

Other Editors Speak *Fred Post 8/8/76*

Freedom — Not Repression

People do not always say what they mean, sometimes intentionally. For instance, there appears to be a deliberate attempt to place a disparaging label on a proven principle of our society. I have in mind the current practice of some who purposely complain of "repression" when they are talking about the supremacy of the law. Apparently to them, any law enforcement function is repressive.

I want to state emphatically and unequivocally that vigorous, effective law enforcement is not repression; rather, it is an integral part of a free society, and it is necessary to our survival. This becomes clearer with every violent demonstration. There can be no freedom and there can be no liberty without supremacy of the law. And we cannot have supremacy of the law unless the law is enforced.

Much of the talk about repression comes from those involved in or in sympathy with revolutionary violence on our campuses and in our streets. With blind enthusiasm for their diverse causes, they defy all authority, burn, loot, and destroy property, and assault police with bricks, bottles, stones, and sometimes firearms — all in the name of dissent.

The first amendment is explicit as to "the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances." This is a popular and cherished freedom, and rightly so. Peaceably is a key word of the above quote; however, it is conveniently ignored by many persons who equate dissent with destruction.

A defiant militant, with a brick in one hand and a firebomb in the other, standing shoulder to shoulder with hundreds of similarly armed protesters, blocking a main thoroughfare and silhouetted against a flaming public building, shouting that his right to dissent is being repressed is a picture of paradox. He may be

making news, but he is perverting freedom.

There is nothing in the first amendment which guarantees people the right to riot and plunder as means of dissent. Invariably, when incidents and altercations occur during public dissent, the trouble is started by unpeaceful participants who knowingly and willingly break the law. Then, when the constitutional functions of enforcing the law and restoring order are brought into play, the participants and their sympathizers scream "repression," a typical anarchic response. No one claims that members of law enforcement have never overreacted to physical and verbal assaults by rioters — one excess against another as it were. But, let us get one thing straight. Prompt, effective law enforcement to stop rioting mobs and wanton destruction is not repression. It is a vital cog in our democratic process.

Some people imply that our choice today may be between anarchy and repression. Indeed, it is not. Our choice today is the same as that of our Founding Fathers some 200 years ago — liberty and freedom under the rule of law. If we enforce the law when it is violated, we will perpetuate this choice, and we will have nothing to fear from either anarchy or repression. Thus, let us make certain that the distinction is clear — the law and its enforcement are pillars of freedom, not repression. — John Edgar Hoover, (Reprinted from the FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin).