

Protests a Flop'--Activists Admit

By John Burks

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MIAMI BEACH — Yesterday's street demonstrations outside the hall where Richard Nixon was delivering his acceptance speech — demonstrations billed in advance by anti-war activist Remmie Davis as "the most massive in American history" — were a flop.

That seemed to be the consensus of most of the anti-war demonstrators who participated in them.

After three hours of taunting and being chased and teargassed by cops, three young men wearing headbands, tee shirts and jeans sat sweating at the counter of the Gray Drugstore, two blocks from Convention Hall, wishing they'd stayed home in Berkeley.

'Stone Diaster'

'It was pathetic, man,' said Larry.

'It wasn't pathetic, man,' countered Mike. 'It was a stone disaster.'

'Hey, I don't want to wait until the morning — let's get the car and head for home right now,' said Hank. Some 830 of their brothers

Campaign '72



Youthful anti-war protesters flee clouds of tear gas as police disperse demonstration near Miami Beach convention hall

—AP Photo

and sisters were arrested during the long, hectic evening.

At no point — except for a final sit-in, toward midnight, in front of the White House staff's hotel, the Doral, where 250 were grabbed in a mass bust — were the 2500 demonstrators grouped in sufficient numbers to make an "effective statement," as they had hoped to, about the Nixon Administration, the war, racism, sexism and allied issues.

The evening certainly had its ugly scenes.

To pick one example of many, there was the tense moment when about 30 delegates and guests from Mississippi hustled through a crowd of perhaps 500 demonstrators to the safety of the chain link fence surrounding the hall.

Demonstrators jolted these Republicans, called them murderers and killers and many things too vile to print in a family newspaper.

Some laid down in the path of the Mississippians, while others squirted them with water pistols and spat upon them.

Arms locked, the anxious-looking southerners kicked at the demonstrators and walked on those who lay in their path.

Vets Upset

The final day's demonstration had gotten off to a spirited start for a couple of reasons.

For one, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, an avowedly non-violent organization, very nearly pulled out. They were upset at the Zippies and SDS because those groups had already broken a pledge against violent tactics such as trashing.

It was only after long-time anti-war activist David Dellinger came to talk with the vets, urging them to participate because otherwise the media would "interpret it to mean you do not support the

actions against Nixon," that VVAW voted to stay aboard.

The other problem for the demonstrators was that police tactics had taken them by total surprise. They had not reckoned on the long, solid lines of buses which created an impenetrable wall behind Convention Hall, at the main vehicular entryway, and at another entrance out in front.

Nor had they reckoned on the heavy police use of Mace and tear gas. For almost two hours during the key speeches inside the hall, dense clouds of tear gas rose steadily at major intersections of tension, sending demonstrators running in all directions, gagging, tears streaming from their eyes.

One method of crowd dispersal was for police suddenly to wheel around a corner and toss the gas pellets into groups of eight or more people.

Indiscriminate

It seemed indiscriminate — and so did some of the arrests. At one point, this reporter was speaking with a pair of Viet vets, one wearing the VVAW tee shirt, another in his Army fatigues.

And then, as they walked off, a Miami Beach police patrol car screeched to a stop, its two officers grabbed the two vets, tossed them inside, and sped away.

I saw this singling out of VVAW's who were apparently doing nothing on two other occasions and other newsmen reported the same thing.

Miami Beach police information officer Sgt. Pete Corso lamented what he considered an "overuse" of police might last night.

The philosophy of the department, as laid down by Chief Rocky Pomerance, had been to give the demonstrators plenty of leeway.

It seemed to work during

the Democratic convention:

Police and dissidents came to a number of agreements on how demonstrations were to be held, resulting in little trouble, hardly any violence on either side and only a handful of arrests.

But this time, there was a court order — delivered by a Miami circuit court judge yesterday afternoon — calling upon the lawmen to enforce "every law on the books to the nth degree," as Sergeant Corso describes it.

This came about after some SDS members had kicked an auto belonging to a local GOP delegate, who in turn demanded that the demonstrators be thrown in jail.

"This guy is running for office and he wants to make a name for himself," Officer Corso continued, "so he went to Judge Shelby Highsmith, a friend of his, and got this court order put through."

The result was police work which, quoting Corso again "none of us are proud of. It comes about because these people want real tough law and order — it's a law and order administration — and to them that means throwing people with long hair and people who smoke marijuana in jail. You know:

"Get 'em out of our sight. That was the effect on that order."

"And so you had the kind of police work that went on out there tonight. There's no way we — and I mean all the law enforcement people involved — can come out of this looking good. If they'd just let us handle it our way for one more day, we could have taken care of it with a lot less trouble for everybody."

2 Women Hit

Three lawmen were injured, none seriously, in the

night's festivities, and at two demonstrators had harassed the drivers. One of these cars, both women, were hit by was said to have two flat-cars in the street, after dem- tened tires.

From CDN story, SF Examiner 24 Aug 72, filed Nix Ad:

.... [The delegates] dashed across the street to a supermarket, but the manager saw the pursuing demonstrators and locked the store's door.

They scurried on down the street, with one group of demonstrators hounding them while a group of older protesters — "I think they were those Vietnam veterans," [Illinois alternate delegate Harry Magers Jr.] said — urged their pursuers to "lay off those people."