

City-State News

Fifth Estate Collective

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Two Detroit policemen, Sergeant Fred T. Wright and Lieutenant Teddy Sikora were suspended from duty over the weekend of June 1 for “conduct unbecoming a police officer,” and “bad judgment” in connection with the May 13 clash at Cobo Hall between Detroit fuzz and a group of Poor People’s Campaign marchers (FIFTH ESTATE, June 4–18). The suspensions will remain in effect until a police trial board decides what disciplinary action, if any, will be brought against the pair.

Commenting on the suspensions at a June 3 press conference Mayor Jerome P. Cavanagh denied allegations that Wright and Sikora had been scapegoats. “Nobody is being made a sacrificial lamb in any sense,” rapped Jerry, “this is one of the most thorough investigations of this nature ever made.”

Earlier in the day the mayor met briefly with leaders of the Ad-Hoc Action Group, an organization that has protested strongly the brutality of the Detroit pig department. The group’s demands include further suspensions of police officers involved in the May 13 incident and the appointment of a Black police commissioner.

While their leaders met with Cavanagh, about 70 sign-bearing members of the group packed the hall outside the mayor’s office demanding to be heard. The leaders of the group insisted that they would not meet formally with the mayor unless the entire group could be present. Employing a favorite phrase, Cavanagh stated that he would not meet with them en masse because he “refused to conduct city business in a carnival-like atmosphere.”

Meanwhile, a second group of demonstrators made up of Detroit cops, Polish-Americans, and members of the ultra-right-wing group, Breakthrough, held a counter-demonstration outside the City-County building.

Throughout the proceedings Cavanagh attempted to avoid the real issue, police brutality, by assuming an attitude of uncertainty. “I am not even sure what these people want of police officers,” the mayor told newsmen. “They seem to want some more heads to roll.”

Although Cavanagh first stated that he would not meet with the group until later on in the week, upon learning that they were prepared to camp outside his office until then, the mayor backed down and agreed to talks later in the day.

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