

Third, we believe that the high incidence of guns involved in the cases presented to us requires a new approach to the regulation and control of firearms. According to the Commission's report, the use of handguns in murders and robberies (including attempts) doubled and in assaults quadrupled over an eleven-year period from 1955 to 1966. Rigid laws in the District governing the sale and carrying of handguns, and the new laws enacted in the suburban counties, are necessary and have helped slow down the increase of the flow of firearms into the District. They appear, however, to have done little to reverse the trend toward the use of firearms or to curb effectively the illegal market in guns in the District. The Commission's report states that of the sixty-two homicides committed with handguns in 1965, only twenty-six of the guns were obtained legally. We suggest that legislation be enacted which would require all firearms to be registered and that the second and third violations demand minimum sentences of increasing severity. Such legislation should aid law enforcement officials in curtailing the illegal exchange and regulating the possession of firearms.

Fourth, we are appalled at the sentences which are handed down for cases similar to ones which we have heard. We have learned that many defendants "shop around" for the easiest judge. The Commission's report relates that, "There were considerable disparities in sentences imposed by 22 District Court judges in the period 1964-1966 as well as a marked disproportionate assumption of the court's criminal caseloads by 2 judges." It goes on to say, "Not unexpectedly, judges who accept a disproportionate number of pleas place a great many offenders on probation." We would suggest a review of the judicial procedure in the handling of cases and mandatory minimum sentences for second or third convictions for repeated offenses.

Our exposure to crime has shown us the result and patterns of criminal behavior, therefore, we have limited our suggestions to this area in the hopes of inhibiting the use of violence and discouraging the repetition of offenses by the criminal. We realize that social, economic, and political steps must be initiated to surmount the real problem, the conditions in our community which cause crime. We also realize that the Bail Reform Act of 1966, the Federal Youth Correction Act, the expanded probation programs, and the work release programs are serious efforts in the judicial province to rectify the inequities of the system and shift the emphasis from castigating to rehabilitating the offender. Our present efforts as a society to protect the rights of the defendant are not only a laudable cause but an indispensable one, however, we should not in this endeavor sacrifice the safety of any individual in our community.

This letter is being sent to the Chairmen of the Judiciary and the District of Columbia Committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives.

Respectfully,

J. M. R. Hutchinson (foreman), Robert A. Arthur, George W. Babb, Lucinda S. Cooper, John D. Davis, Louis A. De Marco, Andrew Dyer, Russell Edmonds, Benjamin A. Jackson, Melvin S. Liederman, Shirley T. Peace, Frank Phillips, Doris Scrivener, Venetta J. Smalley, Alice L. Smith, Sereta Staley, Eva D. Stewart, Marian W. Tammany, R. E. Terry, Ellen Douzikas, Julia C. Walker, Pearl West, Waldo E. Webb.

MICHIGAN PARK CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION,
Washington, May 14, 1968.

HON. WALTER WASHINGTON,
Mayor-Commissioner,
District Building,
Washington, D.C.

DEAR MR. MAYOR-COMMISSIONER: The Michigan Park Citizens Association, at their meeting in May, passed a resolution expressing their sympathy and concern for the property owners, businessmen, and investors who suffered heavy losses in the holocaust of early April.

This anxiety stems from our interest in members of our Association, as well as all entrepreneurs whose property was destroyed, damaged, and looted. Currently, there is still apprehension among business and financial interests about the daily news reports of arson, robbery, and burglary. This does not offer an environment that would encourage constructive plans for the early reestablishment of these business enterprises.