

# Charges Police Brutality Is Attempt to Start Riot

By C. C. DOUGLAS

Charges were made last week at a meeting of the Fitzgerald Community Council that a faction within the police department, over which administrators have no control, is attempting to provoke the city's Negroes to violence such as occurred last July.

The allegations were those of Mrs. Sarah Foley, of the Detroit Council of Parent-Teacher associations, and Leon Atchison, administrative assistant to Congressman John Conyers.

"There is a certain element in the police department bent on starting a new riot," said Atchison, "so that they can use their new guns and equipment against the Negro."

Mrs. Foley went a step further in her accusations.

"It is my opinion," she said, "that we are living in a quasi-police state, over which officialdom has no control."

Maurice Lamar, president of the Post Junior High school PTA, concurred with Atchison and Mrs. Foley.

"There is a plot on the part of the police department to arouse the city into a confrontation," he said. "Police auxiliary groups in the suburbs are arming themselves in preparation to wipe us out."

The meeting represented the culmination of a series of events dating back several weeks. The first of these events was the attempt of a group of youngsters in the Cherylawn-Puritan-Ohio area to establish their own youth center. Mrs. Ethel Garrett, 16580 Ohio, at whose home the meeting was held, explained.

"The Infernos (the group of youngsters aged 17-18) wanted to form their own independent youth center," she said, "and they held dances to raise the money. When they were finally able to raise enough money to rent a place, the trouble started." The trouble she spoke of was police harassment.

"The police were around the place so often that they frightened the owner into breaking the lease," she explained. "So the kids were on the street again."

The youngsters, Mrs. Garrett continued, then raised more money and were going to build their own center. They found they were unable to do that, so they acquired an existing structure on the corner of Puritan and Cherylawn, renamed it the "Inferno-burger" and set about renovating it for a restaurant.

They had hoped that they would be able to make money and employ some of the local teen-agers.

The police harassment continued, according to Mrs. Garrett, whose husband is James Garrett, president of the Cotillion club.

When the youngsters developed a good relationship with a racially mixed squad car team, the officers were transferred out of the precinct. The new team immediately began to harass the Infernos, to which the Garrett's son, Eric, belongs.

"They (the police) would come into the building with drawn guns and frisk the boys, and often illegally take them to the station," said Mrs. Garrett. "They used the pretext of looking for a 'rape suspect'." Mrs. Garrett says her own son was picked up four or five times.

Parents and community representatives finally demanded a meeting with police authorities. Present at that meeting were Atchison, Ernest Mazey of the ACLU, Stuart House, of Wayne County Legal Services, Mrs. Garrett and other parents and the members of the Infernos involved in the case.

That meeting resulted in a formal apology from Inspector Bartoni, supervisor of the top men at the Palmer Park and Schaefer stations, Lieutenant Heads (Schaefer) and Inspector Warner (Palmer Park).

Bartoni said, according to Mrs. Garrett, that he would return all police records of the youths and put a stop to the harassment. He said also that he would have the original squad car team transferred back to the precinct.

After that, Mrs. Garrett said, things were back to normal for about two weeks. Then one of the teen-agers was picked up again without legal justification. A citizen's complaint was filed by Mrs. Foley, who says she was told by an officer at the station that she was "the kind of citizen who caused the increased crime on the streets."

After the complaint was filed, the harassment began with a new intensity, according to Mrs. Foley, and just last week the president of the Infernos, Gwendolyn Warren, 17, of 16615 Washburn became a victim of police brutality.

"I was walking down Marygrove about 10:30 Monday night after a meeting at the

Garretts' home," she related, "When I reached the corner of Indiana, a police car pulled up beside me and one of the men inside said 'Hey, black bitch, where are you going?' When I said 'I'm not your mother,' he got out of the car and hit me in the stomach with his night stick."

Miss Warren said that she then fell to her knees, whereupon the officer voiced a threat. Miss Warren quoted him as saying "We're going to get you Infernos. If we don't get you this winter, we'll get you when summer comes. Nobody is going to tell us how to do our jobs (a reference to the complaint filed against the officers earlier)."

The officers then left her on the sidewalk and drove away. She said later that she

was glad they did not know that she is the president of the club. She thinks that the beating might have been much worse if they had known. As it was, she was not seriously enough injured to require medical attention.

The Fitzgerald council closed its meeting with plans to call the situation to the attention of the people of the city. They will call a press conference within a week for that purpose.

One of the points brought out at the meeting was that cases such as Miss Warren's help add to the nihilistic attitudes of young Negroes.

Miss Warren herself, who was unable to identify the officer on the dimly lit corner, voiced extreme bitterness.

"That policeman got me in the dark," she said, "and we'll get them in the dark. Just wait till summer." According to statements made by the adults at the meeting, the attitude displayed by Miss Warren plays right into the hands of conspiring police factions. They are hoping that their press conference and subsequent activities will help to avert any more violence.

When Inspector Bartoni was notified of the Warren case, he made assurances that he would get to the bottom of the case. He also said that assault and battery charges would be leveled against any officer involved in brutality cases. He stated also that officers on their beats would be watched more closely by their supervisors.

Bartoni did not comment, however, when asked why an immediate identification of the officers involved was not possible. Apparently he lacks a means of knowing the location of each patrol car at any given time, even though the cars supposedly adhere to a strict schedule.