

[From the Evening Star, Washington, D.C., May 20, 1968]

AN ANSWER TO THREATS

Some time ago Mayor Washington asked Congress for a law to give District citizens more protection against threats of bodily harm, with stiff penalties provided for intimidation and extortion.

The initial need for such a District statute arose from the fact that Washingtonians must rely largely for such protection upon federal laws dealing with extortion and intimidation only in terms of interstate offenses. In the absence of the interstate element, therefore, effective law enforcement in such matters here has been severely curtailed. In essence, the proposed legislation would apply the general protective measures of the federal law to the District in cases of purely local origin.

In the aftermath of the April riots, however, another problem arose. A considerable number of businessmen whose properties were destroyed, according to Mayor Washington, have been receiving threats "to the effect that if they should replace or repair their property and continue their business, the property will again be damaged or destroyed." The problem, the mayor added, is "assuming serious proportions."

Accordingly, in a letter the other day, the city government asked the House District Committee to broaden the extortion bill submitted earlier, and to declare such threats against either the person or the property of District citizens by any means of communication to be felony offenses, with commensurate penalties. Such threats, even in the absence of intent to extort money, would be punishable by fines up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to 5 years.

These and other related types of intimidation are difficult to reach. Indeed, as Public Safety Director Murphy has noted, it is almost impossible for law enforcement officials to attack them without the full and complete cooperation of the victims. The proposed legislation, however, would provide the District with a much-needed legal weapon. We trust that it will be passed by the House and Senate as swiftly as possible.

[From the Washington Star, May 4, 1968]

PRIDE WORKER CHARGED IN LIQUOR STORE SLAYING

A 29-year-old man identified by police as a Pride, Inc., worker was arrested last night and charged with the fatal shooting on Tuesday of a Northwest Washington liquor store owner.

Ernest M. Greely, who lives in the 300 block of T Street NW, was arrested at his home about 7 p.m. by homicide squad detectives. Police said he offered no resistance.

He was arrested under a U.S. commissioner's warrant charging him with first degree murder in the shooting late Tuesday afternoon of Benjamin Brown, 58, owner of the Service Liquor Store at 1100 9th St. NW.

Brown, who had reopened his business several days earlier, after it was looted during the rioting last month, was killed by a single shot. The gunman had burst into the store with a group of about 15 people.

Witnesses told police the crowd, mostly youths, first ordered soft drinks and then began grabbing bottles from the store's shelves.

Suddenly, one man reached over the cash register and began banging its keys in an attempt to open it. When Brown ordered him to move away, the man drew a gun, witnesses said.

Seeing the gun, Brown reached for the pistol he kept under the counter. He was shot in the chest as he grasped the pistol. Brown got off two wild shots.

The slain liquor store owner, who lived at 1900 Lyttonsville Road, Silver Spring, had waited about three weeks after the riot before reopening his store, and then had only partially restocked it.

LOOTERS STRIPPED STORE

Looters had broken all the windows in the store and left only a few bottles of cheap wine. Friends said Brown, who had run the store for more than 25 years, had not decided whether to keep it open permanently.

His elder brother, Louis, died in 1964 after being shot by a gunman in the liquor store he operated at 1432 New Jersey Ave. NW, about a half a mile from Benjamin Brown's store. The gunman was later convicted of murder.