

Pigs Beat Teens

Fifth Estate Collective

1968

The Detroit Police are out of control. From the Algiers Motel to Cobo Hall they have left a trail of broken heads, illegal arrests and even murders.

The most recent example of this state of affairs followed right on the heels of the Wallace demonstration [see "Cobo Hall Creep Scene" in this issue] and found drunken off-duty pigs beating and terrorizing black high school students at a church dance.

The incident occurred Nov. 1 at the Veterans' Memorial Building where a youth dance sponsored by the Ebenezer AME church was being held on the sixth floor, while members of the Detroit Police Officers Association (DPOA) and their wives were attending an affair on the first floor.

The church youths, most of high school age, said that they had been insulted from the time they entered the building. Derrick Tabor, son of Rev. Willis Tabor of Drayton Avenue United Presbyterian Church in Ferndale and James Evans III, son of the director of the Fisher YMCA told of being elbowed by several whites on the first floor. The youth said the men began throwing elbows and calling them "niggers."

One of the men, the youths said, asked "Who's sponsoring that riot (the dance), ADC mothers?"

There apparently was no further trouble until youths began to leave the dance about midnight.

Derrick Tabor said he was stopped outside of the building at gunpoint, thrown to the ground and beaten by eight of the pigs. None of the men identified themselves as police officers. Several of his friends had been chased by the men to his parents' car. They locked themselves in the 1967 Cougar to escape, but the guardians of law and order were not about to let a thing like private property stand in the way of a good old fashioned nigger hunt.

These cowardly pigs began to attack the car. They smashed windows, fenders, and one of the men climbed on top of the car and jumped on the roof. The car was impounded as evidence by the police.

Although the Detroit Pig Department makes a regular practice of brutalizing black people, they made the mistake of picking on the sons of some prominent persons.

Sen. Coleman Young of Detroit wired the Justice Department in Washington and asked for an investigation. He said the beatings and the unenthusiastic response of police officials raises the "question of who is running the city?"

Mayor Cavanagh said that a "blue shield of secrecy" had been thrown up by the DPOA and that they were unable to even find out the names of men who attended the dance.

Tabor was beaten and kicked repeatedly in the face and stomach. His injuries included a multitude of cuts including some in the groin area. Just like Mississippi.

James Evans said he was chased from the Veterans' Building by a group of the men, one of whom fired a pistol in the air. He said he was beaten near the river front by the gang and was repeatedly struck in the face and head. He managed to escape and flag down a passing car which took him to Detroit General Hospital where he spent the night.

Both of the two youths said they saw others being beaten, but the other victims have not been identified.

Young said that if this case is handled like others of a similar nature “we will see another whitewash, like the Cobo Hall and Algiers Motel incidents.” He termed the beatings “a most dangerous provocation to widespread rioting and disastrous rioting.”

This time, however, an aroused citizenry has decided to act on its own. Over 500 persons met Nov. 4 at Central Methodist Church and established a police watchdog committee called the Detroit Task Force for Justice.

The group will provide lawyers for victims of police malpractice, investigate instances of police brutality, and set up a civilian patrol to watch police behavior in the streets.

At the meeting, Detroit attorney, Sheldon Otis announced that a civil suit would be filed against the officers involved in the beatings. The next day the parents of the youths involved brought suit against the DPOA and ten unidentified officers for damages of over \$100,000.

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