

House Security Report

Split in Black Panther Probe

By Geoffrey Gould

WASHINGTON — (NNS) — The House Committee on Internal Security has produced what appears to be a thoroughly documented history of the Black Panther party, but the committee's four Republican members have objected that it is grossly inadequate.

The document draws largely on writings and speeches of Black Panther leaders themselves, and it is peppered with footnotes from such prominent scholars as black sociologist Kenneth B. Clark.

The four Republican members — John Ashbrooke of Ohio, Roger Zion of Indiana, Fletcher Thompson of Georgia and John Schmitz of California — in a separate minority view said the report, "in tone and emphasis, is unfair to the police and to the American people."

Called 'Subversive'

"The present report," said the dissenters, "does not give the reader a clear understanding of the Black Panther Party as a subversive

criminal group, using the facade of politics and Marxist-Leninist ideology as a cover for crimes of violence and extortion."

While the report's majority conclusions include a plea to ban the use of the U.S. mail for the Black Panther newspaper, the body of the 145-page study bears evidence of long and careful research and does not resort to inflammatory rhetoric.

The report, to be released tomorrow, is clear evidence of Chairman Richard Ichord's (D-Mo.) efforts to refurbish the image of the committee.

His first move was to change the name from the old House Committee on Un-American Activities — known generally as HUAC in public hearings since he took over the chairmanship a year and a half ago, Ichord has made efforts to be scrupulously fair to witnesses.

Ichord's way contrasts with the past history of the committee, long regarded by liberals and leftists as unfair, unconstitutional in its meth-

ods and packed with roughshod Communist-baiters and "witch hunters."

GOP Rejects Image

But the new image evidently does not set well with the conservative Republican members, who objected to the first line of the report's conclusions: "The Black Panther Party, in a sense, is a product of our times."

Said the minority view:

"The Black Panther Party is not a product of our times, as the report states, but is largely a creature of the mass media.

"The publicity given to this relatively small group of criminal misfits has enabled them to make some gains among a tiny minority of young Negroes and to raise considerable funds from gullible whites.

"It is in the interest of all Americans, both black and white, to expose this organization for what it is. This, the report has not done."

Oakland, 1966

The report traces the Black Panther Party from its

inception in 1966 in Oakland, under the leadership of Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale.

The report does not seem to slight the alleged illegal activities of the militant Panthers, including evidence of extortion from merchants to support their programs.

Besides calling for a mail ban on the party newspaper, the report's conclusions say that no Black Panther Party

entity has ever filed a federal income tax return and suggests an amendment to the Subversive Activities Control Act to cover the Panthers.

'Disintegration'

Ichord entrusted the hearings that led up to the report to Rep. Richardson Preyer (D-N.C.). In a signed rebuttal to the minority view at the end of the report.

S. F. Sunday Examiner & Chronicle, August 22, 1971

Preyer said:

"The Black Panther Party as a national organization is near disintegration. Its peak membership was never more than 1500 or 2000, and the committee hearings document the steady decline in these numbers during the last year . . .

"Probably only remnants of the party will remain alive here and there to bedevil the police and enchant a few of the young, but its day as a national influence and influence in the black community seems over."

Preyer added:

"It is hard to believe that only a little over a year ago

the Panthers, despite their small number, ranked as the most celebrated ghetto militants.

They fascinated the left, inflamed the police, terrified much of America, and had an extraordinary effect on the black community."

'Myth Destroyed'

But he said the Panthers themselves, "through their excesses," have done most to destroy "a myth of their own creation." By and large, he added, "we in the wider community — black and white — have done a good job in keeping our balance, in separating fact from propaganda,

☆☆☆ Section A Page 23

reality from myth, and not overreacting; our police (with a few notable exceptions) have done a good job in keeping their cool in the face of intense provocation.

"The myth that the police were out to eliminate the Panthers, though not swallowed by the whole press, has been laid to rest."

Preyer defended the report as in a "spirit of fairness and balance. Some might say it is too sympathetic to the Panthers, for it would be possible, without departing from the facts, to write a real zinger of a report which would carry a stronger sense of outrage than the present report.