

Skinner 11-9-83

# National Black Lawyers Condemn Invasion of Grenada

Margaret Burnham, National Director of the National Conference of Black Lawyers, today condemned the criminal invasion of Grenada by U.S. military forces. Burnham, speaking on behalf of this national organization of hundreds of Afro-American lawyers, judges, and legal workers across the United States, the Caribbean and Canada, declared:

Even as the death toll in Lebanon continues to climb and more Marines are pulled from the rubble, the Reagan administration has dared to commence a violent and criminal invasion on the island of Grenada.

This invasion clearly represents a further step in the effort of the United States to overturn the revolutionary process in Grenada, an effort that was launched in March 1979. In 1981, the U.S. military staged a mock invasion of Grenada under the code name "Amber and the Amberdines" on the island of Vicques. Earlier this year, there were news reports of a CIA plot to destabilize and overthrow the Grenadian government in the fall of 1981. And as recently as March 1983, Reagan targeted Grenada as a "threat to US security" because it had the audacity to construct an international airport.

In light of this history, the explanations offered by the administration are blatantly transparent and an insult to the American people and the world community.

This invasion constitutes a violation of US domestic law, including the War Powers Resolution, and the international legal principles of the sovereignty of nations and the right of people to self-determination. There is no legal basis for the intervention of one country into the affairs of another, under the guise of restoring order and democracy. This bloody invasion, therefore, can only be seen as another expression of gunboat diplomacy on the part of the United States.

While we of the National Conference of Black Lawyers deplore the killings of Maurice Bishop, members of his cabinet, and other leadership of the New Jewel Movement, and while we consider these killings to be a horrific blow to the Grenadian revolution and the achievements it accomplished for the people of that island, it is our position that it must still remain with the Grenadian people, and them alone, to determine their political destiny.

This invasion of Grenada, coming as it does at a time of U.S.-instigated turmoil in Central America, represents a critical threat to the gains of the Nicaraguan and Cuban peoples, and the struggles of the people of El Salvador, Guatemala, and the rest of Central America and the Caribbean. Contrary to the views expressed by Dominican Prime Minister Eugenia Charles on Oct. 25, Grenada had provided a laudable example of domestic progress on economic and social fronts for all of the countries of the eastern Caribbean region. This invasion sets a threatening precedent for all of the small countries of the Americas, any one of which might now be invaded by the United States on the pretexts asserted by President Reagan and the State Department yesterday.

We of the National Conference of Black Lawyers call for the immediate withdrawal of United States troops from Grenada. We demand that the right of all peoples to choose their own political, economic and social system free from all forms of outside dictation and pressure be fully adhered to. We condemn the outrageous violations of international law and principles committed by the United States in this instance. And we ask the American people to join us in our condemnation of this invasion and in our demand for an end to intervention by the United States and its allies in Grenada.