

# DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM  
First Precinct

Date May 19, 1970

To: District Inspector, Central District

Subject: REPORT ON COMMON COUNCIL REQUEST FOR INFORMATION REGARDING PROBLEMS IN THE DOWNTOWN AREA, CREATED BY MEMBERS OF THE BLACK PANTHER PARTY AND BY MEMBERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS. (FILE #2661).

The First Precinct has been cognizant of the above two groups and the associated problems since the latter part of 1969. This report will cover each group separately.

The Black Panther Party is represented daily by six or eight persons, mostly teen-agers, who stand on the sidewalk on both sides of Woodward, between State and Grand River, to vend the Black Panther paper. The paper sells for twenty-five cents.

The majority of the complaints concerning this group are that the vendors stand in the middle of the sidewalk, particularly on the highly congested corner of Woodward and State, and seriously impede the pedestrian traffic.

Other complaints have been received from the adjacent business places that the persons are entering the stores to sell the papers or to disturb the customers. When the person making the complaint is informed that the police officer can not take any action inside the store without a complainant, the complaint is dropped, due to an obvious fear of retaliation.

Mr. William Doran, the Corporation Council assigned to the Police Department, has rendered an opinion that the sale of the paper is protected under the First Amendment of the Constitution. Mr. Doran also advises that if there is a deliberate blocking of a pedestrian, a ticket could be issued on the complaint of the pedestrian.

In recent court cases, officers have received four convictions in Traffic Court on this charge, without having a citizen as a complainant. However, an equal number of cases have been dismissed due to a lack of a complainant.

In a related matter, the First Precinct has four Negro Officers assigned to patrol the downtown area. The officers work in plainclothes, and do not appear to be police officers in any manner whatsoever. Their main function is the suppression of street crimes in the highly congested downtown shopping area, particularly pick pocket or larceny from person complaints.