

# Civil Rights Leaders Call S.B.1 'Police State' Legislation

Southern civil rights leaders have issued a warning to the Black community and to civil rights advocates across the country concerning legislation pending in this session of Congress which they say could turn the U.S. into a police state. The legislation is titled Senate Bill 1.

Issuing the joint statement were veteran civil rights figures Julian Bond, John Lewis, Rev. Ralph Abernathy and Bernard Lee. Abernathy and Lee are President and Vice-President, respectively, of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

With the second session of the 94th Congress underway, we wish to sound the alarm to the Black community concerning Senate Bill 1 -- the Criminal Justice Reform Act -- now pending in the U.S. Senate.

We are facing the possibility of a vote and passage of S.1 in 1976. We feel its enactment would be a monumental set-back to the civil rights gains of the last 20 years, and a disaster to the rights of all Americans.

We believe S.1 provides the legislative base for a police state in America. Yet most people know nothing about the repressive provisions of S.1 This is a dangerous situation.

There must be a strong, organized outcry against attempts to pass this bill. We are calling on Black leaders and organizations, and all groups concerned with justice, to work now for defeat of S.1 All work for civil rights and justice is imperiled by this bill.

We in the South especially sense its dangers. S.1 would outlaw many of the methods of mass, non-violent protests of the 1960's. It would encourage government harassment such as that directed against the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. by the FBI. S.1 would silence press exposure of government secrets, and would turn concepts of criminal justice upside down. Blacks and minority people especially would lose by this bill's passage. We would face an ominous series of repressive laws in today's struggles for justice if S.1 were law.

S.1 was drafted and introduced in its original form by the Nixon Administration. It would enshrine into law many of the repressive policies of that administration. S.1 is now supported by President Ford, Senate Democratic leader Mike Mansfield and Republican leader Hugh Scott.

Senate Bill 1 is the most dangerous legislative threat to the rights of all Americans perhaps ever to come before the U.S. Congress. Some feel its repressive sections can be taken out by amendment. We feel S.1 is so filled with the repressive taint of the Nixon policies that amendments cannot save it. It must be killed in entirety.

S.1 provisions on civil rights sections with a police state law. Further, its mandatory death penalty, harsh prison terms and excessive sentences have no place in civilized law.

**PROVISIONS:**

\* Under S.1, organizers and participants in protest demonstrations could be charged under "riot" provisions, charged with "obstruction of government functions" or even "instigating overthrow or destruction of government." Numerous sections infringing on rights to assembly and protest include 1111, 1112, 1115, 1116, 1328, 1334, 1861, 1863, 1831, 1103, 1002 and 1003, 1833 and 1834.

\* Under S.1, vast amounts of wiretapping would be authorized against the citizenry, under broad authority (Chapter 31). Wider latitude for use of entrapment activities by government agents is provided (Sec. 551), as well as increased "contempt" penalties and use of "immunity" statutes frequently used against political dissidents (Secs. 1333, 3111).

\* S.1, provides and "official secrets section which would allow the government to persecute news media members, government workers and publisher who publicize secrets embarrassing to the government (Secs. 1121, 1122, 1123, 1124). "Officials misstatements of law" and "public officials and government servants from prosecution for illegal activities, such as some of those involved in Watergate (Secs. 542, 544, 552).

\* S.1 provides for a mandatory death penalty (Chapter. 24). The death penalty has always fallen hardest on poor, Black and minority people. This is especially so in the South -- as the disproportionate share of Black and minority people on death row in North Carolina today shows. This is "cruel and unusual" punishment for a select group of people and it is inherently racist.

\* S.1, provides mandatory long prison sentences, de-emphasizes rehabilitation of criminal offenders in favor of vengeful punishment, and allows greater latitude for the use of forced confessions (Part III, and sections 1811, 1823, 3713 and 3714). It does nothing to establish effective control of handguns (Sec. 1823). And it provides over-broad authority for use of deadly force by authorities to prevent escape from arrest or jail, regardless of the crime alleged or grounds for suspecting the accused (Sec. 541).

## Rustin Calls for Coalition of Blacks and Jews

A new coalition of Blacks and Jews "is absolutely essential for the well-being of both," according to Bayard Rustin, veteran civil rights leader and founder of Black Americans to Support Israel Committee (BASIC). He predicted that there will be a rebirth of the alliance.

Addressing a meeting of the national fact-finding committee of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, Mr. Rustin said Blacks "are being tremendously hurt by the recession and now realize that if anything is to happen, there must be coalitions."

He went on to say that while it was "completely appropriate" for Jews to have "turned inward" in the wake of the Arab-Israeli Six Day War, with current developments at the United Nations, "Jews ought to realize that they profoundly need friends wherever they can find them."

BASIC, through literature, a speakers bureau and trips to Israel, will provide facts on Zionism and the Middle East to the Black community in order to correct what Mr. Rustin called "erroneous notions." He said the vast majority of Blacks do not have any opinion on the Mideast situation because they are not familiar with the facts.




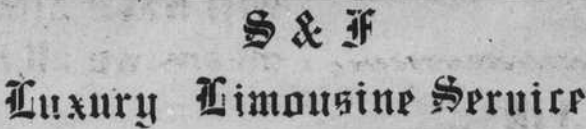

Mr. Rustin described BASIC as having had a "very good" reception in the Black community and said its membership is made up of Black leaders from all walks of life.

"We support Israel," he declared, "because Israel is a democracy and because the Jewish people have traditionally been helpful to us in our struggle."

Mr. Rustin noted that Jews were among the founders of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which today, with 1,700 chapters, is "the most important single organization in the Black community." He also pointed out that Jewish boys died with us in the civil rights revolution in the Sixties.

Benjamin R. Epstein, ADL's national director, and John L. Goldwater, chairman of the agency's fact finding committee, paid tribute to Mr. Rustin for dedicating his life to the achievement of civil and human rights.

A Black-Jewish coalition, Mr. Rustin said, should concentrate on "the preservation of democracy based on individual achievement rather than by virtue of which group one belongs to."

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