

Probe Set Of Panther Incident

7/17/70
By Ellen Hoffman

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A metropolitan police investigation of the confrontation at the Washington Black Panther Community Center Saturday night was ordered yesterday by Deputy Chief Tilmon B. O'Bryant.

Two policemen were injured, one seriously, and 20 persons arrested during the incident at 1932 17th St. NW.

In announcing the investigation, O'Bryant said "I'm not going to tolerate any special drive . . . (against) the Panthers . . . I don't know of any threat they pose as far as the peace is concerned."

The subject of the investigation will be "what transpired up there . . . as far as the police department is concerned."

O'Bryant said. He said "several men," including a detective and some uniformed policemen, have been assigned to the inquiry.

Major concerns of the investigators will be how the two policemen were wounded and who owns the unregistered machine guns and shotguns confiscated by police.

Officer John V. Robinson remained in serious condition at the Washington Hospital Center yesterday. He was hit in the face with a brick during the incident. The second policeman who was wounded, Finish H. McGraw, was treated for a fractured foot and released by the Hospital Center.

"We have a large assortment of machine guns and shotguns and handguns and we intend to establish ownership . . . We have ascertained that they are not registered," O'Bryant said yesterday.

James Heller, local American Civil Liberties Union chairman, said yesterday he plans to file either a complaint or a civil suit against the police protesting their conduct in the incident.

Heller, a lawyer, claims that, while he was at third district headquarters arranging for the release of several arrested in the incident, he saw police beat a suspect.

Heller said he also plans to protest "being locked out of the precinct, not having answers to requests for names and badges of officers, and the damage done" at the Panthers' community center.

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PANTHER, From C1

In a press conference Sunday the Panthers displayed furniture and personal belongings they claimed were damaged by policemen who entered the center.

O'Bryant said he had not heard from Heller about the forthcoming complaints but that "on the basis of rumor" had requested his investigators to look into the reports of the beating.

Witnesses said the confrontation started Saturday about 10:30 p.m. when police asked a group gathered at the front of the center to stop singing. The singing continued, Panthers and police agree. Then rocks and bottles were thrown at policemen, police said, and they entered the Panther center where the arrests were made and the weapons seized.