

THE MILITANT

Black victims of Detroit police terror speak out at hearing

By RONALD LOCKETT

DETROIT, Feb. 6—The Black Independent Commission of Inquiry into Police Terror held the first of five scheduled hearings here last night. Ten witnesses testified before the commissioners and more than 200 spectators at the New Calvary Baptist Church on Detroit's East Side.

A revolving commission of more than 20 politicians, lawyers, and activists from the Black community is conducting the hearings. Seated for last night's hearing were Jim Ingrams of the *Michigan Chronicle*; Larry Nev-

Refusing to answer her question about what they wanted, they "cussed" her out, pushed her up against her car, and called her a "Black bitch," among other things. She said she had reported the incident to the Citizens' Complaint Bureau but had received no satisfaction.

James Purvey was stopped by police while driving home about 7:30 p.m. Feb. 3. The cops asked for his license, but refused to tell him why. When he demanded to know, he was beaten with a flashlight. He was arrested, charged with resisting an officer, and

his temple, and told, "Nigger, if you breathe loud I'll blow your brains out." This incident has been widely reported in the media. After the incident police said they had raided the wrong house.

A common theme running through all the testimony was that something had to be done about STRESS and the police department or Blacks would be forced to defend themselves guns in hand, with another rebellion like that of 1967 in the offing.

The commission announced that the fifth hearing in the series would hear

Hayward Brown faces frame-up in Detroit

DETROIT, Feb. 3—Hayward Brown, 18, finished a series of six arraignments last week. He is charged with attempted murder in the Dec. 4 shooting of four STRESS officers, and with first-degree murder in the killing of a Detroit policeman Dec. 27. He is also charged with firebombing the Planned Parenthood League Jan. 12.

Brown was bound over for trial on nine charges. The prosecution's case is already weakening as key witnesses either failed to identify Brown or contradicted themselves. In the sixth arraignment, covering the alleged firebombing, the chief witness for the prosecution was unable to identify Brown as one of the men she saw throwing the firebomb.

The judge ordered Brown to stand trial on this charge solely on the strength of testimony by patrolman Roger Studer, who claims he sat with Brown in the back of a squad car after Brown's arrest. Studer testified that Brown admitted the firebombing to him, started crying, and said, "I'll tell you anything you want to know."

Brown is represented by attorneys Kenneth Cockrel, Dennis Archer, and Jeff Taft.

Two other men, both Black, are charged with the same crimes. They are John Percy Boyd, 23, and Mark Bethune, 22. These two are still at liberty.

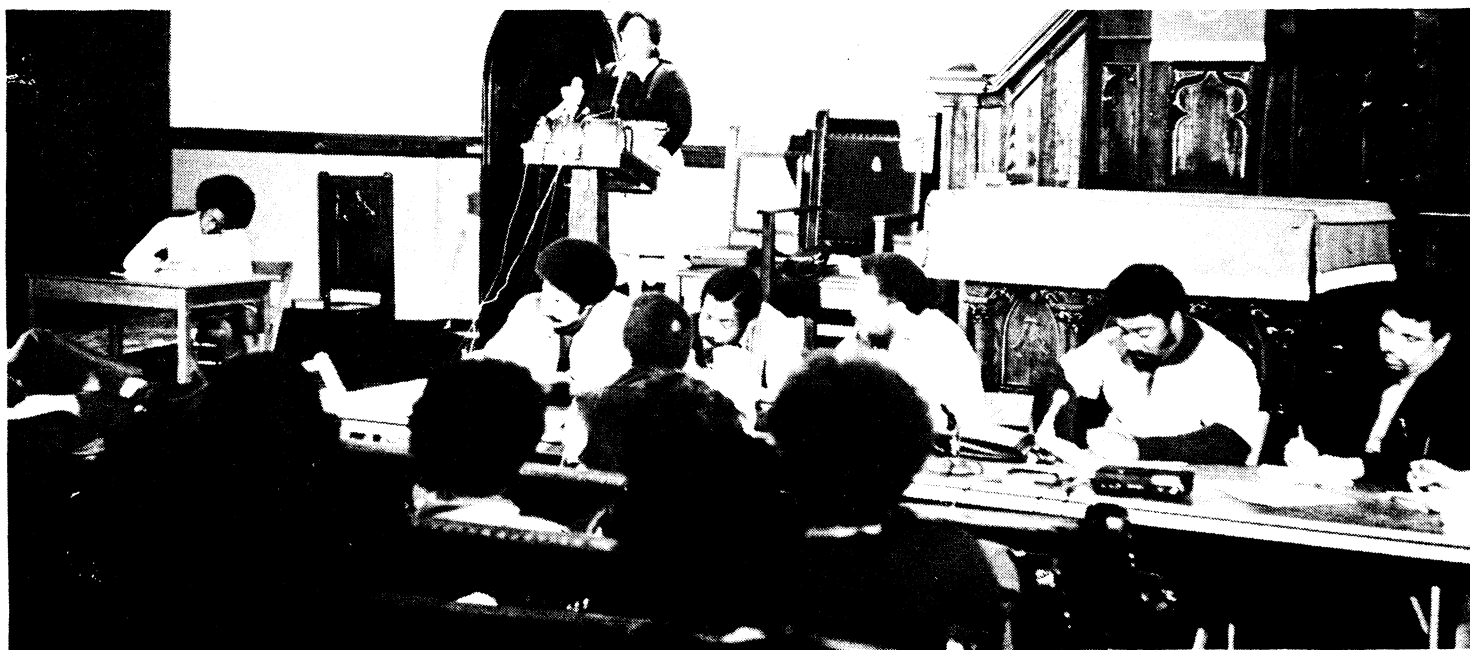
The issue of drugs in the Black community, especially heroin, looms large in the case. The Dec. 4 incident, according to police, occurred as they had a suspected "narcotics pad" under surveillance. Police charge that the three accused men were in a car outside the building. (On the basis of this they identified them to newsmen as dope pushers.) The police say they followed the three suspects, stopped their car, and the shoot-out began.

However, in a Jan. 11 hearing into charges of police brutality called by the Detroit common council, relatives of the three denied that they were dope pushers. Instead, all testified that the three were well-known opponents of drugs in the Black community. Some suggested that they were involved in driving the real dope pushers out.

The public hearings also heard charges that the cops were protecting dope pushers. This accusation has been substantiated by several recent events. On Dec. 22, the *Detroit News* reported a raid on the tenth precinct police station by a special unit of the police department. This raid, according to the *News*, was directed at more than 25 policemen involved in drug traffic.

The *News* later reported the arrest of a Detroit cop on narcotics charges in Toronto, Canada.

After the Dec. 4 shooting, the police reported having every "known dope house in the city under surveillance." This raised in the minds of many the question of why the police, who have proved so adept at breaking down doors of innocent Black citizens, are so inept when it comes to dealing with "known dope pads."



Militant/Gene Yzquierdo

Black commission of inquiry listens to testimony at Detroit's New Calvary Baptist Church. At extreme left is Vera Coleman, cochairwoman of the commission. Seated, from left, are Gil Bass, Larry Nevils, Frank Ditto, Rowley Smith, and Jim Ingrams.

ils of UNICOM (United Community organization); and Stu House, an aide to Congressman John Conyers.

Also Gene Cunningham from the *South End*; Frank Ditto of the "Black Talk" TV show; Rowley Smith, vice-president of the Pan-African Congress; and Fred Durhall, president of the Association of Minority Pre-Law Students at Wayne State University. Commission coordinators Vera Coleman and Maceo Dixon cochaired the meeting.

The hearing has received extensive publicity on the air and in the local papers.

The testimony exposed the brutality Black residents of Detroit suffer daily at the hands of the police. Some witnesses focused on the most recent wave of police terror following an incident last December in which a member of the special Detroit police squad known as STRESS (Stop the Robberies—Enjoy Safe Streets) was killed. (See *The Militant*, Feb. 9.) Other testimony highlighted the "normal" harassment of Blacks by racist cops.

One middle-aged Black woman described how her son was stopped by police while driving, ordered out of his car, and beaten unconscious. He was later charged with fighting with an officer! She warned that it "may be your son next week" unless something is done about the police.

James and Linda Purvey recounted two incidents of police harassment. Linda Purvey described the treatment she received when four white STRESS officers stopped her while she was driving home from a Christmas dinner.

arraigned on \$2,000 bond. As he named the policeman responsible and gave his badge number, the crowd at the hearing broke into applause.

Anna Coleman related an incident that is now well known throughout the Black community. On Dec. 29 she was visiting friends, whose son had gone to school with Hayward Brown. At that time Brown was being sought as a suspect in the shootings of Detroit policemen.

She told the commissioners that at 11:30 in the evening some 30 police kicked in the door to her friends' home, with shotguns, riot guns, and handguns drawn. She and the three others present, all Black, were thrown up against the wall. In a harrowing 45-minute ordeal, they were subjected to a stream of racist abuse from the white police.

She and her friend were taken to separate rooms, forced to strip in front of the cops, who then physically abused them, threatening to kill them if they didn't comply. Afterwards, they were told this had been part of a search for Hayward Brown.

Anna Coleman's testimony was corroborated by Sylvia Cleveland and Sandy McGee, who had also been present during the assault. McGee told the commission he had been beaten and his kneecap broken. He testified on crutches.

In addition to other testimony, statements were read into the record from the Reverend Leroy Cannon and Clifford Kelly. Cannon's house had been "mistakenly" broken into Dec. 4 by more than 15 cops. He was pushed up against a wall, a rifle pointed at

proposals for action to end the police brutality.

Two new commissioners have been added recently. They are David Hartman, president of the First Black National Bank, and Judge Edward Bell, Black mayoral candidate. The African People's Movement has also announced its support for the commission's activities.

Support has been especially strong at Wayne State University. The commission has its headquarters in the Associated Black Students offices there. The ABS has provided phones and supplies for the effort. Most of the activities involved in organizing support for the commission's work are Black students on the campus, and the university student newspaper, the *South End*, has publicized the commission's work in daily articles.



Maceo Dixon

Militant/Gene Yzquierdo