

Black Caucus Takes Aim On Probe Of Officials

In late September the Congressional Black Caucus met due to the mounting list of black officials who have been investigated, indicted or convicted in what many view as a clear pattern of government harassment and selective law enforcement.

Representative Mervyn M. Dymally (D-Calif.) urged black political organizations, research groups and churches to establish a "formal institution charged with seeing that the right of African Americans to be represented before the government bodies of our land will no longer be abridged by systematic harassment of blacks officials."

The organization raised funds and helped develop defense strategies.

Representative John Conyers, Jr. (D-Mich.), the senior member of the 24 member caucus,

announced that he will hold hearings on the harassment issue sometime next year. The hearings will look at tactics government investigators use in bringing cases against black officials, the number of cases that have been brought, and their outcomes.

"What we're trying to do is take the emotional content and rhetorical factor out of it as much as possible," Conyers said.

The claim of harassment and selective law enforcement has been fueled by criticism of tactics used to attack high-profile cases such as D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, filmed in an FBI sting operation then convicted last summer on a drug charge; House Majority Whip William H. Gray III (D-PA.), the subject last year of a leak claiming

he was the target of a Justice Department investigation later denied by the department; and Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, who was investigated, but not prosecuted for financial improprieties.

"It is a perception that demands the most serious attention because it calls into question the ability of African Americans to participate fully in the process of American self-government," Dymally said.

Russell E. Owens, director of the National Policy Institute commented on the situation. "There is a larger issue: whether or not blacks are being treated fairly and equitably and whether they are given access to all the protections that are guaranteed them as citizens of the United States," said Owens.

Dymally's CBC Weekend Harassment Forum Draws Record Crowd

On Thursday, September 27, 1990, Congressman Mervyn M. Dymally (D-CA) held a hearing and strategy session on "Harassment of Black Leaders". This subject drew a record crowd for such a forum, attracting about 1,000 people who attended various segments of the program throughout the day.

Congressman Dymally, in his opening statement, challenged those in attendance to understand the pervasiveness of selective prosecution, unjust adverse publicity or media leaks, and very real conscious efforts on the part of law enforcement agencies, government and quasi government agencies, news agencies, and other powerful

community organizations to discredit and render ineffective African American leadership across the country.

Witness after witness told stories of how they have been harassed because of their life style, for being too outspoken, for taking unpopular positions on issues, for holding powerful positions in their communities and for being perceived as too influential, etc. While many of the witnesses were never accused or convicted of any criminal offenses, the common horror story included the draining of their financial resources in an effort to defend themselves.

Among the participants in Dymally's program were: Dr. Benjamin

Chavis, Mayor Richard Arrington of Birmingham, Congressman William Clay (D-MO), Dr. Mary Sawyer (author of "Dilemma of Black Politics" and "Ten Years Later"), Dr. Dorothy Height, Bishop George Stallings, Attorney Faye Williams, Minister Louis Farrakhan.

Also speaking were: Attorneys William Kuntzler, Arthur Kinoy,

Henry Sanders, Mary Cox, Brian Click, Lewis Pitts, Senator Andrew Jenkins, Alice Huffman, Clarence Mitchell, III and Dr. C. Dolores Tucker.

Co-sponsors of the program with Dymally were: National Council of the Churches of Christ, National Interreligious Council of Racial Justice and Clarence Mitchell Memorial Fund.



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