

DETROIT POLICE DEPARTMENT

INTER-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date April 13, 1970

To: Commissioner Patrick V. Murphy (through channels)

Subject: PRELIMINARY REPORT OF INCIDENT AT DENBY AND OSBORN HIGH SCHOOLS
ON APRIL 8, 1970

Shortly after 10:00 a.m., on April 8, 1970, students at Denby High School, 12800 Kelly, City of Detroit, walked out of their classes or were between classes, and assembled in the area of the high school. They apparently decided to march on the Osborn High School, which is located at Seven Mile and Hoover, some distance away from Denby. This action was apparently precipitated by the on-going controversy over the decision of the Board of Education in reference to school decentralization and bussing of pupils.

Officers under the command of Inspector Russell Galloway, of the Fifteenth Precinct, responded to Denby and made some efforts to break up the gathering of the youths. They were assisted in this effort by the coach, Roger Parmentier, of the Denby High School staff, who had been given the facility of a police loud speaker. However, the youths did begin their march toward Osborn High School during the efforts to break them up.

At some time prior to the arrival at Gratiot Avenue, it was anticipated that the youths could be broken up and dissuaded from continuing their march. However, it is alleged that at this time a television sound truck, which was filming the group's march, told them to "whoop it up," so that they would be on T.V. At this time, the television crew preceded the 1,000 or so youths down the street, filming them running after the men, shouting. It then became impossible to address the group in any effort to cease this march, and they proceeded toward Osborn.

Their motive in going to Osborn is not clear, whether this was a demonstration anti to the Board of Education's plans, or whether it was to be a confrontation between the predominantly white students of Denby and the black students of Osborn High School.

Lieutenant Robert Moug, of the Precinct Support Unit, and officers of his command, had been attempting to assist Code 15-50 in his efforts to disburse the group of Denby students. At this time, they received information that an officer was

in trouble at the Osborn High School. Lieutenant Moug took the members of his command and proceeded to Osborn High School. On arrival at the scene of Osborn High School, Lieutenant Moug and his men observed a group of black youths at Hoover and Seven Mile Road, and at this time they were in the act of stoning passing vehicles, and a group of the youths had grabbed ahold of a small vehicle, which was stopped on Hoover, and were rocking it, and it appeared to be in danger of being tipped over.

Members of the Precinct Support Unit went to the aid of the driver, and while trying to free him from the youths, Patrolman James McCallum, Badge #2323, of the P.S.U., was struck in the head by a fragment of brick. Lieutenant Moug, having observed the perpetrator of this incident, ordered the arrest of the youth in orange pants, who was later identified as one RONALD JOHNSON, Black/16, of 14002 Goddard.

Patrolmen Stephen Burcicki and Aaron Rothgarber, assisted by Patrolman James McCallum, attempted to arrest JOHNSON. While Patrolman Burcicki had ahold of Johnson, and was attempting to move him toward the arresting officer's car, a man later identified as EMILE LAMPKIN, Black/19, of 15741 Tuller, jumped on the back of Patrolman Burcicki in an effort to free JOHNSON from his grasp. Patrolmen McCallum and Rothgarber attempted to arrest LAMPKIN, who fled north on Hoover a short distance, with the officers in pursuit. When the officers caught up to LAMPKIN, a short struggle ensued when the officers attempted to subdue him. As he fell to the ground with the officers, several blows were struck by Patrolman Rothgarber in an apparent effort to cause him to cease his struggles. (This was the film shown on the television news.) Both RONALD JOHNSON and EMILE LAMPKIN were conveyed to the Fifteenth Precinct Station.

During this melee over the throwing of the brick, a black female, wearing a yellow leather or plastic coat and orange flowered pants, struggled briefly with a uniformed police officer. She apparently was not injured and apparently not arrested.

Subsequent to this arrest, the area was secured with no further incident involving the black youths. In the meanwhile, the marching students from Denby High School had arrived in the vicinity of Osborn High. They were finally stopped by Coach Roger Parmentier using a police loud hailer, and were asked to go onto a large field just to the south of Osborn High where the coach and others addressed them, and ultimately convinced them to proceed to their homes and to break up this gathering.

During this time, elements of the Precinct Support Unit, the Tactical Mobile Unit, and the Fifteenth Precinct Command had formed a line to prevent the two groups from coming together in a confrontation.

The incident at Osborn High, and more particularly a subsequent showing of some television news film on Channel 2, resulted in several allegations being made that fell into four different accusations regarding the incident. (1) That the police had over-reacted and then had brutalized some black youths. (2) That proper provisions had not been made for the transportation of the black youths away from Osborn after they were dismissed. (3) That there was preferential treatment of the two groups, the black and the white, by the police. (4) That a black youth had been set upon by the white mob and severely assaulted, and his car destroyed and driven into a citizen's house in the vicinity of Osborn High.

In regard to the first complaint about police conduct and particularly accusations of police physical abuse, there were some complaints made to the Citizen's Complaint Bureau by four persons.

(1) DENNIS BROWN, Black/15, of 18867 Albany, alleged that during a melee at Hoover and Seven Mile Road, that officers had struck one MELODY DODSON, and that as he moved in with the crowd apparently to assist the girl, the officers struck her with clubs, and that he was struck in the head by the club twice, and also kicked in the legs by police officers who were present and trying to move the crowd. He states that he cannot identify the officers, and he received no medical treatment.

(2) WALTER LEWIS, SR. made a complaint on behalf of his daughter, PENNY LEWIS, Black/15, of 18097 Bloom. She alleges that she was struck on the back by an officer using a night stick as she was talking to a school teacher. That the officer further badgered the female Negro school teacher.

(3) LILLIE BRYANT, Black/17, of 18036 Syracuse, states that she witnessed a white police officer with red hair and wearing a nylon jacket, hit one MELODY DODSON. MISS DODSON is a neighbor of the BRYANT girl.

(4) LATRICE McCRARY, Black/17, of 13821 Lumpkin, alleges that she observed a police officer strike one MELODY DODSON with his right fist, striking her in the left jaw. She states that the scout car the officers were in rolled forward, apparently without the officers realizing it, and the crowd pulled Miss DODSON from in front of the car. She further stated that it looked as though the police were going after someone past MISS DODSON, but she was in their way and got hit.

As of this time, these are the only complaints received of police brutality by the officers from any of the witnesses, and as you see, three of the complaints allege misconduct or brutality against one MELODY DODSON. Thus far we have been unable to contact MISS DODSON, and she has not made a complaint to this department. Information has been received that she was one of the persons instrumental in the stoning and inciting others to stone the vehicles. This might explain her unavailability to us at this time.

The other complaint alleging misconduct is where PENNY LEWIS states she was struck by a police officer. MISS LEWIS gives us the name of the school teacher to whom she states she was talking. We have interviewed that teacher, a Miss Crowell, and she does not corroborate MISS LEWIS' statement, except to the extent that she had observed MISS LEWIS crying and she went to her attempting to find out what the difficulty was. Miss Crowell states that MISS LEWIS told her that she had witnessed police officers beating a black man with a night club. Miss Crowell, herself, saw officers swinging nightsticks, but did not see anyone hit by them.

It appears that the complaint of DENNIS BROWN that he was struck by officers was a part of the general melee at the same time that MELODY DODSON was involved with the police.

The preliminary investigation indicates that the allegations of physical abuse by the police all grew out of the efforts of the police to arrest RONALD JOHNSON, and the subsequent arrest of EMILE LAMPKIN for attempting to free JOHNSON from the police.

The T.V. 2 news film of this incident would indicate that MELODY DODSON is a Negro in a yellow coat and red slacks, who appears to have grabbed PATROLMAN JAMES McCALLUM as he attempted to arrest EMILE LAMPKIN. The tape does not indicate that she was struck on the jaw or hit with a club, as alleged. It does appear that she is spun around by the officer, who grabs her arm, and she is grappling with the officer in this film. As previously reported, we have been unable to contact MISS DODSON, but will continue our efforts to do so.

The balance of the allegations involve the allegation of physical abuse against a man who the police had on the ground, and were hitting with clubs. This obviously is the arrest of EMILE LAMPKIN who had attempted to free JOHNSON, and he was struck several times on the back and buttocks by clubs wielded by the arresting officers, Patrolmen McCallum and Rothgarber.

On April 9, 1970, LAMPKIN was charged and appeared in Judge Sutherland's Court, where he was convicted of Resisting and Obstructing a police officer. At this time he told the Court that he had attempted to free JOHNSON from the grasp of the police officers, and that further he had attempted to flee the officers and had resisted for a short time after they apprehended him. He alleges he was struck about the body with a night stick. MR. LAMPKIN had not made a complaint to this department about his treatment by the officers thus far.

LAMPKIN further stated, both to Judge Sutherland and in an interview, that he interceded on JOHNSON's behalf, but that at the time he had no knowledge of what the police were holding JOHNSON for, but that later he had been told by JOHNSON after their arrest, that JOHNSON had thrown a brick at Officer McCallum. This seemed to upset LAMPKIN, who was apologetic to the Court for having interfered.

All of these specific complaints would appear to be addressed to the same set of actions, the striking of McCallum, the stoning and rocking of the car, the arrest of RONALD JOHNSON and EMILE LAMPKIN, and the short scuffle between MISS DODSON and Officer McCallum as he attempted to apprehend LAMPKIN. This phase of the allegations will be investigated further.

The second allegation regarding the Osborn Incident involved that a provision had not been made to transport the Osborn youths away from the school when they were dismissed as a result of the march by the Denby students.

The writer has in his possession a statement from a Mr. McLaughlin, of the D.S.R., who states that he had conferred at the scene with officers of the Detroit Police Department in an effort to get the students from Osborn onto the busses and away from the scene. That ultimately they were able to load some of them and transport them away, west on Seven Mile, and got them out of the area. However, the group that had been persuaded to board the bus off-loaded en masse at Ryan Road, and turned around and proceeded back to the school. Mr. McLaughlin states that eventually traffic was shut off on Seven Mile, and busses were not permitted through. However, he further states that the students were not about to take busses in any case, and were not about to leave the area.

However, there was information received from the D.S.R. at the Fifteenth Precinct Station that the students would not be loaded unless they were assured of on-board or a following escort of police, due to the fact that several coaches had been severely damaged or set afire on the day before, April 7, 1970.

A Mr. Billups, of the Board of Education, corroborates this statement of Mr. McLaughlin in that he, himself, in company with Lieutenant Moug and others of the Police Department attempted to get the students to board busses and leave, and that they refused to do so.

I can find no corroboration of the allegation that the bus drivers refused to allow the students to board, or the further allegation that all of the black girls were allowed to board the bus and the black males were prohibited from boarding. It appears from the statements of the people who were at the scene that this allegation of failure to provide transportation to evacuate the area was without merit.

It might be considered advisable in any future incident of this nature, when conveying students away from an area or a school under these circumstances, that they be escorted until they are sufficiently far away to insure that the students will not retrace their route back to the troubled area.

The third allegation of preferential treatment of the two groups was based on the fact that the Denby students had been allowed to proceed all the way from their high school to the vicinity of Osborn, and it was felt that had these been black students, they would not have been permitted to make that long trek.

However, as previously explained, efforts were made to stop this group short of the goal of arrival at Osborn. That these efforts consisted of the attendant attempts of police to dissuade them and disburse them, and efforts of their own coach and other teachers to dissuade them. However, these efforts were unsuccessful, and it was felt that they were chiefly unsuccessful because the television news crews had inveighed upon these youths to "whoop it up," and it appears that this created rather a holiday spirit with a great deal of shouting and display of emotion.

The answer to this criticism appears to be that the police were well mobilized at Osborn with the TMU, PSU, and the Precinct Units, and did, in fact, prevent the Denby High School students from coming into contact with the Osborn High School students, and did prevent any confrontation

between the two groups. In addition to those facts we quoted above, there are several other reports reviewed of isolated incidents of difficulty between white and black youths. These consisted of assault, both by blacks against whites and whites against blacks. However, these reports would indicate that they took place away from the school, possibly by elements who had left the school area, but none-the-less not within the cordon provided by the police elements.

This writer has been unable to find the report which alleges that a black youth was set upon by numerous white people and severely beaten and his car destroyed.

However, this apparently involved one WALTER LEWIS, JR., who stated that he was driving south on Annott and Seven Mile to Osborn High School to pick up his sister, PENNY LEWIS, who was mentioned in one of the other complaints, when he observed twenty to thirty white youths proceeding in his direction. He apparently became alarmed and put his car in reverse, his foot slipped off the brake pedal and hit the gas pedal, and he was projected backwards into a house causing extensive damage to his vehicle. He was not assaulted by the youths, nor intimidated by them. This statement is according to his father, WALTER LEWIS, SR., who was personally contacted by the writer.

In conclusion the writer feels that the police response and activity at the Osborn High School was generally proper and appropriate to the situation. The criticism and subsequent emotional feeling is based on the single incident involving the arrest of EMILE LAMPKIN, and that particular incident at Hoover and Seven Mile Road, in which all of these allegations seems to have grown out of, and this phase of the operation will be further investigated for recommendations.

James Bannon

JAMES D. BANNON

District Detective Inspector

JDB/pc