

Highlights Concerning the "Riot" in Memphis

As a result of interviews with various persons, I was able to obtain much information concerning the recent riot in Memphis.

For example, on interview with Mrs. A, one of the strikers who participated in the march demonstration on Thursday April 28, 1968, related the following:

"The riot really started before the march," explained Mrs. A. "There were a group of teenagers standing at the corner of Linden and Hernando near a liquor store. They began by attacking buses with bricks and sticks. The liquor store close as a result of the disturbance. They had previously refused to serve the teenagers. The youngsters broke into the store and helped themselves".

These youngsters, according to Mrs. A, did not participate in the march. Even though

they were asked to clear the sidewalk and join the march, they refused.

Mr. A. continued: "after the march began we had not gone very far before someone ordered us to turn back. We immediately turned back to the church on Hemonds where the march had begun. Policemen sprayed noise in the church yard. They did not spray it directly inside the church. It circulated inside."

"Later, around 2:30 P.M. I saw policemen beat two teenagers on Pontotoc and leave them lying on the ground. Bystanders took one of the teenage boys upstairs in one of the buildings and later on an ambulance came and took him away. Policemen were running people off the street in the area. Some of the people ran in a house on Pontotoc; some went around the house. The policemen sprayed noise in the house and those persons who were caught were beaten. All this ^{took} place at approximately 2:30 or 3:00 P.M. I didn't see them beat any adult,

but I saw them until ~~they~~ ^{they} made me get off the street, but they didn't hit me."

Mr. W., a demonstrator and businessman, gave his account of the incident.

"I was on the tail end of the march when we got to Herndon and Beale there was a commotion at Beale and Maine St. We were signaled to turn back. I went back to work. From there I saw a youngster coming down the street with an arm of liquor. He gave two bottles to a woman on the sidewalk. Policemen were riding at least six to a car. Some disturbance took place at Vance and Ave. and Herndon. Policemen arrived on the scene and the crowd dispersed. There was one youngster who straggled from the spot where disturbance had taken place. I saw a group of policemen beat this boy unmercifully. The boy's face was red and a bubble of blood stood in the street. Two of them picked him up and threw him across the hood of the car and hit him two more times as they proceeded to reach him. It took nineteen ^{in his head} stitches as a

result of the incident.

"Afterward I judge that the rioters were not taken part before they began to break glasses along Union.

I feel that this was done through anger after seeing Salicmon and the other youngsters. A police car passed but they made no effort to stop the youngsters.

Apparently they called for help because soon there were about fifteen cars there.

"One Salicmon also shot six times as a youngster ran down the street. However, I don't believe he tried to shoot hit him."

Mr. B. also had this to say: "I believe that many of the rioters were from out of town. There were a lot of strange faces."

Still another eye witness gave her account. "It was about 6:31 P.M. on Thursday. Teenagers and young adults were breaking windows along Union. Salicmon rushed in about fifteen cars and the chief, and ordered people off

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~~the street in front of the building~~

Although I saw none of these incidents, my personal observation is that the demastiation had no effect in the rest. Possibly others took advantage of the demastiation for their own personal gain; that is, to loot as they did in Beale Avenue. However, according to Mr. X, a businessman, all the looting was not done by rioters. He said that one of his employees declared that he saw policemen looting a liquor store that had been broken into earlier by teenagers.

I also feel that after those on the side-line, who took advantage of the demastiation, started rioting and looting and salivemen began to beat people, some possibly innocent, others were whipped to angry and retaliated by rioting. The noise and account of the youngsters who received such a beating is an example.