

Charges Dropped in 'Policeman's Field Day'

Frank H. Joyce

1966

On September 16 charges of Inciting to Riot against Moses Wedlow and James Roberts were dismissed in Recorder's Court by visiting Judge John Seiler. The charges grew out of the August 9-12 "Policeman's Field Days" on Kercheval on Detroit's East Side. Three additional charges of rioting, conspiracy to disturb the peace and possession of a bomb against the two men had previously been dropped for lack of evidence.

On October 26 and 27 Mr. Wedlow and Mr. Roberts were again arrested and charged with inciting to riot. Rather than appealing the original dismissal of the charges as they had claimed they would do, the prosecution has chosen to simply start over again. Presumably their hope is that a different judge—Seiler is no longer at Recorder's Court—perhaps a regular judge will be more sympathetic to their position. This, of course, would shift the burden of appeal on the legal questions involved (can a person be guilty of inciting a riot when there was in fact no riot) from the prosecution to the defendants.

The recent action is typical of the Pros-Police response to the difficult situation in which they find themselves. Case after case has been dropped or dismissed for lack of evidence.

Of approximately 35 adult defendants formally charged as a result of the disturbances, 16 have been completely absolved of guilt. The same is true for numerous juveniles who were also arrested.

Thirty-two counts were originally brought against the five main "conspirators," Alvin Harrison, Wilbert McClendon, Moses Wedlow, James Roberts and Thomas Abston. All are members of the Afro-American Youth Movement, The Adult Community Movement for Equality (ACME) or the Northern Student Movement (NSM).

Of the 32 counts 21 have been dismissed or dropped.

A decision is still pending as to whether the men will be forced to stand trial on any of the remaining 11 counts.

The Pros-Police have yet to gain a conviction against anyone involved in the "disturbances." In the two cases which have come up so far, involving 6 and 4 defendants respectively, the prosecution has moved for dismissal moments before the trials were to begin.

Credit for thwarting the prosecutor's desire to railroad innocent people in the usual Recorder's Court fashion goes to the Metropolitan Defense Committee, Incorporated. The committee was formed shortly after the disturbances to provide legal counsel to all arrested. It includes many of Detroit's outstanding trial and criminal attorneys.

Chairman of the group is Donald Hobson. Other officers include Milton Henry, Warfield Moore and Ronald Reosti Vice Presidents, Dennis James, Secretary and Fred Patman, Treasurer and Business Agent. Other attorneys active in the group are Myron Wahls, Joe Brown and Sam Gardner. They and their colleagues have declared themselves willing to take other cases if they arise.

Despite the reverses in court, the cases have not been a total loss for the pros-police. Numerous defendants have lost their jobs as a result of adverse publicity surrounding their arrest. Thousands of dollars was paid in irretrievable fees to bondsmen on charges which were later dropped. Hundreds if not thousands of dollars have been lost by defendants forced to miss time from work to appear in court. And countless hours of the valuable time of defense attorneys have had to be volunteered.

The taxpayers have suffered as well. They have paid the wages of the judges and prosecutors involved in ersatz court proceedings. Moreover, the city of Detroit paid \$570,000 for 94,000 hours of overtime pay for police during Aug. 9-12.

The irony in all this is that the police and prosecutor provoked, created, produced, planned, and executed the whole disturbance from the outset. As more information becomes available, this newspaper will reveal the complete story of how and why the "riot" was staged.

fifth Estate

Frank H. Joyce
Charges Dropped in 'Policeman's Field Day'
1966

<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/17-november-1-15-1966/charges-dropped-in-policemans-field-day>
Fifth Estate #17, November 1-15, 1966

fifthestate.anarchistlibraries.net