

America Amuck, Wis. Style

Elliot Blinder

1967

MADISON, WIS. (LNS) Students and police fought with fists, rocks, sticks, and tear gas for two and a half hours Oct. 19 on the campus of the University of Wisconsin.

The rioting between some three to four thousand students and city police followed what began as a peaceful demonstration against the presence of the Dow Chemical Company on campus. (Dow Chemical is best known for its role in the production of napalm).

The demonstration began at 10:30 a.m. when over 350 students linked arms and sat down in the corridors of the Commerce Building in the center of campus, where representatives of the Dow company were to hold job interviews for prospective employees in co-operation with the university placement service.

Some two dozen assorted policemen were waiting for the demonstrators inside the building from 9:30 a.m. on, as University Chancellor William Sewell had hired regulars from the Madison police force to assist campus security officers.

At 11 a.m. three demonstrators sitting nearest to the doorway were seized by university police in an attempt to take them into custody. Other students held on to their companions and struggled with police for several minutes. The students eventually won the struggle, but name arrests were issued later for the three students identified by university personnel.

Outside a crowd of over three thousand students gathered in support of the civil disobedience, while city riot police began congregating in front of the building.

At 1:30 p.m. at the request of Chancellor Sewell, 25 helmeted policemen armed with two-foot long night sticks, entered the building, smashing plate-glass doors in their zeal.

The students remained in their places, heads between their knees, and arms over their necks, as the police began swinging their clubs and dragging out the bludgeoned victims.

In less than an hour the building was emptied, with male and female students milling about, heads bloodied and bruised, groaning, crying, stopping cars on the streets and begging rides to the nearest hospital. No ambulances were present. By this time, demonstrators outside reacted to the treatment the comrades had received and police began throwing tear gas to disperse the crowd.

Six student demonstrators were dragged out of the building and placed in a police van. Windows of the van were then smashed by the crowd, the air was let out of the tires, cars were rolled in front of it, students stretched themselves out in its path, and a picket line was set up at the only available exit some 50 feet away. Seeing that there would be no way out, police released their captives but placed them under name arrest.

Meanwhile the skirmish was still going on between police, tear gas bombs and the mob of students moving against and retreating from the police line between each round. At about four p.m., the crowd which had previously restrained itself to shouting and jeering at police, began to fight back with rocks, bricks, sticks, shoes and anything else it could get its hands on. Police began using the nerve gas, Mace.

One policeman was struck in the face with a flying brick and fell to the ground, apparently unconscious. He was carried off by police, with a broken nose. A second officer suffered a broken leg when he was struck by a rock

thrown from the crowd. He fell among the students who set upon him and beat him with hands and fists. He was rescued by fellow officers and taken to the university hospital.

Seven policemen and 65 students were treated at the hospital, for wounds ranging from skull injuries to superficial bruises.

The fighting eventually ceased around 6:30 p.m. after police finally succeeded in containing and dividing the protesters who had begun to back off when police dogs were brought onto the scene.

In later developments, Chancellor Sewell announced the suspension of all 12 members of the Dow Protest Steering Committee, which had planned the civil-disobedience demonstration.

A rally was held at 7 p.m. in the library mall, where 5,000 students, surrounded by a protective ring of 400 teaching assistants, called for and announced a general strike to last until the university guarantees that Dow Chemical will never be allowed on campus again.

fifth Estate

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Fifth Estate #41, November 1-15, 1967

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