

# THE MILITANT

## Detroit hearings on 'STRESS'

# Black inquiry exposes cops' racist terror

By RONALD LOCKETT

DETROIT, Feb. 11 — Black residents continued to protest the reign of terror police unleashed here in the wake of a shoot-out last December in which one policeman was killed and several wounded. In a series of hearings and rallies, a broad spectrum of the Black community spoke out against the police harassment and called for an end to the special unit of the Detroit police most responsible for it, the STRESS ("Stop the Robberies — Enjoy Safe Streets") unit.

The broad-based Independent Black Commission of Inquiry into Police Terror has held three of five scheduled hearings. Press and TV coverage of the first hearing (see *The Militant*, Feb. 16) was extensive. Both major dailies, the *News* and the *Free Press*, had detailed stories on the hearing. The *Michigan Chronicle*, Michigan's Black newsweekly, covered the commission's activities on the front page of its Feb. 10 issue.

In addition, TV channels 7 (ABC) and 4 (NBC) provided filmed coverage. Reports of the hearings have been broadcast daily on the area's Black stations, especially WCHB. Channel 56, UHF-TV station, filmed the entire first hearing for airing at a later date. The commission coordinators also gave extensive interviews to *Muhammad Speaks* and *The Black Panther*.

Blacks from all walks of life have testified about the daily insults, harassment, and brutal treatment they receive at the hands of the racist police force. Typical of the witnesses stepping forward was Ray Jenkins, who testified at the hearing held Feb. 11 at St. Cecilia's Catholic Church on Detroit's West Side.

Jenkins is a middle-aged real estate broker. He was detained Dec. 7 by two white policemen who objected to his waiting in his car for a client who was inspecting a nearby house. He was searched and insulted by the police. Complaints he made to Police Commissioner John Nichols, the Civil Rights Commission, and the Citizens Complaint Bureau brought no response. He stated, to the applause of the audience, that the "police are as racist as any you can find in Mississippi" and that "police investigating police is the biggest joke in the world."

James Morris, 50, became a victim of harassment for the first time two weeks ago. He was stopped by police while driving in his car. Po-

lice swerved in front of him and forced him over to the side of the road. They demanded to see his license and registration but offered no explanation when he asked why. They then began asking him a series of questions totally unrelated to his car or driving. This stopping, searching, and harassing of Blacks the police deem "suspicious" has been a common complaint voiced in the hearings.

Morris said that he understood why some younger Blacks might get fed up with this behavior and defend themselves, especially when the police brandish their weapons in such cases, which is frequent. He also said, "I hope something can be done before some of the old men like me give up the few years we have left" in defending themselves against the police.

The commission announced in a Feb. 9 news release that Kenneth Cockrel was joining the commission and would be seated for the fourth and fifth hearings. Cockrel, a prominent Black attorney, is defending Hayward Brown, who is charged with murder in the death of one of the STRESS policemen.

In the same release the commission also announced that Louella Buck had been unanimously chosen as honorary chairwoman. Her 15-year-old son Ricardo was a victim of the STRESS squad Sept. 15, 1971.

The Black Commission has two more hearings scheduled. The fourth one will take place Feb. 13 at Presentation Catholic High School at 7:30 p.m. The fifth and last hearing, to take up courses of action to deal with the police terror, will be held at Wayne State University on Feb. 17 at 10:00 a.m.

On Feb. 11 a protest rally was called by the Labor Defense Coalition, a group headed by Kenneth Cockrel. More than 600 attended the predominantly Black event. Prominent leaders of the Black community denounced the police terror and called for the dissolution of STRESS. Speakers included Councilwoman Erma Henderson, State Representative Jackie Vaughn III, the Reverend Charles Butler of the New Calvary Baptist Church, Harold Wilson of UAW Local 600, and others.

In the meantime, Detroit's common council has continued its do-nothing policy. The whitewash of STRESS the Black Commission has warned about came to pass last week. The council announced that it had agreed to a



Trigger-happy plainclothes cops in Detroit, like this STRESS officer, are harassing and brutalizing Blacks who 'look suspicious.'

request by Police Commissioner Nichols to hear behind closed doors his reports on charges of police brutality.

The reports will be on only six of the 20 complaints heard at a Jan. 11 common council meeting. No explanation was given for dropping the other 14. Nichols said public disclosure of the reports "would serve no purpose but to fan the flames already licking at our city."

The common council and police department are trying to defuse the developing protest movement in the city. The police department announced it had appointed a Black codirector of the STRESS unit, George Jackson. Jackson, a 25-year veteran of the department, defended the actions of the STRESS unit.

The other codirector, James Bannon, in commenting on the appointment, radical-baited the opposition to STRESS when he charged that he did not believe Jackson's race would make

any difference to "anti-STRESS radicals." "They wouldn't believe us if Malcolm X were the commander of STRESS," Bannon said.

He made the real purpose of the new director clear when he admitted that many Blacks who are now predisposed to opposing STRESS might be swayed in their attitude toward the unit after Jackson's appointment.

What the reaction of the community will be remains to be seen. It is unlikely that opposition to STRESS will decrease simply because a Black signs the squad's "death warrants."

The common council, obviously stung by criticisms of its functioning and the formation of the Independent Black Commission, has announced the formation of a nine-member committee to "study relations between citizens and the police." Council President Mel Ravitz admitted it was in response to a "number of complaints regarding the police department."

## Cities will suffer from budget cutbacks

The following statement was made Feb. 14 by Norman Oliver, Socialist Workers Party candidate for mayor of New York.

President Nixon's 1974 budget reveals the real priorities of the capitalist politicians who run this country. Nixon wants an increase of \$4.2-billion for the war budget. At the same time he wants to slash spending on social services.

The working people will be the ones to suffer while the war contractors continue to get rich at our expense.

The cutbacks are going to hit hardest at Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Chica-

nos, and other oppressed nationalities concentrated in the central cities. Massive social programs are urgently needed to begin to alleviate the pressing problems facing the American people. Yet even the minimal, inadequate social welfare programs are being taken away.

Millions face exorbitant rents in dilapidated, rat- and roach-infested apartments. Our right to a decent education is being denied because of the lack of funds for schools. And now Nixon proposes even to cut off funds for milk for school children!

Although there has been a massive outcry against Nixon's budget, the

Democrats and Republicans will both go along with his plan to enrich the few at the expense of the many. They can't solve the problems because they are on the side of the capitalist system, which puts private profits ahead of human needs.

We must oppose these cutbacks. We must demand: Shorten the work week so there can be jobs for all! Union wages for all workers and for those unable to work! Preferential hiring and promotion for Blacks and other oppressed nationalities! A crash program of public works! Put the needs of the people ahead of the profits of the rich!



Norman Oliver