

V B 59

September 10, 1969

MEMORANDUM TO: Commission on Community Relations
FROM: Field Division
SUBJECT: SUMMARY OF SCHOOL DISTURBANCES

9/4/69

About 50 students walked out of Northeastern High School and held a meeting to protest the appointment of Dr. Coleman from Mumford High School as Principal. The students wanted Mrs. Hood, the Assistant Principal at Northeastern last year, to be promoted. The meeting ended peacefully.

9/11/69

About 120-150 students walked out of Northeastern High and held a rally protesting 1) the Principal's appointment and 2) the ruling that they were prohibited from flying the flag of black nationalism and unity. They met with Mr. Billups, Regional Superintendent, who informed them that both decisions were final. The group went to the Board offices and on the way "attempted to hijack a bus." They met with Mr. Billups, Dr. Flynn and Dr. Myers to no avail. Some of the students then went to a private cafeteria and threw food on the floors and walls until the Police ordered the cafeteria closed.

9/12/69

About 150 Northeastern students showed up for a meeting with Mr. Billups. He met with 20, and the meeting soon broke up without incident.

9/15/69

Mr. Billups went to the school to tell the dissident students that the black nationalist flag was still prohibited and there would be no reversal of the appointment of the Principal. A fire alarm was set off and about 150 students stayed out. Several fire bombs were thrown against the school, but did no damage. Another group of Northeastern students went to the School Center building where they set off some smoke bombs. After meeting with Mr. Billups and Deputy Superintendent Arthur Johnson, they left.

9/17/69

Anti-war and SDS literature was passed out by a group of young white people at Osborn, Finney, Denby and Northern high schools. At Osborn, two teachers attempting to eject them were hit and kicked. There was vandalism at several of the schools.

9/19/69

A demonstration planned to protest the pending execution of Ahmed Evans of Cleveland, Ohio drew students to Northwestern High School. Classes continued while a crowd of over 1,000 gathered outside for the rally. There were a few scuffles, but violence was minimal, with no student-police confrontation.

At Northern High School students were urged by people with bullhorns to walkout and attend the rally, both inside and outside of the school. A fire alarm was set off, and a total of about 600 students joined the walkout. When the students took down the flag, the police tried to stop them. Several students, including a young lady whom the students alleged was an innocent bystander, were hit by police sticks. Bottles and rocks were thrown at the police and at a police car. Another confrontation came when the police moved an illegally parked truck that was used by some of the rally organizers. Five persons were arrested on charges of Felonious Assault, Inciting to Riot and Malicious Destruction of Property.

At Cooley High School a few students walked out in the morning to attend the rally. The major disturbance came shortly after noon when a fire alarm was set off. White and black students fought, and ax handle-wielding police broke up the crowds. Seven people were arrested for inciting to riot, resisting arrest, and rape. Several brutality and unlawful arrest complaints have been lodged with CCB. There are allegations that white outsiders provided the black students. Others allege provocations by black outsiders.

There were also walkouts at Murray Wright School, but serious problems did not arise there. Football games that evening between Cooley and Northwestern, Mumford and Central, and Wright and Mackenzie were cancelled.

9/22/69

At Cooley tensions remaining from Friday's disturbance led to students milling in the halls and on the school grounds. Staff, parents, and clergymen urged calm but had little success in getting students to go to classes. Fights between black and white students broke out on an even larger scale than Friday. When the disturbances made it impossible to continue, the school was closed. The groups slowly dispersed, but isolated incidents continued for about three hours. There were about 32 arrests for assault and battery, arson on an automobile, and weapons charges.

9/23/69

At Post Jr. High School about 100 students and a handful of adults threw rocks at the school building. Police were called and the adults fled. Although the rock throwing stopped, students gathered outside the building and refused to come in to classes. The administration closed the school. About 40 windows were broken in the school.

At Mumford, after a meeting in the school auditorium, about 500 students (probably including some from Cooley and Post) marched down Wyoming to Beaubien Jr. High School. After sitting on the lawn for about an hour, the group returned to Mumford. A squad of police in riot gear, at one point on Wyoming, blocked the walk. When the commander pulled them back, one officer scuffled with the marchers. Later the students were milling in front of Mumford when a bottle was thrown at the police. After ordering the crowd to disperse, the police charged the group with nightsticks and riot batons. The group gathered again and rocks, sticks and bottles were thrown at the police. Leaders in the group finally encouraged them to disperse in order to avoid further confrontation. There was one complaint of brutality arising from this incident.

Cooley was closed, as previously planned, for a teachers' reorganization day.

9/24/69

Cooley reopened with a group of parents, clergymen, and community people standing around the building to prevent loitering and keep non-students away. There were no incidents. Police arrested six persons in the area, mostly on weapons charges. Attendance in the school was about 30-40% of normal.

Post and Mumford were closed for previously planned teachers' planning days.

There was a minor disturbance at Coffey Jr. High School, but nothing serious developed.

9/25/69

Mr. McGivens, Principal of Northern High School was presented with a list of demands for punishment of police brutality, a black studies curriculum, a reading room named Malcolm X, the right to fly the tri-color flag of black unity, student control of student discipline, modernization of school facilities and amnesty for arrested students by a student group called the Uhuru Association. He asked for time to study them. The students said they would wait until the following Tuesday.

10/1/69

A group of about 150 Northern students, dissatisfied with Mr. McGivens response to their demands, walked out of school and marched to the School Center Building, where they picketed and talked to School Administrators.

The principal of Mumford, Mr. Sandweiss, reported that several young men had been seen by a custodian dousing a stairwell with gasoline. They fled before it was lit. Later, lighted bottles of kerosene were found in a stairwell, and unlit bottles of kerosene were found in a heat duct. Several small wastebasket fires were discovered and put on during the day.

10/2/69

About 200 Northern students established a Freedom School in St. Joseph's Church. They said they would stay out of school until their demands were met.

At Mumford, a gasoline fire on the floor of a classroom was discovered by a teacher before the students arrived. It was put out without calling the Fire Department. A few more wastebasket fires were lit. Steps were taken to increase surveillance in the school. Regular teachers guarded the halls while substitutes took their classes. All custodial staff were taken off cleaning duties and put on hall duty. The police assigned a uniformed officer to the school. No further incidents were reported.