

# Bombing Witness Charges Cop Payoff

Fifth Estate Collective

1970

Facts have come to light that show the Detroit Police Department was involved in a deal with a prosecution witness that involved pay-offs and promises of immunity from criminal charges.

Ronald Tunstall, who testified in court that he and David Valler, convicted bomber, plotted and executed seven bombings in late 1968, has stated in a sworn statement that he received over 20 payments of cash from police and promises of immunity from prosecution. He also was bought a new pair of glasses, given daily witness fees and allusions were made to the financing of college for him.

The main purpose of the deal seems to have been to nail Valler and White Panther Jack Forrest who the police pegged as the ring leaders of the bombers. Seven others were charged in the crime and all but Forrest recently pleaded guilty to lesser charges. (See "Valler Cops Plea," FE #103, April 15-29, 1970, this issue.)

In his sworn affidavit, Tunstall, known on the street as "Owsley," all but exonerates Forrest from implication in the bombings. It is not known at this time whether or not the prosecution still plans to use him as a witness against Forrest or whether some of the others who pleaded guilty will testify for the State.

Below is a portion of the statement by Tunstall:

Q. Did you receive any money or were you given any kind of compensation?

A. No. They did offer assistance, but that wasn't the deal, financial assistance.

Q. Can you give the details?

A. Simply that I was in need of financial assistance and they were willing to donate some money to a worthy cause. They did bring me money.

Q. What kind? How much?

A. Relative to my needs at the time. Never more than \$100.

Q. How much in total?

A. I can't make an estimate of that nature.

Q. Didn't you say you received \$100 at a time?

A. No. Never more than \$50.

Q. On how many occasions did you receive money from them?

A. About 20.

Tunstall went on to describe how all of the pay-offs came through the Special Investigation Bureau (SIB) and that he would simply call them up and tell them he needed money and they would bring it by. He stated also that SIB men spoke of financing his way through college and said "You could do a little work for us on campus."

The Fifth Estate called the SIB and spoke to a Detective Furlong who freaked when the statement was read to him. He refused to comment on the charges of the pay-off after several minutes of muffled conversation with someone else in the office.

It is unclear what the police reaction to this will be. Tunstall was clearly afraid of the consequences of making his statement and suggested he might not be in town when it was released. However, at this writing he remains in the city.

One fear he emphasized was that the police would retaliate against him, since, in his words, “they think they have a pretty good grip on me.” Tunstall’s brother Randall was facing a possession of dangerous drugs charge and was found guilty in a Records court trial April 24 even though several persons testified that the drugs in question belonged to another person.

How often this sort of procedure occurs within the corrupt structure of the Detroit Police Department is not known. What is known is that money talks within the force. Detroit Police connections with the Mafia reaching up into the upper echelons of police officials has been documented by Grand Juries and in other news publications. Penny ante graft is widespread, with cops on the take from numbers men, prostitutes, gamblers and bar owners.

The direct buying of witnesses is a new facet; or is it? Just recently a woman who accused two Detroit cops of raping and stabbing her was bought off by Detroit Police Officer Association attorneys for \$5000. Prosecutor Cahalan agreed to drop the charges because the woman wished to do so.

Why wasn’t the same procedure followed at the beginning of the year when the University of Detroit administration wanted to drop charges it had brought against 17 students who had staged a campus anti-war sit-in? Cahalan’s argument then was that once charges had been brought, a complainant could not drop them.

It’s clear that there is a game going on downtown and you aren’t allowed to play unless you happen to be a cop, Records’ Court judge, prosecutor or bondsmen. The people sit on the sidelines getting a brand of justice that is corrupt and preferential. This must end.



Fifth Estate Collective  
Bombing Witness Charges Cop Payoff  
1970

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/103-april-15-29-1970/bombing-witness-charges-cop-payoff>  
Fifth Estate #103, April 15-29, 1970

[fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net](https://fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net)