

NCCF Trial

anon.

1971

Fourteen members of the National Committee to Combat Fascism, accused of murder and conspiracy to murder in the killing of a Detroit patrolman at 14th and Myrtle last October, are set to go on trial May 10th. The NCCF is the organizing arm of the Black Panther Party.

Police had originally charged 15 members of the group with the shooting, but have since dropped charges against one defendant under mysterious circumstances

The incident which led to the death of Patrolman Glenn Smith started in the afternoon of Oct. 24 when several Detroit cops began hassling two men selling the Black Panther paper near the NCCF headquarters. A crowd gathered and one cop was beaten and the two salesmen arrested.

Some of the crowd ran over to the nearby NCCF house on Myrtle and then police arrived and surrounded the house. The police opened fire on the house and Patrolman Smith was killed by a shotgun fired from the street.

Though the NCCF house was half a block away, and two houses stood directly between Smith and the NCCF house, the police arrested all the people in the house for murder (the Detroit 15).

The second round of struggle is going on now in the courts. The prosecution started out with a situation where they had no idea who did the killing and their only way of finding out was by interrogation. Recorder's Court Judge Robert DeMascio issued an order forbidding police or prosecutors to talk to any defendants without their attorneys present. However, this didn't stop them from zeroing in on defendant Jerome Lee.

A few weeks after his arrest, Lee was set on fire in his Wayne County Jail cell while he was sleeping. He was charged with arson, and later convicted on the charge.

In a defense motion asking Judge De Mascio to disqualify himself, Lee's attorneys charged that on Feb. 4, Lee was interrogated at length by police and left alone for a short time in a room with a gun on the table. On February 10 he was taken out to dinner at the Greyhound station without handcuffs by a single plain-clothes detective. The defense also charged that DeMascio violated his own order by talking to Lee without his lawyers present, and giving him incorrect legal advice.

Did police want the chance to kill Lee while trying to escape? Maybe. Did they offer to drop charges against him if he would testify against the others?

These questions may be answered by the fact that on Feb. 26, murder charges against Lee were dropped. It is not yet known whether he will testify against the others accused since the trial judge for the case has put severe restrictions on what the lawyers and defendants can say to the press. The defendants out on bond are not even allowed to "participate" in NCCF meetings.

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