

Ann Arbor Mothers, Students Unite and Win

Liberation News Service

1968

Steve Wildstrom, managing editor of the *Michigan Daily* in Ann Arbor, Mich., was recently beat to the ground and roughed up by deputy sheriffs attempting to keep him from covering a welfare rights demonstration that the regular press was allowed to cover freely.

On Wednesday, Sept. 4, Steve went to the local Washtenaw County courthouse where welfare mothers were attempting to talk to the county board of supervisors about a needed change in the welfare program after reporters from the *Michigan Daily* had been harassed for two days. As he placed his hand on the courthouse door to enter, he was ordered away by deputy sheriffs. When he asked rhetorically if it wasn't a public building and if it wasn't open, he was told that orders had been given to let no one in.

Steve said that he had business with the sheriff. Deputy Sheriff R.E. Youngs knocked Steve to the ground and five other deputies kicked him and otherwise roughed him up. Then they arrested him on a charge of assaulting a police officer and took him to the county jail.

That night 400 students marched on the county jail to protest the arrest. They found a line of waiting deputies and soon left.

The welfare mothers in Washtenaw County are trying to get money granted to them for their children's school clothing on the basis of individual need. The supervisors have granted a flat rate of \$60 per child over and above the normal welfare grants but the mothers are holding out until they get individual attention.

On Thursday, Sept. 4, about 1,000 students attended a rally on campus and more students than before joined the welfare mothers whose protest had now become a sit-in because the supervisors refused to talk any further.

Fifty-two people, 28 of them students, were arrested Thursday night when the building closed. They were charged with trespassing and released on \$25 bail later that night. About 150 students stood outside the building waiting for everyone's release. They were guarded by 120 deputies from Washtenaw and surrounding counties, including the tactical mobile police from nearby Oakland County. A police helicopter circled overhead.

On Friday, 1,200 students attended a rally on campus. Eight hundred of them marched to the county building to join the welfare mothers in the sit-in. The law came armed with 2 police dogs, shotguns, mace, teargas, 3-foot riot sticks, and, on the roof, M-16 rifles. Meanwhile, on Michigan's north campus a large-number of state policemen were moving into a civil defense center which is located on campus but used by the city.

There were almost two hundred people in the building and 400 more picketing outside. The police arrested 192 at closing time. This time the bail was set at \$50 each and all were taken directly to city hall and arraigned. All were charged with trespassing and must appear for court at the same time—for what looks like a mass-produced trial.

The Ann Arbor police department, surprisingly, took no part in the recent arrests. It is rumored that the Sheriff's department was refused aid by the police.

After the three sit-ins, and with threats of more to follow if the protesters' demands were not met, the County Board of Supervisors finally was forced into accepting a compromise agreement granting emergency funds based partially upon individual need. The settlement provided for payments on the basis of individual need, but placed a ceiling of \$70 on initial payments. The remaining money in the special \$91,000 state-county grant will be given

to mothers whose individual needs are shown to exceed \$70. Approximately 1,200 children receive ADC funds in Washtenaw County.



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