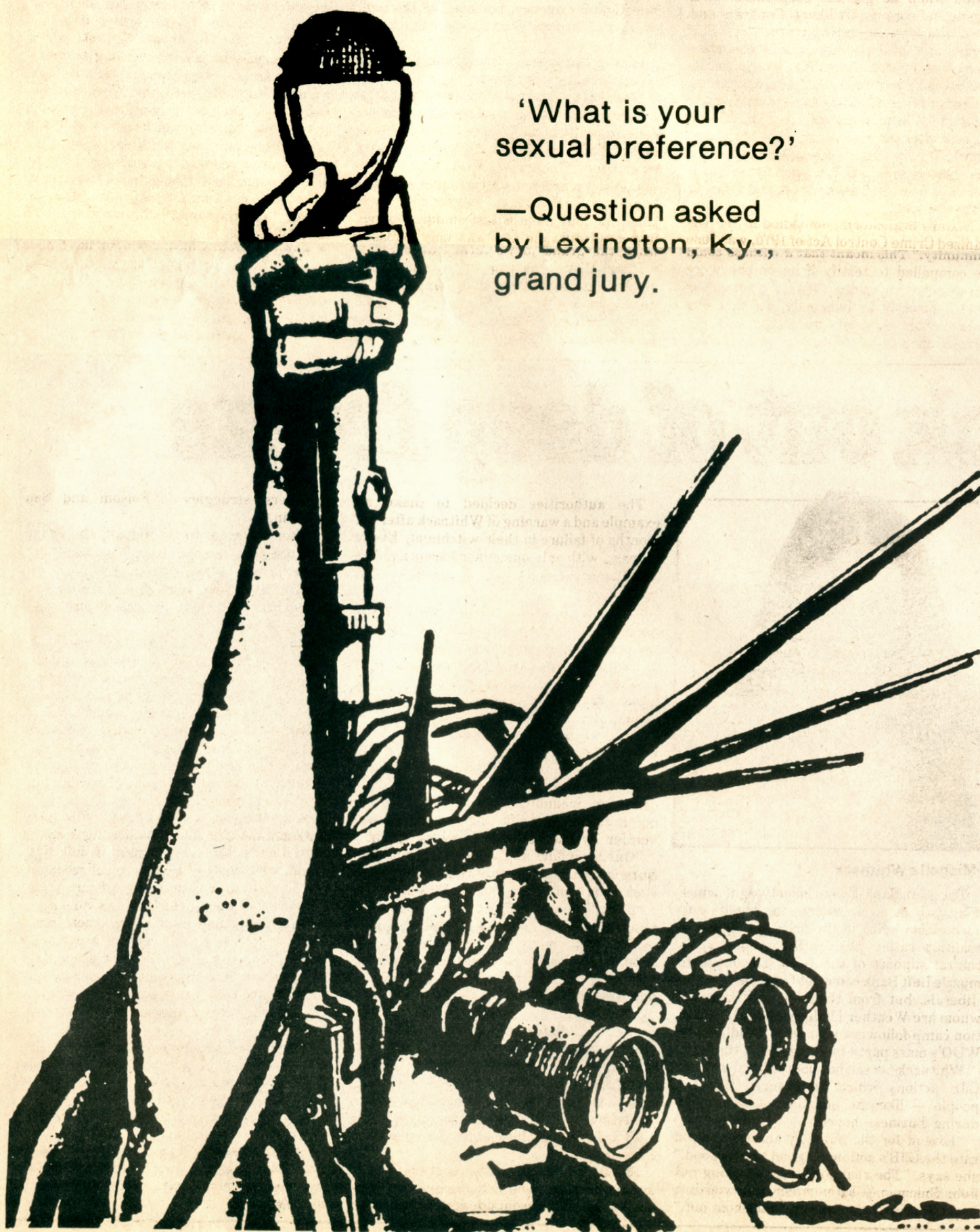


# Grand Juries: The New American Inquisition

BY HARRY GOMBE



'What is your  
sexual preference?'

—Question asked  
by Lexington, Ky.,  
grand jury.

**Y**ou can't hardly get out of a jam in America anymore by "taking the Fifth." That once-hallowed refuge of civil libertarians and other believers in the essential beneficence of the State has been rendered a virtual dead letter by an intensified grand jury offensive across the country.

Scores of individuals have gone to jail for refusing to cooperate with politically-motivated grand juries, and thousands of others have had their personal lives and political priorities disrupted in combatting the aura of criminality that the authorities have attempted to bestow on all dissenters.

In the process, these resisters have shown that the scope of political activity in a society depends not on the "rights" guaranteed by the government nor on the good will or good intentions of high officials and media managers, but on how well groups and individuals can mobilize to protect their own interests.

The resistance to the grand juries has had only marginal luck in legal and bureaucratic challenges of the grand juries' patently unconstitutional abuses. The main successes up to now have been due to the personal courage of individual "martyrs" and to the organizing skills and energies of local anti-grand jury coalitions and defense committees across the U.S.

Nixon's relatively minor tampering with the U.S. Constitution during the Watergate farce provoked anguished and outraged protests from his "enemies" among the ruling elite of government and the media. But a much graver breach of popular rights — in fact, the outright subversion of such key elements of liberal democracy as the Bill of Rights' Fifth Amendment guarantee against self-incrimination — is being carried out with hardly a murmur of discontent from the established opinion-makers.

Maybe it's because the targets (for now, at least) of this new Inquisition are merely the dispossessed and the dissident, including native people, militant unionists, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, gays, feminists, anti-war activists, single mothers and urban guerrillas.

Under the pretext of a war on organized crime and "terrorism," the grand jury has become a glibly subversive and glibly glib body completely subservient to the FBI and other police agencies aiming to destroy the broad progressive and Left communities. Prosecutors routinely use grand juries to extort information behind closed doors to which police investigators have

**F**or Michelle Whitnack, last December 20th started out like every other long and boring day in the Seattle City Jail. But it got worse, and then better, in a hurry.

Whitnack, a 21-year-old prison activist and anarchist, had been held in the jail since July for refusing to testify or even give her fingerprints to a grand jury probing Seattle's Left community. As things stood, she faced another 12 months inside.

On the morning of the 20th, without warning, six federal marshalls dragged her out of her cell, choked her into unconsciousness, and forcibly took her prints and mugshot. Then, without further ceremony, they gave her her walking papers.

The prosecutor's office issued a press release saying that the prints were obtained "without injury to the prisoner," and then went on to state that the evidence would be compared to prints taken from an unexploded bomb found a year earlier in the Seattle courthouse.

"Why did they let me out just before Christmas? I don't know," says Whitnack. "I'd like to say it was because of the big public campaign around my case, and their embarrassment at having me in jail, and they were looking for a face-saving way out, but that would be speculation.

"All I know is they picked a day when both my lawyers were out of town and the magistrate and the head marshal, both of whom would have stopped the forcible fingerprinting, were on vacation."

Whitnack points out as well that the reference to the unexploded bomb doesn't make much sense since it would have been more logical to keep her in jail until the comparison of prints had been completed.

The press release by the prosecutor's office was, in fact, part of a continuing official campaign to discredit the Seattle Left among the general population by creating an aura of criminality around political activists.

little access and no legal right.

As things stand now, a grand jury witness is in as much or more jeopardy as the ostensible "target" against whom the prosecutor is supposed to be seeking an indictment. The witness is given little or no warning to appear; he or she has no right to know the crimes being investigated and no right to have a lawyer present in the grand jury room; the regular rules of evidence and other due process safeguards don't apply; there is no public presence at the proceedings.

But the grand jury's main bludgeon is its power of civil contempt. Witnesses can be compelled, on pain of being sent to prison to answer literally any question about their political ideas and associations, about their conversations and activities, and those of their friends, neighbors and relatives. Jail terms can last up to 18 months — the term of the grand jury.

In a chilling new wrinkle, the grand jury has been put to work on what can only be described as anthropological research. It's the sort of research that the CIA has been funding for years in Latin America and elsewhere in an effort to anticipate, divert and control the forces of social change. Only now, the "subjects" are home-grown communities living in self-sufficient ways outside the sanctioned mainstream.

This happened clearly in Lexington, Kentucky, where the FBI thought it had tracked down political bank robbers Susan Saxe and Katherine Power. Agents started asking heavy-handed questions in the small Lesbian community there and were baffled to find they were getting nowhere.

One of the people questioned in Lexington said the FBI was thoroughly spooked to learn there were whole groups of people in America whose internal dynamics were a mystery to it, whose members spontaneously nurtured and supported each other and built solidarity outside the pale of the Welfare State. "For them, it was a bureaucrats' nightmare," she says. "They just assumed there was a national network of Lesbians moving people around, and they had to find out how it worked. They got the grand jury to ask all sorts of personal and irrelevant questions: who people had lived with in the past few years, who they met when they went to meetings, what they majored in in college.

"It was tremendously destructive of the political community in Lexington. People became burned out and paranoid. It caused tremendous rifts. You never knew what was happening."

Similar research is being conducted in Seattle (see accompanying article), where, as one lawyer put it, most of the subpoenees "obviously don't know shit from shinola" about any illegal political activities.

**C**ivics textbooks say the grand jury system was established way back when, in order to protect the individual against capricious prosecution by the government. In truth, the grand jury — mostly male, white, middle-aged and middle-class — has almost always been a rubber stamp in criminal prosecutions and political persecutions, and in times of acute domestic stress or of abrupt or profound changes in official policy, most federal administrations — even "liberal" or "progressive" ones — have allowed or encouraged grand juries to stifle the voices of opposition.

Abraham Lincoln used grand juries to silence critics of the Union cause; Woodrow Wilson to illegally imprison and deport hundreds of radicals to Russia following the Bolshevik Revolution; Franklin Roosevelt to put down Nazi sympathizers; and Harry Truman to provide a cover for the anti-liberal crusade waged by Joe McCarthy and the young and hungry Richard Nixon in their congressional committee.

Nixon was following in this American tradition when he got the cooperation of a supine and supposedly liberal Congress and the U.S. Supreme Court to rewrite the Bill of Rights and fatally weaken one of the more cherished liberal freedoms — the right against self-incrimination. High government officials had been looking for new methods to stem the Vietnam-era tide of popular discontent after the great conspiracy trials (Dr. Spock, Chicago Eight, Wounded Knee, etc.), and 1984-type legislation, such as no-knock laws and preventive detention, had failed to turn the trick.

Nixon's brainstorm, embodied in the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, was "use immunity." This meant that a witness could be compelled to testify if he or she were "granted" immunity from prosecution based, directly or indirectly, on that evidence. This dubious protection was obviously open to subversion by unscrupulous

prosecutors.

The first wave of witchhunts was coordinated by the Internal Security Division (ISD) of the "Justice" Department. ISD prosecutors jetted around the country, appearing in more than 100 cities, subpoenaing more than 2,000 people sympathetic to or active in radical causes, or people who were simply friends or acquaintances of activists, forcing many of them to journey, often on little or no notice and with no explanation, hundreds or thousands of miles from their homes to answer a series of wide-ranging questions relating to their friends, political associations and activities.

Sample question in Tucson, where the grand jury was investigating the theft of a quantity of explosives (the woman who refused to answer it got seven months in jail):

"I want you to tell the grand jury what period of time during the years 1969 and 1970 you resided at 2201 Ocean Front Walk, Venice (California); who resided there at the time you lived there, identifying all persons you have seen in or about the premises of that address; and tell the grand jury all of the conversations that were held by you or others in your presence during the time that you were at that address."

#### Stalled by Watergate

The government's offensive got stalled temporarily as a result of Watergate and various court challenges, but these impediments have now been largely swept away, setting the stage for a new initiative. Nixon, Mitchell and that gang are gone now, and the FBI has taken over from the ISD as the main investigatory agency, but most of the politically-motivated prosecutors are still on the job.

Among the more active grand juries in recent months have been:

- New York — a campaign is being waged to smear the Puerto Rican independence movement by linking the Puerto Rican Socialist Party (PSP), with the Armed Forces of Puerto Rican Liberation (FALN), a clandestine group which has carried out a series of bombings. PSP militant Luerida Torres was jailed for four months last summer for refusing to talk, and she was only released when the grand jury's term expired.
- Rapid City — as part of the continuing government repression of the native movement following Wounded Knee, three people were jailed for refusing to talk about a shootout in which two FBI agents who invaded the

Pine Ridge Reservation were killed. An elderly couple was jailed for three months; they agreed to talk only because they had to get out to care for their young children. Joanna Ledieux, a tribal worker and mediator in the shootout, spent eight months in jail, and was only released because of public outrage: she was unable to nurse her newborn infant. In a related case, a Wounded Knee lawyer successfully resisted a subpoena in Des Moines which called on her to give evidence against her client.

• Washington, D.C. — a grand jury is helping the Washington Post attempt to bust the militant Pressmen's Union. Eighty-eight unionists have been subpoenaed to find out how Post presses got wrecked during a 1975 strike. Fifteen unionists have been indicted for rioting, destruction of machinery and other offenses.

• Scranton-Harrisburg, Pennsylvania — three separate grand juries are attempting to probe the underground "network" that harbored Patty Hearst and other Symbionese Liberation Army members in their travels. Two local activists, Jay Weiner and Phil Shinnick, went to jail in December after tying up the panel for months on procedural challenges and on direct "outreach" appeals to the jurors to take an independent stand against the prosecutor.

• Seattle — a fishing expedition against the entire Left community resulted in the jailing of Michelle Whitnack for six months. Ten other people — most of them women, including four single mothers — have been threatened with jail for refusing to talk.

• Denver — FBI-police-vigilante offensive against the Chicano movement is being aided by a grand jury, which is purportedly investigating a 1974 bomb explosion that killed six Chicano men (Los Seis) in a car. Veronica Vigil, a Chicana activist, spent seven months in jail for refusing to talk.

• New Haven — two formerly non-political women, Terri Turgeon and Ellen Grusse, went to jail for seven months as part of a grand jury inquisition of the Women's and Lesbian communities in Connecticut. This investigation is linked to a similar witchhunt in Lexington, Kentucky, ostensibly aimed at ferreting out Susan Saxe and Katherine Power. In Lexington, Jill Raymond spent 17 months in jail.

• Tucson — four Chicana women have been indicted for aiding "illegal" immigrants from Mexico as part of a grand jury attempt to scapegoat undocumented workers for the high rate of unemployment.

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# Whitnack out of deep freeze

The grand jury is ostensibly probing the activities of the George Jackson Brigade, a clandestine group that pulled off six political bombings, a bungled bank robbery and a successful jailbreak during 1975 and 1976. (The courthouse bomb has been claimed by the New World Liberation Front, based in the San Francisco Bay area.)

That wasn't the first time the prosecutor had attempted to discredit Whitnack when she refused to give in to his threats. Months earlier, he had announced that he had discovered a housewife who claimed to have seen a woman vaguely fitting Whitnack's description lodged in a tree near a suburban power station that was bombed the next day.

Whitnack recalls: "When I first heard about this housewife's statement, I ran up to Ed Mead (a GJB member then and now in prison), and I said to him, 'Ed, I wouldn't ask you this if I didn't need to know, but was there anybody who looked like me in the Laurehurst bombing?'  
"He told me, 'nope, there were no women involved.' Now, since then, friends have gone to look at the tree and they have told me there was no reason to climb the tree to see the power station, and that only one tree thereabouts would hold my weight — I'm neither slender nor athletic — and it lacks branches for its first ten feet."

To this date, Whitnack has yet to be charged for either the Laurehurst or the courthouse bomb. But the guilt-by-association tactic has had some success in splitting the Seattle Coalition against Grand Jury abuse by driving a wedge between those who give critical support to armed struggle and those who oppose it out of principle or out of fear of a repressive backlash.



Michelle Whitnack

The Left Bank Book Collective (of which Whitnack is a member), the main anti-authoritarian voice in the area, has quit the coalition rather than stifle its outspoken critical support of the GJB. The move to muzzle Left Bank came not from the nervous liberals, but from the Leninists, many of whom are Weather Underground Organization camp-followers who were peddling the WUO's mass party-building line at the time.

Whitnack herself has been critical of those GJB actions which endangered innocent people — like the bombing of a Safeway during business hours.

"Except for the Safeway action, I would rate the GJB's actions as good to real good," she says. "The real good was breaking out John Sherman (GJB member) who was in a hospital prison ward after a bank shoot-out."

The authorities decided to make an example and a warning of Whitnack after six months of failure in their witchhunt. Every witness, with only one minor exception, has steadfastly refused to talk to the FBI or the grand jury.

In all, 11 individuals have been subpoenaed, many of whom have only marginal connection to the Left or underground scenes. Four of those subpoenaed have been single mothers with very young children — an obvious attempt to intimidate a vulnerable group. Police search-and-seize raids on people's homes have followed the same random pattern.

Despite its internal conflicts, the Grand Jury Coalition has mounted an effective campaign, including fairly favorable coverage in the news media and energetic intervention by the National Lawyers' Guild.

"Our basic line is 'Co-operating with the State is like eating potato chips — once you start, you can't stop,'" says Whitnack.

"They (the authorities) have it in their minds that there's one big conspiracy going on. I think it's more comforting for them to think it's coming from some sort of central command than that folks are acting independently."

#### Safeway Bombing

Whitnack was subpoenaed because of her friendship with Ralph "Po" Ford, a Left Bank member who was killed in late 1975 when a bomb he was attempting to place in a closed Safeway blew up prematurely. (The GJB Safeway bombing came in response to Po's death.)

She had lived in Seattle about two years, and before that lived in Sacramento, where she was involved in outside support work for

prisoners' struggles in Folsom and San Quentin.

After she went to jail herself, the grand jury offensive seemed to stall, probably because of the adverse publicity over the jailing. Since July, there have been no new subpoenas, although the grand jury continues to sit.

But that's not all: as soon as she went inside, Whitnack got busy helping organize a propaganda barrage about the lack of health care facilities in the jail. When, as a result, she was transferred to the Tacoma jail in punishment, the Seattle women prisoners staged a hunger strike to demand her return. She finally made it back, but mainly because of the string-pulling of her lawyer.

Now that she's out, Whitnack has to try to pick up the pieces of her totally-disrupted personal life. She had been sharing a house with Laurie Raymond (sister of Jill Raymond, who spent 17 months in jail resisting the Lexington, Kentucky, grand jury), and Laurie's two young children. But now Raymond is in jail and could remain there until summer on two convictions: destroying federal property at the Trident nuclear submarine base, and "assaulting" six marshalls at Whitnack's contempt hearing. Raymond's two children are temporarily staying with friends.

"My immediate priorities are to settle my home life and to transform my defense committee, Deep Freeze Life Support Systems (P.O. Box 12497, Seattle, Washington 98111), into a defense committee for Laurie," says Whitnack.

"Was six months in jail worth it? You bet it was. The thing they didn't realize was when my energy runs out, my stubbornness switches in."



**T**he strategy of resistance to grand juries is summed up in the slogan, Community — Not Immunity. It's a strategy that depends on the personal courage, discipline and commitment of individuals called to testify, but also on the willingness of diverse elements in the Left community to unite behind a political movement that will put intolerable pressure — mainly in the form of public opinion — on the authorities.

After a period of initial confusion over how to respond to grand jury attacks, a nationwide consensus has now developed (with only one significant exception — more of that later) that absolute non-collaboration is the starting point. In the past six years, nearly 200 people have refused to talk in the face of government coercion, compared to maybe 25 in the previous 20 years. As one anti-grand jury coalition puts it:

"What happens if you testify? (1) You have been one person who does not resist. (2) You may have made real what they were only guessing. (3) You have increased your chances of being called again. (4) Without knowing it, you may have made connections they did not know. (5) You have increased the momentum for more grand juries. (6) However innocently, you may be responsible for someone, perhaps yourself, going to prison."

This tactic applies to dealings with the FBI as well. The watchword is **Don't Talk**. There is no federal law requiring anyone to answer questions of the FBI, but it is against the law to lie to the FBI or other police agencies. Don't try to outsmart them, either; they are professionals at their work. The suggested line is, "I have nothing to say. Goodbye," and keep repeating that till they go away.

The jailings have provided the main focus for organizing activities. But, except for a few cases, the resistance has not been all that successful in actually springing people from jail. The courts have run roughshod over just about every legal objection, and it takes a unique set of circumstances for the government to cave in to public pressure. Example: Joanna Ledieux of Pine Ridge got out after eight months because the government was placed in the embarrassing position of denying her access to her newborn baby.

However, the intense public campaigns around these cases has almost assuredly prevented the heavier use of jailings by the authorities, who are beginning to find this tactic counterproductive. Most of those who went to jail were threatened with new subpoenas on their release, but the government rarely followed through on the threat.

In many cities, after someone had been jailed, the subpoenas for subsequent witnesses were quietly dropped, especially if the witnesses made a public show of resistance. In Los Angeles last June, widespread public protest in the entertainment industry led to the dropping of subpoenas against three filmmakers working on **Underground**, a major documentary about the Weather Underground Organization.

All forms of media have been used to bring the message home. There have been mass demonstrations, public meetings, cultural events featuring everything from specially-created operas to puppet shows, public statements inside and outside of court, torrents of letters and telegrams to public officials, letter-writing campaigns to local newspapers, establishment of "Peoples' grand juries" to investigate crimes by those in public office.

The mass media has been used effectively in a number of cities to educate the public on the broader usages of repression. This has been especially so when there has been a "martyr" (usually female) involved. Two examples: when Jill Raymond came out of jail, three of the four leading papers in the State editorialized that the grand jury investigation should lay off; and when Michelle Whitnack went in, the local red-neck rag in Seattle ran an extremely sympathetic inter-

view and profile letting her mention the word "anarchist" and talk about her prison movement work and even running a poignant photo of her peering through the jail-house visitors' peephole.

Another type of educational campaign has been directed at the grand jurors themselves. Nearly all uncooperative witnesses issue statements or hand them to the jurors pointing out the various sins of the government and advising them they don't have to be in the thrall of the prosecutor. In a few cases, this has resulted in juries taking a somewhat more independent tack.

However, a "courier" for the underground New World Liberation Front was charged with threatening a federal grand jury last October in San Francisco for handing the jurors a document warning them their "safety will be in great peril" if they persisted in their investigation of the NWLF. She beat the charge after several jurors testified in court that they did not feel frightened or intimidated by the warning.

The NWLF is the only major group that has a policy of talking to the grand juries. NWLF above-ground couriers say they have no direct connection with or knowledge of the underground, so it can't hurt for them to talk. They also warn others who communicate with them to bear in mind that "nothing is secure" at their above-ground headquarters. The rationale for this strategy is that it's better to keep politically active and free rather than tied down in legal battles or locked-down in jail.

This strategy is nothing if not controversial. The Bay Area Research Collective (BARC), a Berkeley-based above-ground guerrilla support group with strong anti-authoritarian tendencies, calls it arrogant, individualistic and dangerous. BARC asks, "Can anyone know so well what information is useful or will be used — even illegally in a set-up? . . . Doesn't this move at once undercut the strength of non-collaboration while also under-cutting support for the NWLF? Many people simply don't want their enemy, the State, to be privy to either the fact or content of correspondence and/or conversations with (even above-ground) members of the NWLF."

Attempts to reform the grand jury system through legislation are also being made. The most comprehensive reform bill is one sponsored by liberal Rep. John Conyers of Michigan and 24 others. It would abolish use immunity, strengthen the independence of the jurors and give witnesses more procedural protections. This bill is now stalled in Congress, and has been for the past couple of years.

However, Congress is also considering another bill which represents a grave threat to civil liberties, the freedom of the press, and the right to mobilize for social change. Formerly called Senate Bill S-1, this legislation would, among other things, reinstate the death penalty, expand federal criminal jurisdiction, establish a new category of classified "national defense information" more sweeping than anything now on the books, and beef up prison sentences and the obscenity and insanity laws.

**C**anada has its own version of the grand jury. It may not have been used as much as the Nixon grand jury (up to now), but it has potential for even greater abuse.

As the result of a decision last year by the Supreme Court of Canada, the provinces have the power to establish "special crime inquiries" to probe organized criminal activities. These commissions, which are composed of government appointees, can subpoena witnesses, authorize wiretaps and house searches and seize books and records.

There is no limit to the length of time the commission can sit nor to the types of questions it can ask, and there is no necessary accountability to the public. Protections against self-incrimination are already considerably weaker in Canada than in the U.S., since a witness in a Canadian court can be compelled to testify without immunity from prosecution.

The Supreme Court decision involved an investigation by Quebec into Mafia-style criminal operations in the Montreal area. Other provinces, especially British Columbia, are considered likely to move against the heroin trade and the organized trafficking in stolen property. But, as the Nixon experience proves, they could hardly stop there when they have such a powerful weapon for combatting "subversives," organized or otherwise.

(For more information contact the Grand Jury Project, Room 1415, 853 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10003.)

## JAMAICA

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**Bob Marley, after being shot**

economy. The CIA operates in force in Jamaica (nine operatives exposed in the Jamaican press in the past year), and there have been dozens of PNP organizers and sympathizers killed in right-wing pogroms.

Since the second decisive electoral victory of the PNP on December 15, the campaign is sure to intensify. There is already an international squeeze on the economy. The stakes are high because of the strategic bauxite reserves (necessary in production of aluminum) that Jamaica possesses.

Manley knows where his strength is: "I listen carefully to the new reggae songs. We have to keep a moral focus on the terrible suffering and poverty we have here. I listen carefully to the new reggae songs because they remind me that the slums are still there and that they are among the worst in the world. The middle-class tells me we are moving towards Socialism too fast. The reggae and Rastas tell me we are moving too slow."

As for Bob Marley, he is like most Jamaicans—sceptical of politicians and their grandiose claims: "When ya talk about the people in power, ya haffa be a politics man. Me don't deal wit' no politics. Me deal wit de truth."

### The Music

**"Often times I sit right down and I remember those chains**

**How my people was enslaved time and time and time again**

**—Africa, Might Diamonds**

Reggae music has roots drilled deep into the heart of Jamaica. It embodies the historical experience of the Jamaican people—it reflects and in reflecting, reveals the contemporary situation of the nation.

Reggae is the natural music of the people. Like all oppressed peoples—culturally and economically throttled—Jamaicans have turned to themselves for an alternative to what has been forced down their throats. They have combined the transistorized static of American rhythm'n'blues with the distinctive rhythm of the Caribbean, the age-old pulsing of their African homeland and the experiences of everyday life to produce "Rebel Music."

Until 1962, the year of

Jamaican independence from Britain, popular music on the island mainly followed American and English trends, with very little indigenous music reaching the media.

An important exception was the Burra dance, an African based rhythm that represented an open celebration of criminality and was used to welcome discharged prisoners back into the community. It was an occasion for the outpouring of grievances against the authorities.

In the Forties the Rastafari began clashing regularly with the police, because of the Rastas' radical lifestyle, and liaison began to develop between the Rastas and common criminals. The drift towards a consciously anti-establishment and anarchist position was assisted by the police, who labelled the Rastas as dangerous criminals who were merely using mysticism as a front for their subversive activities. Many Rastas openly embraced their outlaw status.

In time the criminal ambience which surrounded the music was incorporated and eclipsed by the Niyabingi dance which replaced the Burra, essentially an act of resistance, with an open commitment to revolution. The Niyabingi were an Ethiopian version of the Mau Mau warriors who carried out a guerrilla war against the British in Kenya between 1952-60. In Jamaica, the Niyabingi had staged small-scale localized uprisings which terrorized the rulers but amounted to nothing.

The Rastafari, who came to the urban jungles in the first flush of neo-colonialism following 1962, steadily gained influence and involved themselves creatively in the production of popular music as an outlet for their message. The embittered youth of the West Kingston slums, abandoned and oppressed by a society which claimed to serve them, were ready to look to the Rastas for explanations, to listen to their music, and emulate their posture of withdrawal.

In retrospect, the rise of the Rastafari signalled a trend away from the undirected violence, bravado and competitive individualism of the early Sixties (stunningly portrayed in the reggae film "The Harder They Come") and to a more articulate and informed anger. The once "rude-boys" acquired the Rastas' terms of reference and became the movement's militant arm. As the music evolved and passed into the hands of the Natty Dreads there was an accompanying expansion of class and colour consciousness throughout the communities. The official Black Power left, centred on the University of the West Indies, came to the Rastas' doorstep in the late Sixties translating their mystical anarchism directly into Marxist dialectics in the pages of their newspaper **Abeng**.

**"So who's gonna stay home When the freedom fighters are fighting"**

**—Talkin' Blues, the Wailers**

Today, a wave of anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, and anti-establishment reggae hits has bolstered Manley's left-wing policies

and exposed the source of Jamaica's problems to ordinary people. Songs with titles like: "Foreign Press", "Revolution Conference", "Kissinger", "MPLA", "We Should Be In Angola", "Arab Oil Weapon", and "Hear Talk of Inflation" are being produced by the hundreds and serve to communicate resistance consciousness where the high-sounding phrases of Manley's government create confusion.

The impact of reggae/Rasta philosophy has been aided by the economics of record production and distribution on the island. For all their faults, the rip-off recording studios permit almost anyone with talent to make a record using studio equipment. They also allow the production of dub (sound-track) sides which the performers can take with them on the important backyard party circuit.

In a society where the public cannot generally afford to pay for concerts (there is very little live music in Jamaica) and the musicians cannot afford instruments, the dub-sides enable performers to accompany their records live at parties. The disc-jockey philosophers and poets like Big Youth, U-Roy, I-Roy and others can get the message out by scatting (talking) over dub-sides. In this way the people have direct and intimate contact with uplifting subversive ideas.

Another important factor is the ability of ordinary people to distribute and promote their records through the decentralized independent record shops which have grown up in the absence of strong monopolies. Songs, political or otherwise, make it on their own merits rather than on manipulated radio play. Thus, tunes banned by the government or media establishment can become runaway hits, appropriately termed "heavy shots," regardless of official sanctions. Examples of these are "Legalize It," calling for the legalization of ganja, and "Discrimination," warning employers not to hassle Rastas, both of which were banned by the government.

Without a doubt reggae and the resistance culture it represents has performed a liberating function in contemporary Jamaica, and a secularized version of the Rastafarian credo is definitely on the upswing. Whether the Natty Dreads can continue their development is another story. It remains to be seen if reggae music and its rebel content can withstand the pressures of North America's spectacular commodity society. Or if it will be denatured and co-opted, absorbed without a whimper, like the protest movement and "San Francisco Sound" of the Hippy Sixties.

Bob Marley says emphatically, "It never be mon, because Rasta-man him not like a hippie. . . Him hold-a on long time an' hippie no hold-a on, him fail."

At the present time the Dreads believe that their example, their message, and the strength of their vision will prevail in the world. If not, Bob Marley says ominously, "Is better to die fightin' for yar freedom than to be a prisoner all da days of yar life."