

May 14, 1968

REPORT CONCERNING INCIDENT INVOLVING

DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT AND

MIDWEST CONTINGENT OF POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN

FROM: Longworth D. Quinn, Jr., official City observer sent to Dayton, Ohio on Saturday, May 11, 1968 to join the Poor People's Campaign and to refer back any pertinent information that might be useful in preparing City of Detroit municipal personnel in offering their cooperation to the caravan when it arrived in Detroit.

On Monday, May 13, 1968, observer was at Cobo Hall Convention Center at approximately 8:30 Monday evening. Much of the Poor People's Caravan was finishing dinner inside Hall "B". Other members of the Caravan and spectators of the City of Detroit were at the Campaign rally on the North bank of the Detroit River. A white Oldsmobile 98 which had been fitted with public address system, radio, and telephone, and which had been used as the Command Car of the Midwest Contingent of the Poor People's Campaign, was in the service drive to the front of the convention hall. The car had been having mechanical difficulties and the battery had been removed and efforts were being made to get a new battery. Orders were given by officers of the Detroit Police Department to have the Command Car towed away. It must also be noted that the Command Car was adequately marked and adequately identified as the official car of the Midwest Contingent of the Poor People's Campaign. As the police tow truck approached the March Command Car, March Marshals requested the Police Department not to interfere with the car and informed them that they were waiting for the battery. The Police Department, then, insisted on moving the car and moved toward it. At this time, Marshals ran inside Hall "B" and announced an emergency and asked Marshals, security personnel, Chicago Commandoes and Milwaukee Commandoes to immediately go outside.

The first group of March officials gathered outside, surrounded the Command Car, linked arms, and began singing. At this point, a contingent of Detroit Police Department Mounted Officers, approximately 12, recklessly charged into the midst of the converging March officials swinging billy clubs indiscriminately and trampling men, women, and children as they emerged from the convention area. Police officers, tactical mobile units, and squad cars began to converge on this site. Officers in riot dress, i.e. riot helmets and face masks, also moved into this immediate area. Individual police officers entered into the conflict and beat many persons maliciously to the ground. Some officers opened trunks of squad cars and took out semi-automatic carbines. This observer made an effort to introduce himself as a representative of the Commission on Community Relations to these officers with the carbines and requested that these officers put their carbines back into the cars. One of the officers told this observer "they don't take orders from no NIGGERS". These observations and statements can be supported by observers from the U. S. Justice Department who were present with this observer. The individuals from the Justice Department have information on badge numbers and squad car numbers of some of the officers involved.



As the melee continued Commandoes and March Marshals made the effort to calm other members of the March and to get those members of the March to return to Hall "B". This was a difficult task as the Detroit Police Department continued its excessive physical brutality of those members of outside of the building. Once people from the March had returned inside Hall "B", the Detroit Police Department Officers sealed off the Hall "B" area. The mounted police officers withdrew a very short distance from the Civic Center. Bus loads of Police Officers in riot dress, riot coats and jack boots were in the alleys and the side streets around the convention area.

At this point, leaders of the Midwest Contingent were preparing to move all of the March personnel out of Cobo Hall and over to Rev. Franklin's Church where further decisions and discussions would take place. Other observers at this incident included members of the Justice Department previously mentioned as well as Mr. Conrad Mallett of the Mayor's Office, ministers, white volunteers and various news reporters.

The information which this observer has been relaying to City officials since his tenure with the Midwest Campaign was in no way considered as made evident by the actions of the Police Department. The actions of the Police Department, mounted police officers, tactical mobile units and independent patrolmen was completely unwarranted and unprovoked. No similar incident has taken place any where along the route of the Midwest Contingent. It can only be assumed that the actions of the Detroit Police Department is nothing more than another indication of the bigotry and race-hatred that prevades not only the Police Department of the City of Detroit, but also the white community of the City of Detroit.

This observer is available for further consultation concerning the particulars of this incident.