

# Church

## Ministers Alliance Protests Food Stamp Sting

The arrests of citizens caught up in the Food Stamp Sting operation last week has caused widespread consternation and protest among citizens throughout the community.

In an exclusive conversation with the SENTINEL, Rev. I. W. Wilson, Pastor of the True Love Missionary Baptist Church and President of the Ministers Alliance, voiced outrage over the manner in which innocent people were entrapped in the sting operation. Rev. Wilson said, "The Ministers Alliance wishes it to be known that it loudly protests and disagrees with the manner in which these arrests have come about and been made. We will do everything that we can to see that something is done about this sort of

thing."

He cited, as an example, the case of a minister who, after having been asked on three separate occasions to sell gasoline for food stamps, finally did so, thinking that he was actually helping the person who was offering the food stamps for the gasoline. After accepting the stamps for the gasoline, the minister was picked up and taken to jail. His wife, who allegedly had had nothing to do with the transaction, was taken to jail, also.

At SENTINEL press time, a huge Westside community rally is being planned to address the problem of these arrests. The rally is scheduled to be held at the True Love Missionary Baptist Church on Thursday evening, July 22, at 7 p.m.

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the individual who presented the Food Stamps for purchasing or used the stamps for payment for gasoline would be just as guilty as the person receiving the payment. Here is how the law reads:

"(a) Notwithstanding any other provision of this Act, the Secretary may provide for the issuance or redemption for redemption of coupons to such person or persons, and at such times and in such manner, as the Secretary deems necessary or appropriate to protect the interests of the United States or to ensure enforcement of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act.

(b)(1) Subject to the provisions of paragraph (2) of this subsection, whoever knowingly uses, transfers, acquires, alters, or possesses coupons or authorization cards in any manner not authorized by this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act shall, if such coupons or authorization cards are of a value of \$100 or more, be guilty of a felony and shall, upon the first conviction thereof, be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both, and upon the second and any subsequent conviction thereof, shall be imprisoned for not less than six months nor more than five years and may also be fined not more than \$10,000, or, if such coupons or authorization cards are of a value of less than \$100, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor, and upon the first conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both, and upon the second and any subsequent convictions thereof, shall be imprisoned for not more than one year and may also be fined not more than \$1,000. In addition to such penalties, any person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor violation under this subsection may be suspended by the court from participation in the food stamp program for an additional period of up to eighteen months consecutive to that period of suspension mandated by section 6(b)(1) of this Act (7 USCS \*2015(b)(2)).

(2) In the case of any individual convicted of an offense under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the court may permit such individual to perform work approved by the court for the purpose of providing restitution for losses incurred by the United States and the State agency as a result of the offense for which such individual was convicted. If the court permits such individual to perform such work and such individual agrees thereto, the court shall withhold the imposition of the sentence on the condition that such individual perform the assigned work. Upon the successful completion of the assigned work the court may suspend the sentence.

(c) Whoever presents, or causes to be presented, coupons for payment or redemption of the value of \$100 or more, knowing the same to have been received, transferred, or used in any manner in violation of the provisions of this Act or the regulations issued pursuant to this Act, shall be guilty of a felony and, upon the first conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned for not more than five years, or both, and upon the second and any subsequent conviction thereof, shall be imprisoned for not less than one year nor more than five years and may also be fined not more than \$10,000, or if such coupons are of a value of less than \$100, shall be guilty of a misdemeanor and, upon the first conviction thereof, shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than one year, or both, and, upon the second and any subsequent conviction thereof, shall be imprisoned for not more than one year and may also be fined not more than \$1,000. In addition to such penalties, any person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor violation under this subsection may be suspended by the court from participation in the food stamp program for an additional period of up to eighteen months consecutive to that period of suspension mandated by section 6(b)(1) of this Act (7 USCS \*2015(b)(1)).

(d) Coupons issued pursuant to this Act shall be deemed to be obligations of the United States within the meaning of Section 8 of title 18, United States Code (18 USCS \* 8).

(e) Any coupon issuer or any officer, employee, or agent thereof convicted of failing to provide the report required under section 7(d) (7 USCS \*2016(d)) of this Act or of violating the regulations issued under section 7(d) and (e) of this Act (7 USCS \*2016(d), (e)) shall be fined not more than \$1,000 or imprisoned for not more than

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since its inception in December, 1980, has examined many fundamental issues pertaining to the role of the police in America. Obviously, the heart of the matter is in the perception the black community and the police have one for the other.

Are the police viewed as "protectors from street crime, or are they the perpetrators of a worse kind of crime — the violation of constitutional rights?"

Attorney Fleetwood makes the interesting point that "while the historical roots of the American police may be traced to England, the evolution of modern American policemen are heavily influenced by the 'paddy-rollers' who patrolled southern swamps and lands looking for escaped slaves. American police became armed and organized within large cities immediately after the Civil War, when weapons were widespread throughout Society."

"As with many local government institutions," reminds the Project director, "the modern American police department has evolved without strong participation by the black community. Black citizens have generally not had a chance to express their concerns in the policy-making circles of individual police departments, in the state houses, or even in the city councils, where the laws governing police behavior are adopted."

Regrettably, Las Vegas is not one of the communities engaged in the NAACP Police-Citizen Violence Project. Reading Attorney Fleetwood's exposition of the evolution of the American police department, provided me with some insight as to why the police perceive us as they do — All one of a kind — to be corralled, herded up and sent back to where we belong — in bondage. What is resented most by Blacks, I believe, is the apparent inability (or lack of desire) of the police to separate the criminal element from the majority of the black population as they do the white citizenry.

An incident that occurred Friday night which began in front of the Maxim Hotel and ended on a downtown street with four police cars converging on an automobile occupied by four black youths who were summarily yanked from the car, thrown

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one year, or both.

(f) Any coupon issuer or any officer, employee, or agent thereof convicted of knowingly providing false information in the report required under Section 7(d) of this Act (7 USCS \*2016(d)) shall be fined not more than \$10,000 or imprisoned not more than five years, or both.

(g) The Secretary may subject to forfeiture and denial of property rights any nonfood items, moneys, negotiable instruments, securities, or other things of value that are furnished or intended to be furnished by any person in exchange for coupons or authorization cards in any manner not authorized by this Act or the regulations issued under this Act. Any forfeiture and disposal of property forfeited under this subsection shall be conducted in accordance with procedures contained in regulations issued by the Secretary.

(As amended May 26, 1980, P.L. 96-249, Title I, \*124, 94 Stat 383; Dec. 22, 1981, P.L. 97-98, Title XIII, \*1324, 95 Stat 1288.)"

The government should have a better way of quality assurance in its Food Stamp operation than the apparent selective prosecution. If the government is allowed to select its targets for the offering of Food Stamps at bargaining prices without some knowledge of the selected individual's involvement in the trafficking of Food Stamps, it would be selective persecution on the government's part.

Most of the individuals would probably end up with a felony record, only because someone walked up to them and made them such an offer. There has to be a better way of protecting the government's interest than just by making us all felons.



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