

A. B. A. Unit of Young Lawyers Sees Threats to U.S. Liberties

NYTimes

By JOHN DARNTON JUL 9 1971

A committee of the young lawyers section of the American Bar Association reported yesterday that "there is currently an anti-libertarian climate in the United States which properly can be labeled 'repressive.'"

In a 28-page report that was researched over the last year, the Committee on Protection of Civil Liberties and Civil Rights concluded that the threat to civil liberties in this country is "more dangerous" than at any other time in history—including "the McCarthy years in the nineteen-fifties."

"While this situation is not yet at a crisis point, our civil liberties problems are serious enough for us to conclude that we are dangerously close," the report said.

An underlying cause, of the situation, the report said, was "national stress," brought about by "a highly unpopular war in Southeast Asia."

But it also blamed "some of our nation's highest leaders," whose words and deeds it maintained contributed to "the present climate of repression."

Actions Are Specified

Among the Government's actions the group singled out were rhetorical attacks upon dissenters, the placement of informers on campuses and in activist organizations, a readiness to engage in "unprecedented" electronic and photographic surveillance, the accumulation

of dossiers on private citizens in all walks of life, and the Vice President's critical remarks about the media.

The report, written by a committee of 14 headed by Robert Pincus of New York City, was released yesterday the young lawyers section. The section has about 50,000 members, about one-third of the parent organization.

The civil rights committee is distinctly more liberal than the A.B.A. as a whole. Its report called upon fellow lawyers to be actively vigilant in protecting First Amendment liberties and appealed to President Nixon to "initiate a high-priority program aimed at the improvement of the present civil liberties climate."

In addition to the Government's actions, the report found other evidence of "repression." They included warnings of repressive trends from prominent citizens and institutions, public opinion polls showing an intolerance of opposing views and a willingness to restrict basic freedoms, and violent events, such as the Kent State shootings and construction workers assaults on students in Wall Street.

The report noted that the fear and appearance of repression — even if unfounded — can adversely effect civil liberties. "The appearance of repression is itself repressive," the group said.