

Letter to the Editor

July 19, 1997

I have taken note of the fact that the NAACP has asked congress to open the FBI files on counterintelligence during the 1960's period, one reason for this is the Rice-Poindexter case in Nebraska. It is a matter of record that the FBI withheld from the defense evidence in the file of these two men to which the defense was entitled. Thus, Rice and Poindexter seek a new trial or release.

The state Parole Board recommended commutation for both men, but the Nebraska Pardons Board refused to grant them a hearing to consider parole.

As a citizen, a former prosecutor, and Governor of this state, I abhor, detest and condemn the cowardly, cruel and unjustified murder of officer Minard. My heart aches for his family. The guilty parties should pay the penalty. The self-confessed murderer was turned loose after a slap on the wrist.

In my opinion, it is just as important for the state to protect the innocent as to prosecute the guilty. As Public Defender of Douglas County, it was my official duty to represent Ed Poindexter. He told me then that he was innocent of this crime, and I still believe him. We did not have the resources in the Public Defender's office to get all of the facts In this case. Our state motto is 'Equality before the Law.' The last time I checked the Public Defender's office In Douglas County. I found that It processes thousands of criminal cases a year (on about the same budget as the O.J. Simpson case alone). Is this equality before the law?

As a former law-enforcing official. I am strongly opposed to the FBI memo of 9/16/70 which reads as follows:

"Purpose of counterintelligence is to disrupt the BPP (Black Panther Party) and it is immaterial whether facts exist to substantiate the charges."

I now believe and always have believed that the true role of law enforcement is a search for truth. Real justice can only be built on truth. I hope the Congress and other policy makers will re- establish this policy. I feel both I and the system failed Ed Poindexter.

Sincerely,

Frank B. Morrison, Sr.
Former Governor
State of Nebraska