

# To Be Equal =

## Police Arms Control Needed

By Vernon E. Jordan, Jr.



One of last year's most popular movies was "Death Wish," about a man who becomes a one-man vigilante squad, killing and maiming criminals, lying in wait for them, and in general playing a Superman role in defense of public safety.

The film's popularity tells us a lot about the fear of crime today. Crime films have always offered fantasy, escape, and delusions of righteous power but never before has there been a movie that resulted in such a lust for blood on the part of huge audiences.

Many people left the theatre willing to set aside civilized notions of trial and due process, enthusiastically backing the vigilante approach of executing law-breakers on the spot.

This illustrates the danger that the public's fear of crime may result in increased toleration for vigilante action, for police excesses, and finally, for a strong-arm police state.

We can see some of this in the wide-spread trend toward use of lethal weaponry by some police departments. As if .38 caliber revolvers aren't enough, new, more powerful weapons are being issued and some policemen want higher caliber weapons besides.

### DUMDUM BULLETS

A most dangerous aspect of this urban arms race is the new popularity of dum dum bullets which rip and tear, leaving horrible wounds, and which cause death or permanent maiming where ordinary bullets inflict less serious wounds.

In fact, the dum dums are so extremely vicious that they are banned from use in warfare by international conventions which the United States has signed. So we are in the logically incomprehensible situation of refusing to use these bullets against enemies in wartime, but condone their use by police officers here at home.

While some police spokesmen are insisting on adopting these and other unnecessarily lethal weapons, some states are considering action to make dum dums illegal. I don't understand why the federal government, which bans them from its war arsenal, can't ban them from the home front as well.

This is not a matter of coddling criminals, or being "soft on crime." It is the vitally important matter of establishing a rule of law and a moral posture on the part of the state that encourages respect for the law.

Some people may think that highly-publicized crime can only be stopped by "unleashing" cops and giving them more dangerous weaponry, but such a course is more likely to result in serious abuses of police power, escalation of criminals' weaponry, more harm to innocent people and even a higher crime rate.

### POLICE VIOLENCE

Brazil offers a good example of such a cycle. After the murder of a popular police chief back in 1964, policemen organized "Death Squads" that murdered known gangsters in retribution. The murder binge has continued with documented cases of convicts dragged from their cells to be executed, petty thieves killed, and inevitably, many victims of mistaken identity, personal grudges, or jealousy.

What started as a crusade against crime and the red tape of the courts would up as a reign of terror by police officers in some cities. It is hard now for people to tell the difference between law-breakers and lawmen. And crime rates are still rising.

But that couldn't happen here. Or could it? A Maine police officer was recently brought up on charges of trying to organize a death squad to kill criminals. A Long Island man was subjected to a search of his house without a warrant and to personal abuse by police officers looking for a man he'd never even heard of.

A scandal buried by the news of Watergate last year dealt with narcotics raids in which federal police smashed into homes without warrants, waved guns under people's noses, wrecked rooms, and then left, admitting they had the wrong houses.

With headlines about abuses by CIA and FBI operatives, unauthorized wiretaps, disregard of civil rights, and other abuses by agencies sworn to uphold the law, I wouldn't be too trusting of police who claim they need more power or far-out weapons.

Crime can be brought under control without recourse to internationally-out-lawed weaponry, abuse of civil liberties, or turning law officers into executioners.

## Rehabilitation Conference hosted by Las Vegas

Del Frost, Administrator of the State Rehabilitation Division, announced that professionals in the field of rehabilitation will be meeting in Las Vegas April 1-4 under the sponsorship of the Rehabilitation Division. This conference is the first stage in the implementation of the Federal program requirement which emphasizes priority service to the severely handicapped.

Conference sessions are slated to cover topics such as architectural barriers to the handicapped, discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations and medical as well as psychosocial considerations.

Keynoting the meeting will be Dr. Paul Kreider, Dean of Human Resources, Clark County whose specialty has been serving the severely disabled.

In announcing the conference, Frost stated that he hopes this will increase awareness of the needs of the severely handicapped. 83 professionals in the rehabilitation field have been invited to attend this meeting, but Mr. Frost extends that invitation to the general public. The meeting, "Serving the Severely Disabled -- An Overview," will be held at the Showboat Hotel, Las Vegas.

"Tackling the topics to be covered at this conference will increase the availability and quality of service to those Nevadans with severe handicaps," Frost said.

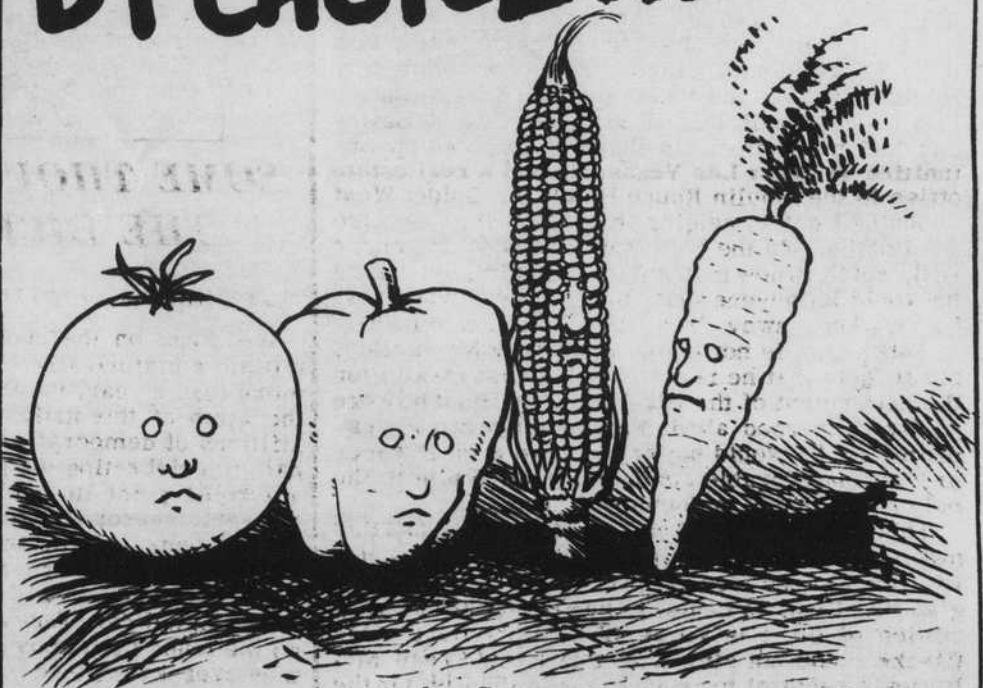
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United States that is not featured by their heroic liberation struggles against slavery or the super-exploration of genocidal racism. Those struggles have taken every conceivable shape and form. In briefing the members of the "Advisory Committee on Civil Rights" which he created, President Lyndon B. Johnson said: "Segregation and poverty have created in the racist ghetto a destructive environment totally unknown to white Americans through the distortion of history." He did not mention the source of "segregation and poverty."

This truth is only exceeded in political significance by the fact that through the same distortion of history the heroism of Black citizenry in struggle against its "segregation and poverty" has been hidden from the exploited and oppressed whites for whom those Blacks constitute a natural ally without whose aid "labor in a white skin cannot emancipate itself." This truism the ideologists of capitalism, deeply distressed, will not bring to the fore as they rant about the glories of this society. Nor will they speak of the destructive character of this distortion of history by the ruling class on the honor and integrity of the nation. But that is the reality.

Continued next week.....

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