

Riot Experts' View of White House Hit

By Paul W. Valentine
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Government attorneys yesterday challenged as "biased and prejudiced" the testimony in federal court of a crowd behavior specialist who says present restrictions on political demonstrations near the White House could generate violence more readily than the lack of restrictions.

"You and I don't seem to have the same definition of violence," said Assistant U.S. Attorney Gil Zimmerman of Jerome H. Skolnick, a criminologist and specialist in mob violence.

Zimmerman attacked Skolnick's testimony in the fifth day of a U.S. District Court trial in which the American Civil Liberties Union is challenging the legality of a Na-

tional Park Service regulation limiting the number of demonstrators to 100 on the sidewalk in front of the White House on Pennsylvania Avenue NW and to 500 in adjacent Lafayette Park.

Secret Service and police officials have testified that increased militancy of demonstrations in the late 1960s created a potential threat to White House security, justifying the 100/500 limit.

Specifically, Zimmerman hammered at a study produced by Skolnick purporting to show that the frequency of violent incidents at demonstrations diminishes with the increase in the size of the demonstrations. The study was based on a review of demonstrations, riots, protests and rallies reported in The New

York Times from 1965 through 1969 and in 1972.

Skolnick's study, for example, showed 320 such events in 1968. But Zimmerman produced a Senate Government Operations subcommittee study showing 196 "disturbances" on college campuses alone in that year.

Skolnick acknowledged that The Times probably did not report many of the disturbances, but he contended that a substantial portion of them were not violent either.

Skolnick described as a "marginal case" one instance in which an ROTC officer was held nine hours by campus activists.

"I'd call that kidnapping," snapped Judge George L. Hart Jr.

Zimmerman also asked why the Skolnick study skipped the years 1970 and 1971. The Kent State and Jackson State College shootings, which set off hundreds of violent disturbances throughout the country, occurred in 1970, he noted.

Skolnick said he lacked resources and manpower to include 1970 and 1971, but had reserched 1972 to see if any trend had occurred since 1969. He is a professor at the University of California in Berkeley and a former task force director of the National Violence Commission.

Skolnick said that as a general rule large crowds are less prone to violence than small groups because they are

"more inert, more cross-sectional and require more organization."

A large crowd with a broad cross section of participants is less likely to be swayed by militant splinter groups, he said. Also, he said, large crowds require "more responsible leadership," which helps to insure adherence to peaceful actions.