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Los Angeles Police in Training To Curb Recession Protests

Special to The New York Times

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 25 — The police here are being trained in special crowd-control techniques to enable them to cope with any protests that might occur during the current recession. The instruction is part of the department's ongoing education program and takes place in the station houses. No special equipment or instruction is necessary. The program is financed from the regular budget.

Chief of Police Edward M. Davis denied Thursday an earlier report by a subordinate that the police were being trained to cope with food riots.

"I do not think that there is any reasonable possibility of any kind of food riots," said Chief Davis. "America is the food basket for the world and California is the food basket for the nation so the last thing I would expect is a food riot."

Police Comdr. Frank Brittel of the Metropolitan Division said Wednesday that the department had started the training program last month in anticipation of food riots. Commander Brittel said that many policemen had joined the force since the 1965 Watts riots and had never controlled a crowd.

"Food riots might be more difficult to handle because of the emotions involved," Commander Brittel said. "Our training stresses using reason rather than force and helps the officers to understand the people on the picket lines."

Five hundred police supervisors have completed the program and are now instructing line officers. All 7,200 policemen will be taught to control labor strikes, student protests and other demonstrations that might occur in a recession.

March, 1975

Dear Friend,

Food riots? Rent strikes? Mass demonstrations for jobs? In the United States? Yes, the nightmare is real, and becoming more real day by day. We haven't seen food riots yet, but rent strikes have already become common, and in the past two months alone, tens of thousands of unemployed Americans have demonstrated in Washington for jobs.

Do you remember when blacks were demonstrating for civil rights, and getting arrested in the process? Or when thousands of students, people we were told were "hippies" or cowards or traitors, were holding mass demonstrations for peace, and getting arrested for their efforts? Perhaps you, or your parents or grandparents, remember as far back as the 1920's to the mass arrests of Americans who simply wanted the right to organize and join unions.

The patterns begin to emerge. First, you start with intolerable conditions, whether fundamental economic needs, or denial of civil rights, or the conducting of an illegal and inhumane war.

Then, inevitably, people begin to organize themselves to change those conditions, because they understand that the only power they have is in numbers. Finally, the government and corporations begin to see the dangers inherent in large organizations of people committed to goals that are inconsistent with their desires.

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That's when the repression begins. Laws are passed. Union organizing becomes "criminal syndicalism." Progressives become subversives. Students become hippies. Interstate travel to a demonstration becomes "crossing state lines with intent to incite a riot." Wanting peace, or food, or jobs, becomes an "un-American activity." Government spying on its own citizens becomes "domestic security measures." And on and on. The targets change with history. The tactics remain essentially the same.

And if there is anything that stands out clearly about the tactics of repression in this country, it is that the law has consistently been used to achieve repression. Think about it. How much of a difference was there between the notorious frame-ups of Sacco and Vanzetti in the 1920's, the Rosenbergs in the 1950's, and the "VVAW 8" in the 1970's? Is there any real difference between the mass arrests of union workers fifty years ago and the mass arrests of anti-war demonstrators five years ago?

As we enter the second half of the decade, economic depression and social upheaval loom large. People must and will come together in every conceivable type of group and association in order to protect their jobs, their homes, their very economic survival. And this Administration, like others before it, will shape the law into a tool of repression to prevent effective opposition to its policies or to the profits of its corporate benefactors.

You can expect the passage of laws limiting further your right to assemble. To strike. To boycott. To withhold your rent. To join many organizations. You can expect fabricated criminal charges against the most outspoken critics of government and corporate practices. You can expect a major increase in government surveillance and intrusion into your private life.

The CCR can't lower the price of bread. We can't force an employer to rehire those who have been laid off. We can't force the government to abandon economic policies which benefit the corporations, and crush us. Only you, working with your friends, neighbors, and co-workers, can do that.

But what we can do, what we have always done, is to protect you in whatever it is you must do to insure your survival. To interpose ourselves between you and the government; to be your first line of defense against repression.

From its birth in the civil rights movement, the CCR has led the resistance to the "legal" aggression that our government regularly engages in against its own people. We have fought and defeated laws that attempted to illegalize your First Amendment right to assemble; we have won acquittals in major conspiracy trials, and exposed the purely political bases for the prosecutions; we have resisted, and in many cases, defeated the misuse of grand jury subpoenas to frighten and even jail American citizens; we caused the government's claim to an unlimited right to spy on you to be struck down in the Supreme Court; we have attacked the no-strike provision of labor contracts; we have prevented witch-hunting Congressional Committees from gaining access to the bank records of organizations opposed to government policies so as to identify their contributors; and we have engaged in countless other legal battles where the Bill of Rights has come under attack.

The CCR has no reason for being, except to defend and expand your rights, as you pursue social, economic, and political justice. Therefore, we can expect and would accept no support from the Rockefellers or Fords, or the corporate interests they represent. Our support must continue to come from the people. From you. Please contribute as much as you can today.

For Justice,

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