

Rioting Delays Occupancy in Truth Homes

More Than Dozen
Hurt as Negroes
Attempt to Move In

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Using tear gas, clubs and pistol shots fired into the air, police Saturday broke up two riots at the \$1,000,000 Sojourner Truth Housing project which forced postponement of plans to allow Negroes to occupy the new buildings.

More than a dozen persons, including a white woman and four policemen, were treated at hospitals, all injured by knives, clubs or flying bricks.

One white man, stabbed in the back, was in a critical condition in Saratoga General Hospital. The others were less seriously hurt.

Fighting Continues

Skirmishes continued throughout the day in the vicinity of the housing project, at Nevada avenue and Ryan road, and police remained on duty all night. Chief of Detectives Paul Wencel took personal command and had 180 men on duty.

An offer of military assistance by troops from Fort Custer was turned down by Detective Inspector Edward Graff, who telegraphed the army that "the situation is in hand."

The head-cracking clash, with bricks and stones the principal ammunition, was an attempt by white residents of the neighborhood to prevent Negroes from entering the new government-built homes.

Even after Mayor Edward J. Jeffries Jr. postponed opening the buildings, Negroes charged in force and were turned back by police billies and tear gas.

Later, they tried to enter the project by an infiltration process,

Truth Homes Tenancy Held Up

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one man at a time trying to cross the police deadline.

Bitter fighting broke out anew at nightfall, when 200 Negro youths attempted to cross the white lines on Ryan avenue, near Stockton avenue.

Riot squads, both afoot and in cars, swung into action in an attempt to quell the fighting. Indiscriminate stoning of passing cars was continuous, several pellets breaking windows and barely missing drivers or occupants.

At 6:45 p. m., five Negroes attempted to crash the white picket lines in an automobile. When stopped by police, the driver, Walter Drain, 19, of 13597 Dequindre avenue, drew a knife. Another occupant of the car produced a hatchet. After a brief chase on foot, patrolmen rounded up all five and loaded them, with difficulty, into a patrol wagon.

The one victim seriously injured was Walter Efimetz, 24, of 19775 Westphalia avenue. He told Saratoga hospital attendants that he had been shot, but examination showed the deep wound in his back to have been made with a knife.

The woman taken to St. Francis Hospital was Mrs. Dolores Homer, 24, of 17137 Sunset avenue. Her head was cut by a brick.

Patrolmen treated in hospitals included Joseph Dunn, 28, of 17221 Stout avenue; Carl Mayer, 34, of 16741 Stout avenue, and Edward Koss, 36, of 742 Maywood avenue. All three were felled by rocks. Patrolman Mayer being knocked from a horse.

Another victim was Sgt. Harold Krepps, who was knocked unconscious by a clubber.

More than 60 men, most of them Negroes, were arrested and held at Davison station. Charges ranged from carrying concealed weapons to felonious assault and inciting a riot.

Chief of Detectives Wencel personally arrested Bernard L. Augustyniak, 33, of 7514 Stockton avenue, whom he caught swinging an iron bar.

Lawrence Martin, Negro, of 9079 Greeley avenue, was accused of possessing a .38-caliber pistol and 44 bullets. William Pearson, Negro, of 3916 Stockton avenue, is

charged with carrying a .38-caliber revolver and nine cartridges.

Upset Negro's Car

White pickets at Shields and Stockton avenues upset and damaged an automobile driven by a Negro, who fled.

Late in the day, a committee of three Negroes, named by Ford Local No. 600, UAW-CIO, attempted to end the trouble by urging both whites and Negroes to disperse. On this committee were Horace Sheffield, Robert L. Boyd and George Lee, all Ford employes.

The Rev. Horace White, Negro member of the legislature, also attempted to end further violence. Speaking from a CIO sound truck, the Rev. Charles Hill, Negro Baptist minister, told the crowd it "would get nowhere with violence."

Urges Co-operation

"I am sure that through co-operation with the authorities, we can find a way to live in peace and friendliness," he said.

The preacher was booed by some.

But most of the belligerents remained, and the undertone threat of bloodshed and hand-to-hand scuffling continued.

Meanwhile, Mayor Jeffries said he was shocked to find violence continuing.

"I have done everything I can," he commented. "I believe the police now have the situation under control."

Gunfire Heard

The first outbreak of fighting at 9:30 a. m. brought hundreds of policemen to the scene. Street battling started again at 12:30 p. m. after authorities had decided to postpone opening the project.

Gunfire was heard at different times during the battling, but no one was wounded. Several shots passed through windows of the home of Mrs. Mary Williams, 45, Negro, at 4015 Nevada avenue, imperiling her and her family.

Tear gas was used in the second outbreak, but police were the victims of this weapon. Ordering the Negro mob to disperse, the police hurled tear gas bombs into the threatening mob. The gas was blown back.

Charles Edgecomb, secretary of the Detroit Housing Commission, made the decision to postpone occupancy of the project after he had personally surveyed the scene and conferred with a federal observer.

He added that the subject would

be taken up next week at a meeting of the commission.

The rioting in which the man and woman were hurt occurred at Ryan road and Nevada avenue, a half-mile from the homes.

Earlier, Negroes had lined up on the west side of Ryan opposite some 450 white people, who greatly outnumbered them.

The first tenant appeared about 9 a. m. but after viewing the mob turned his truck around and left.

"I'm not going to risk my family in there," he said.

A few minutes later another group of tenants arrived in two cars and a moving van.

These vehicles were stopped by the pickets.

How Fight Started

The battle began when two Negroes endeavored to run picket lines in their car.

A hail of bricks, stones and sticks rose from the crowd which at several points broke across the street for brief scuffles.

According to witnesses this lasted about five minutes despite the efforts of mounted patrolmen and subsided almost as suddenly as it began when some one yelled:

"Watch the man with the rifle."

A Negro had appeared on the porch of his home near the intersection with a gun. He went back in the house without approaching the crowd.

Pickets patrolled the neighborhood throughout the night in a demonstration similar to that staged at City Hall when designation of Sojourner Truth was under discussion.

Heaviest concentration of pickets was at the main intersection at Nevada and Fenelon avenues and this group was swelled this morning by neighbors directed to the scene by roving committeemen.

Fiery Cross Blazes

Indicative of the high feeling in the matter, a fiery cross blazed in a field near the homes. The men who had set the fire fled before police arrived.

Two Negroes attempting to deliver coal to the project were the first victims of the pickets' wrath. The truck was damaged before the men took flight.

Meanwhile in Washington Rep. Rudolph G. Tenerowicz of Hamtramck, who has led the political fight for designation of the homes as "white," charged Mayor Edward J. Jeffries Jr. with "blundering" in handling the affair.

Tenerowicz predicted rioting in a speech before the House and declared Sojourner Truth located in a "100 per cent white neighborhood." He accused real estate speculators, seeking to lower property values, of encouraging the Negro faction.