

The Chicago Conspiracy

Chris Singer

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CHICAGO—The repression that many have forecast may have come.

On September 9, 1968, Judge William J. Campbell charged a 23-man grand jury with the job of investigating the violence in the streets of Chicago that occurred during the week of the 1968 Democratic National Convention.

Last week the grand jury, in a remarkable political balancing act, returned indictments against 17 persons: eight Chicago police; eight persons allied with the movement; and, one member of the fourth estate, a suspended NBC News executive.

Twelve others were named as “co-conspirators,” but were not indicted.

Among those indicted were: Dave Dellinger, Liberation Magazine editor; Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, ex-SDS organizers and well-known activists; Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, of the Yippies; John Froins, an assistant chemistry professor at the University of Oregon; and, Lee Weiner, a grad student at Northwestern.

In the most clearly transparent move of all, the grand jury also indicted Bobby Seale, Chairman of the Black Panther Party.

All were charged under the “Rap Brown title” of the 1968 Civil Rights Act with conspiracy to use interstate commerce to incite acts of violence. They are, in other words, accused of being outside agitators.

They are distinguished by being the first persons so charged under the so-called “anti riot” provisions of the act.

Of the eight police indicted, one officer is charged with perjury, the others with depriving citizens of their civil rights (under the century-old civil-rights law that has been used to prosecute white racists in the South). The policemen are accused of assaulting six persons, among them Detroit Bureau Chief James C. Jones of Newspeak Magazine.

The last name on the list is Enid Roth, of New York, an NBC News employee accused of planting a microphone in a meeting room used by the platform committee of the Democratic party. Only the government is allowed to spy on its citizens.

Of the 23 grand jurors, 11 are women, and only two are black. Half of the 23 are over 50 years of age, most are white-collar professionals. Only 16 votes are needed to return an indictment.

“Evidence” was given the grand jury by U.S. Attorney Thomas A. Foran, who, in announcing the indictments, promised more indictments to follow.

Dellinger has formed a defense fund called “The Conspiracy.” He said: “We are people whose work against war, poverty, racism, corporate and military power is being called a conspiracy. We are proud of this work. We will continue it. We invite all Americans to join The Conspiracy, helping us to build a society in which people have control over their lives.”

Hayden, in surrendering to federal authorities in San Francisco, issued a statement vowing to turn the grand jury action into an indictment of the government.

Seale, who had been asked to make a speech in Chicago and did, flying into and out of the city in less than 24 hours during the convention week, was in Finland when his name appeared on the list. Minister of Defense Huey

P. Newton is in jail, Minister of Information Eldridge Cleaver is a political refugee, and Seale is the only nationally known Black Panther Officer free.

Hence the indictment of Bobby Seale, the only non-white indicted.

Two Detroiters, Dave Baker of People Against Racism, and Bo Taylor, were named as being “co-conspirators” but weren’t indicted.

Demonstrations are being planned to be held in Chicago to protest the grand jury action and show solidarity and support for the accused.

fifth Estate

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