

MEMORANDUM TO: Members of the Honorable Common Council

FROM: Commission on Community Relations Staff

DATE: September 24, 1970

SUBJECT: Emerging racial problems within the student body and the community adjacent to Henry Ford High School, Seven Mile Road and Evergreen

I. Patterns of Student Involvement and Assessment of Causes

According to reports received by CCR staff from school officials, a few minor fights occurred inside the school building toward the end of the school week of September 14 to September 18, 1970. These isolated scuffles reportedly only involved some youths who apparently were carrying "chips on their shoulders."

Beginning with the current school week, student confrontations escalated and assumed a new form, with components as follows:

1. Harassment of badly outnumbered black students by roving gangs of white youths and adults, aged 18 to 23 and older, as the black students walked from the school to bus stops or buses at the school awaiting their arrival.
2. Subjecting blacks to verbal insults and pelting with objects of various kinds, without known provocation, according to school and police officials. (Substantial police and Board of Education Security Force presence has apparently been the factor that has forestalled serious consequences and maintained adequate control of the situation up to this point.)
3. The offending white youths and adults are described as being of an incendiary type and committed to rioting. Many were not students. Their actions are described as closely resembling those of the most extreme activists that are commonly known to provoke and exacerbate confrontation situations. Their procedure involves the assembly of about 50, in small groups, near residences across from the school about one hour before school closing, with an instantaneous buildup to 300 - 400 - from concealment - in response to signals from their leaders, with ensuing stalking and harassment of black students.
4. School officials indicate that the unique feature of the current trouble at Henry Ford High School is the absence of unusual difficulty in student interaction within the school or demands on school administration for redress of grievances. They say that, at present, there is adequate control of the student body, and the faculty is cooperating, but there is appreciable apprehension. Officials express certainty that the existing problem will not be short lived.

II. Planning Efforts of School Officials

Officials of the School Community Relations Division have been in constant close touch with this situation as on-site observers and as an added resource for the administration at the school. There have been planning sessions involving school administration up to the level of Regional Superintendent, with daily communication by letters with parents, aimed at enlisting effective control by parents having youths attending the school. Because of the difficulty in controlling mass meetings, none are planned. Officials are working closely with the Parents Club, however. Development of effective long-range human relations measures are being considered as major attention is given to control of the immediate emergency. A group of exceptional school-community agents are being

transferred from other assignments to work with students at Ford High School.

III. Role of the Police

Staff observations at the school on September 23, 1970 reveal that the conduct of policemen was restrained, efficient, and professional. An excellent job was done in keeping the white and black student groups separate, especially by a group of Rangers, or Scooter Patrol officers.

Inspectors Kleiner of Sixteenth Precinct and Henry Jason of the Police-Community Relations Bureau were notably active in an effort to maintain effective control of the situation.

The presence of efficient policemen in adequate numbers was positive in its effect.

IV. Special Observations

1. School officials observe that a potentially explosive situation exists at Ford High School which is likely to remain for sometime to come.
2. School officials feel the population of the school area contains a high level of white citizens who completely reject blacks on any terms - a major deterrent to successful resolution in a time span that is desirable.
3. Officials agree that continued objective, efficient, professional police performance in maintaining control of this disturbing situation is of paramount importance if harmony within this unique community is to be restored reasonably soon.