

Police Terror, Mass Arrests in East Long Beach

July, 3, 1978. A fireman's interference in a domestic quarrel led to an altercation with firemen and Chicano youth around 9:00 p.m. Monday night. Police responded with intense overreaction, indiscriminate arrests, beatings and raids on the Chicano community. During the following sequence of events 46 youths were rounded up, some over a mile from the scene of the altercation, and 42 were booked (28 minors and 12 adults). The actions took place in three distinct events.

The first incident began as a fire truck returning to the station swerved to avoid a couple fighting in the street. The fireman interfered in the domestic quarrel and abusive language ensued, provoking the youth. Instead of driving on, the fireman jumped out of the truck and ran to the sidewalk and jumped the youth. The other firemen disembarked and all began to beat the youth, whose friends by this time had begun to come to his rescue. The result was a fight involving approximately 20 people, including a fireman wielding an ax. In the course of the altercation, one of the firemen was stabbed in the shoulder.

Shortly after the scuffle had ensued the staff of the East Long Beach Neighborhood Center moved quickly to separate the two groups and restore order to what had been, moments before a peaceful fundraising event including music, paintings, and Aztec dancers. The announcement was made for the crowd (about 200 participants) to disperse, they did, and the situation was under control by the time police arrived 5-10 minutes later. The whole incident lasted approximately 4 minutes.

The second series of events can only be described as an all out attack on whatever Chicanos were left in the area, all those who had been involved in the first incident had dispersed by the time the police arrived. 5-10 minutes later.

Police responded by brandishing metal flashlights and clubs, sneering racist comments, and harrassing women and young people. As Police converged on the area there were indiscriminate arrests and beatings. Two young girls, one of them 13, were stopped on their way home and thrown up against a fence. Mace was sprayed



in their eyes and they were arrested on the charges of "resisting arrest."

One Long Beach Neighborhood Center staff member, instructed to mediate with the police was seized and severely beaten by 5-6 officers even after handcuffs were placed on him. He was thrown into a police car and received no medical attention after being arrested.

During the second incident, police were taking reports from two young boys between 7-10 years of age and from bar patrons who had been inside during the first incident. Other police were degrading what people were left, asking if they spoke english, asking for green cards, and trying to provoke further violence.

An hour and a half later at 10:30 p.m. the third incident occurred as police converged on an apartment building approximately a mile away. The police broke in and ransacked the home of one of the neighborhood youths who was not at home at the time to give his consent. They also threatened to break down the door to another apartment in the building where some of the youth had gathered. The young people were taken to the nearby alley, made to get down on their knees or to ly on the ground, were handcuffed and arrested.

A total of 46 youth were taken in and 42 (28 minors and 12 adults) were booked. Most on blanket charges of assault on a fireman, assault on an officer, and one pregnant teenager was charged with assault with a deadly weapon.

The police terror tactics on the Eastside Long Beach community plainly shows the blatant racism and repression of the Long Beach Police who labeled their overreaction a justifiable response to what they called "gang activity." In reality the "gang activity" was a Neighborhood Center fundraising event to finance materials needed for summer classes cut by Proposition 13. The Long Beach newsmedia responded with an equally disturbing distortion of the truth with their headline "L.B. Fireman Attacked in Street Gang Melée."

The police, via the media have continued to perpetuate old stereotypes of Chicanos as gang members and trouble makers. Their total disregard for the civil



rights of barrio members well illustrates their view of Chicanos and other minorities as second-class citizens.

The irresponsible and misconduct of both firemen and police could result in possible jeopardy of the Neighborhood Center summer youth programs as well as creating tension through out the East Side community.

The committee of Neighborhood Center staff and concerned parents and concerned citizens is demanding

- 1) that all charges be dropped against Chicano minors and adults arrested in the mass arrests
- 2) A stop to all police harassment and brutality by the Long Beach Police Department in the East Long Beach community
- 3) Release the cars impounded during the mass roundups free of charge
- 4) The investigation of officers and departments responsible for irresponsible actions and misconduct

We need your support. For information call (213)433-5761.