in both the News and Free Press refer to the incident as "riot beatings" as often or more than as "riot deaths"—and never as "murder" (which one police officer was finally charged with).

The Free Press found the Algiers Motel Incident disturbing enough to print an editorial August 9 titled "Any Abuses of the Law Must Also Be Punished." It is interesting, however, that the editorial does not regard the incident as part of a growing trend in the Detroit Police Department or the National Guard. Furthermore, editorials on a rising crime rate suggest solutions (primarily more policemen). The editorial on the Algiers Motel Incident calls for an "investigation"—not a solution.

The editorial on the Algiers Motel Incident was only one in a series of editorials by the News and Free Press concerning the rebellion. That particular editorial, however, was the only one to mention the fact that any black people had died. The lives of two white firemen and one white policeman (reported in the Free Press editorial "Exchanging Salutes" August 1, 1967) are worth more in the eyes of the media than are the lives of over forty black people. Predictably, while the editorials were ignoring the loss of black lives, they were commending the forces of law and order and attacking the black community. The editorials in the News and Free Press on August 4 agreed with a statement by Hubert Humphrey that the "law of the jungle must go." In "Exchanging Salutes" the Free Press states "Guardsmen courageously patrolled the streets echoing with sniper fire." In "How to Control Riots" (August 29), the News states that "Detroiters owe their generous thanks to the National Guardsmen who had risked their lives during our city's crisis." **What about the forty black lives that were lost?**

## THE VENDETTA AGAINST JUDGE CROCKETT

The racism manifested in the Detroit News vendetta against Judge George Crockett is also not recent in origin. Only three weeks before the 1966 general election in which Crockett was elevated to the Recorder's Court bench, the News published a full page "background" story dealing with him. In this article, which begins with the sentence, "Is George C. Crockett — who went to jail 14 years ago for insulting a federal judge in his courtroom — now ready to dispense justice as a Recorder's Court Judge of Detroit?", the News subtly raised the question of whether Crockett might be a "handyman for the radical left." Undoubtedly this News effort contributed to the efforts of right wing extremists in Detroit to link Crockett with "Communism." In this effort the News also joins the com-

pany of such stalwart racists as Senator James O. Eastland of Mississippi, who brought this same kind of "background" to the attention of the U.S. Senate in 1964 when Crockett and other lawyers were attempting to protect the legal rights of Negroes in Mississippi.

Judge Crockett is now the target of a massive and vicious vendetta by the Detroit News for his actions to insure the constitutional rights as accused persons who happen to be black. The fact is that the News has resorted to distortion in order to make its case. The paper has also, by continuous coverage and reiteration of particular cases handled by the Judge, created the impression that he has 'flooded' the streets of Detroit with known criminals.

On February 18, 1969, the News carried the story of Lloyd K. Tyler, a Negro who pleaded guilty before Judge Crockett to assault with intent to rob, while being armed. Judge Crockett sentenced him to two years' probation, stipulating that Tyler, a drug addict, must apply to the federal narcotics rehabilitation center in Lexington, Ky.. The News story carried a full description of Tyler's previous record. The following day, the News editorial stated: "A three-time loser who had pleaded guilty to a fourth charge walked out of a Detroit courtroom Monday a free man because of the generosity of Judge George C. Crockett." The statement is plainly inaccurate. Tyler was never freed, nor is he presently free. Tyler was not accepted by the rehabilitation center and was returned to Wayne County Jail where he presently awaits disposition of his case. The News had already, however, created the impression that Judge Crockett had freed a 'dangerous Negro criminal.'

Columnist Will Muller added to this unmistakable impression two days later by calling for the state Judicial Tenure Commission to "review the tempestuous course of Recorder's Judge George C. Crockett, Jr.," In supporting his reference (giving the impression of a continuous series of acts by Judge Crockett) to the "tempestuous course," Muller mentions only the case of the "release" of Tyler as occasioning the "latest uproar." The columnist conveniently neglects to identify prior examples.

The February 21 News editorial condemns the Judge for granting probation to a second narcotics addict with the same requirement of commitment to the rehabilitation center. The News story the prior day, February 20, had indicated that the individual involved, James A. Pierce, was granted probation at the recommendation of the Court's probation and psychiatric departments. The related editorial demonstrates the racism of cries for 'law and order.' The News states: "Judge Crockett seems to have offered felons a new way to freedom. Become a drug addict, plead police brutality and you're home free."

The News concluded the week's attack with a background-article on Sunday, February 23. The writer, Richard A. Ryan, states that Judge Cro-

kett "previously has found 'extenuating circumstances' for lenient sentences." His 'proof' for this is reiteration of one case from a year before. In all, this one week of the News attack on Crockett included at least 12 items: news articles, editorials or cartoons—all relating to two individual instances of persons being ordered on probation to apply for narcotics rehabilitation.

With no new facts to report, the News kept Judge Crockett's name before the public for several successive days, Sunday, March 9, the paper runs a page three headline story, "Drug hospital rejects Crockett probationer." Two sentences of this eighth-column story are devoted to the matter cited in the headline. The bulk of the article is devoted to reiterating the Tyler story for at least the tenth time, and again mentioning Pierce.

For three more successive days the News maintains the anti-Crockett momentum. In a March 10 story, an interview reports the "amazement" of a woman who had been burglarized by a young man whose sentence had been reduced by Crockett. Her view is: "Personally, I think a lot of the crime could be stopped if judges like Crockett would stop being so lenient." Obviously a sentiment for which the News had by this time prepared many willing believers. A News editorial the following day refers to Judge Crockett's "practice of granting immunity," a calculatedly inflammatory generalization. The headline of this editorial is particularly significant: "Under Crockett's 'justice' the innocent suffer." Translation: Judge Crockett is responsible for committing crimes against 81 year-old widows.

The next day the News used the reporting of a letter of support for Crockett as an opportunity to repeat and reinforce the image of him that they have been projecting. March 20, the paper runs an article headlined "Crockett Blasted by Parsell," which contains Parsell's statement that Crockett "has proven to the public that all the crime is not the fault of the police, and Crockett now draws attention to the courts . . ." Parsell, like the News, solidly makes the victim the criminal. It becomes clear that this saturation coverage will have an inevitable effect in determining the views of thousands of Detroit citizens.

The public had been well-conditioned by the press by the time the New Bethel Incident occurred. In the days that followed, both the News and Free Press gave as much, if not more, coverage to Crockett as to the incident itself. On Tuesday, April 1, the headlines of several stories were: "Crockett's Action Stirs Complaints," "Crockett Justice Hit by Picketing Police," "Police Fear Crockett Ruined Search for Officer's Killer," and the editorial "An Abuse of Power?" This News editorial begins: "Have law enforcement and justice taken another beating from Recorder's Judge George Crockett, Jr? It looks that way." Further on the phrase "wholesale and indiscriminate releases" appears. "Wholesale release" is again used in the front page

story. The Free Press editorial of the same day concludes that Judge Crockett "ran roughshod" over the standard of reasonable time before arraignment. It also expressed hope that the prosecutor may be able to overcome the obstacles Crockett has supposedly put in his way.

Fed by such inflammatory journalism, its is no wonder that people who had only the mass media to guide them telephoned, telegraphed, protested and made resolutions concerning Judge Crockett. The racist defamation fed itself as the calls, telegrams, statements and resolutions were duly reported each day.

A few reported statements conceded the fact that perhaps Crockett had operated judiciously and within the Constitution as he asserted, but implied that practices carried out to the contrary have been widely "accepted." Judge Crockett was more explicit in his press statement of April 3: "But I will not lend my office to practices which subvert legal processes and deny justice to some because they are poor or black." A Free Press editorial of April 3 goes so far as to say: "If Judge Crockett's interpretation of the line between investigation and arrest is accepted as general doctrine, then police procedure will have to be vastly altered."

It becomes clear that Judge Crockett's legitimacy comes into question by the press when his power begins to protect the rights of black people. The Free Press praised Crockett in October 1968 because he "kept his cool" and protected the right of those arrested during the 1967 rebellion. At that time his concern saved time because it prevented the necessity of back-tracking. But when the same concern prevents the police and the prosecutor from using acceptable albeit unconstitutional practices vis a vis black people, the Judge "has abused his authority."

## CONCLUSION

Vindictive attacks on Judge Crockett reflect an expectation that black judges should understand that the law does not protect the rights of black people. When the legal actions of a black judge result in the protection of black people's rights, the press and the white community begin to question whether he is qualified to be a judge. Because of racism, whites are opposed to black people attaining positions in which they are able to protect one another. The response to Judge Crockett's actions is that the 'niggers' are getting away with something—not that someone is getting away with something.

Someone gets away with something all the time. The police get away with murder, and they expect that right. They expect to be able to mobilize the national guard for five days in the ghetto without repercussions. They expect to be able to kill over 40 black people (including those in the Algiers Motel) during a rebellion with no repercussions. And there are no objections from the press when police use every constitution-

(Continued on Page 12)

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(Continued from Page 11)

al guarantee, legal maneuver, and ounce of judicial influence to protect themselves in the Algiers case or the Veterans Memorial Incident. The dispensation of the James Earl Ray case serves as a reminder of the fact that no white man has ever received the maximum penalty for causing the death of any black person in the history of this country.

In short, when it comes to crimes against black people, whites have traditionally been totally paralyzed in administering punishment against themselves. It clearly follows that if whites are to be restrained, it will be necessary for blacks to do the restraining. It is also clear that if crimes against black people are to be honestly and objectively reported by the press, the press will have to be black.

**MICHAEL LORINER**

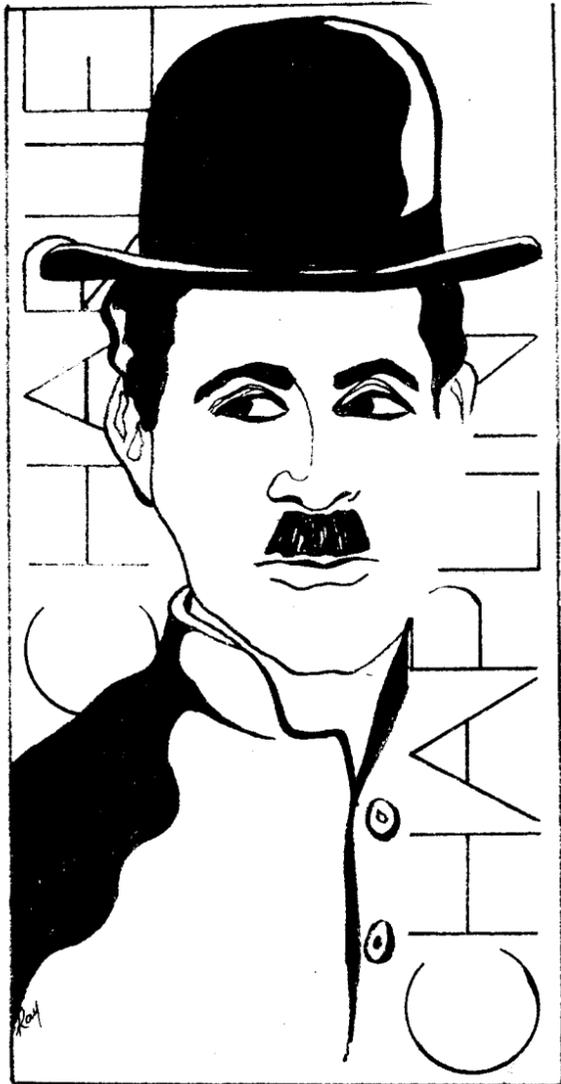
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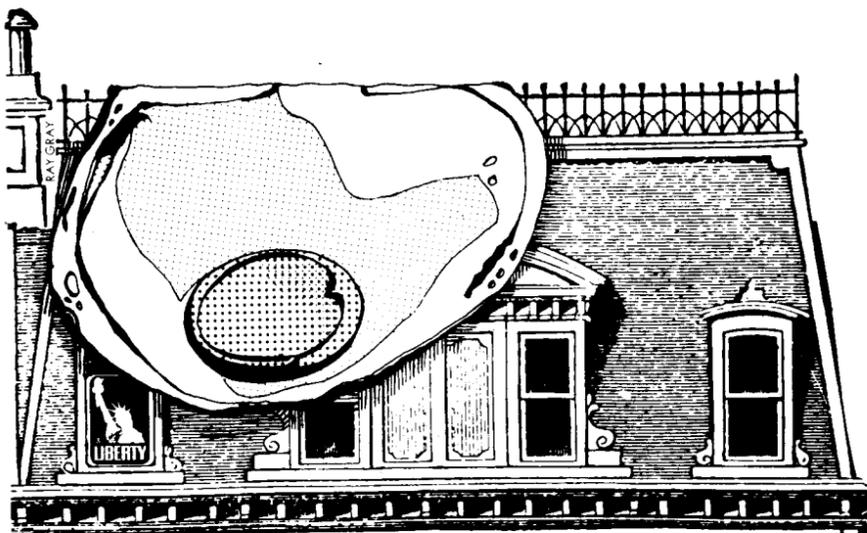
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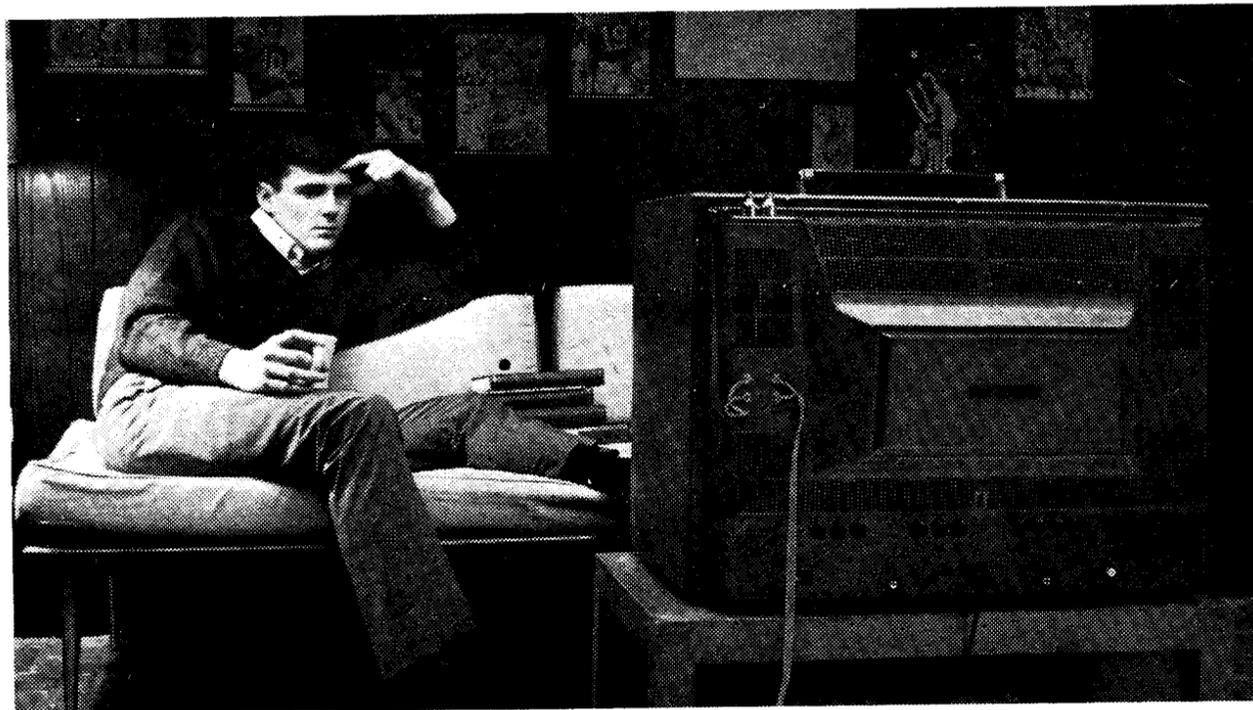
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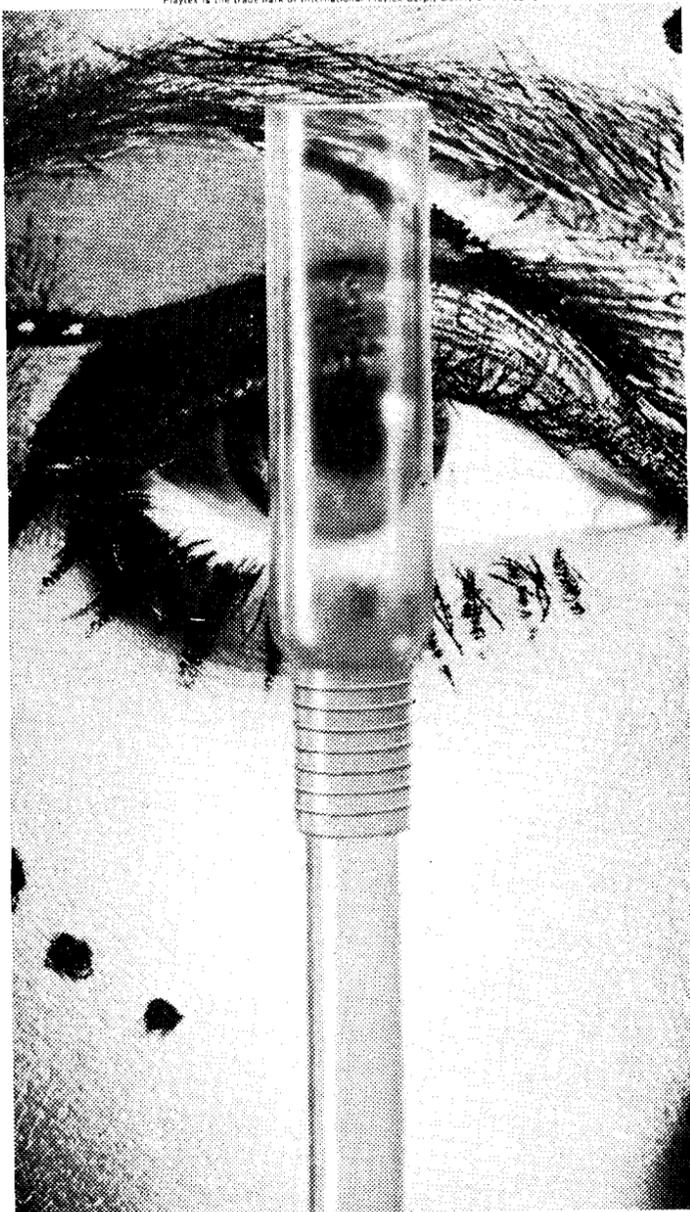
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