

in court, they had top attorneys, and those attorneys said that they were gonna kill him, but nobody pushed far enough and they asked him the wrong questions. Because Mel's got a sense of humor. . . . So, he got the crowd with him, and once you do that, well, every one else he makes look like a fool. And the funny thing, every one else is telling the truth. . . .

Badhwar: Yeah, . . . I think he really impressed that judge up in New York, that Pratt character.

Marie: Oh, you know, when the due-process came out? He read it and he brought home a copy of it . . . he wanted me to read it. . . . So, I'm reading through the thing, and I noticed that Pratt was quoting him.

Badhwar: And says that he should get a medal or something. . . .

Marie: And you know, I remember saying to Mel . . . Mel, aren't you the one that said you can't cheat an honest man? I said, Pratt's got that right in here! Mel says, yeah, you'd think he was my father. Pratt thought he was funny, a Johnny Carson. . . . He loved his sense of humor.

Badhwar: Did he know Pratt before?

Marie: No, he never knew Pratt, but evidently Mel was the charmer. . . . He came on like he was doing this for the betterment of society!

Badhwar: Yeah . . . they did a lot of judge-shopping. . . .

Marie: Listen, I've got even better ones for you.

Marie Weinberg was dead by Jan. 28. The "better ones" remain to be discovered.

'Congress could open itself to be purged'

by Andrew Rotstein

Condemning Justice Department Abscam tactics of political targeting and entrapment, former Manhattan Borough President Hulan Jack held a well-attended press conference in Washington Feb. 4 to issue a defense of Sen. Harrison Williams. The event, sponsored by the National Democratic Policy Committee, released statements from a dozen prominent civil-rights figures calling for a complete probe of Abscam itself prior to any Senate action on the expulsion move against Williams.

Jack, a member of the NDPC Advisory Board, was joined by Barbara Simmons, executive director of the

Washington chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and a member of the District of Columbia's Democratic Central Committee.

Also present was Dennis Speed of New York, co-chairman of the NDPC's newly formed Fact-Finding Division. Speed announced his group's ongoing investigation of the ties of Abscam "sting man" Melvin Weinberg to the funding of international terrorism and of the ties of Williams' Abscam prosecutor, Thomas Puccio of the Eastern District of New York, to Sicilian attorney Michele Papa of "Billygate" and world heroin trade infamy. The press conference was attended by the Associated Press, United Press International, CBS News, Washington's all-news WTOP radio, and others.

The cumulative effects of revelations of government misconduct and links to the international criminal syndicate, coupled with grass-roots outrage at the affair, threaten to upset the Abscammers' case against Williams. On Feb. 23, the question of the Senate Ethics Committee's recommendation to expel Harrison Williams will be taken up by the full Senate.

A call to delay those proceedings until the Justice Department and FBI are fully probed has already been signed by 250 labor and political officials throughout the nation. The statements released Feb. 4 from black and Hispanic figures, including Detroit Mayor Coleman Young and Cleveland City Council President George Forbes, reflect the knowledge of these leaders of past government persecution of civil-rights leaders like Martin Luther King. A parallel concern emerged the same day on Capitol Hill (see Congressional Closeup).

The statement from Coleman Young emphasized, "In times of great economic crisis, government officials and political leaders must be free to be bold and fight—against significant odds—to achieve progress. If our leaders are subject to harrassment and entrapment . . . then few will retain the courage to lead such political struggles."

A similar press conference in New York the previous week received prominent coverage in the city's minority press, though it was boycotted by other leading media.

Additional statements condemning Abscam were released from Calvin Lockridge, District of Columbia School Board; William Dyson, Chairman, Connecticut Legislative Black Caucus; Jose Torres, President, Puerto Rican Civil Rights Association; Dr. William Banks, Supreme President, International Masons and President, WGPR-TV, Detroit; Robert "Buddy" Battle, Director, Region 1-A, United Auto Workers; Sandra Esparza, National President for Youth, League of United Latin American Citizens; Joe Chaneyfield, Vice President, Service Employees International Union Local 305, Newark, New Jersey; William Goodman, Business Manager, Laborers International Union Local 135, Norristown, Pennsylvania.