S. F. BLOWS
Sights and Sounds at Hunters Point
Wednesday

On Wednesday, September 28, FLATLANDS went to the Bayview-Hunter’s Point district of San Francisco with Mark Comfort. We wanted to see for ourselves how much damage had been done, and try to get some idea of the mood of the people in that area.

We first drove down Third St. The damage was obviously not the result of complete lack of control. In places, only one or two stores had been damaged on a block. One gas station was completely without glass; another, closer to the center of the trouble, was untouched.

Although radio and television had spoken of a “30 block” area, the visible damage extended only a few blocks on either side of Third and Palou. As in Oakland six weeks before, glass had been replaced very quickly. By noon, many of the shattered windows had new panes; there were several glass company trucks on the street.

We went into the project itself, looking for the Rev. Bruce Kennedy, a minister who lives and works in the Hunter’s Point area. Except for a few new units, the projects look as if they were made from very old cardboard. These buildings were put up as temporary units in the late 1930s. Even a quick walk through the project would tell many leaders more than thousands of words.

Talking to the people in the project, we learned that the Rev. Kennedy, Ken Simmons and two other men had been standing on a corner the night before when policemen burst out of a paddy wagon. Without a word from the police, the four men found themselves being hit in the back with rifle butts; one was injured in the head.

We went down to see Rev. Kennedy, but stopped outside the Bayview Community Center. A few people were already throwing steel bars and bottles at passing cars driven by whites.

Youths’ statement
The youth of the community had had a meeting at noon, and we were handed a sheet which read:

It was decided that we want to have Governor Brown, Willie Brown, Phillip Burton, John Bur-
Racial Violence in S.F.

Thoughts on the causes and effects of the disturbance

San Francisco has now joined other cities, such as Los Angeles, Cleveland, Chicago, Omaha, Atlanta and New York, in a rude awakening.

When people are left out of the world that makes the rules, they become angry and hopeless. Their despair will come out in violence.

In trying to find out about the incivility in San Francisco, I could not help but feel some bitterness. The people spoke of their own respect for law and order, but gave examples of disrespect from policemen in their areas.

One middle-aged Negro lady told of being stopped by a white policeman in the Fillmore district, one week before the riots, and asked if she was a street walker looking for customers. A Negro man told how he was stopped in his car downtown by a white policeman and ordered out of the car for步行 on the wrong side of the road.

On the other hand, one white woman told how two white policemen picked her up and offered her a dollar if she would submit to their search. She declined.

All of these incidents happened before the riots. The policemen’s lack of respect for black Americans brought things to a head last week in San Francisco.

The next time

or printed in some newspaper or magazine, but no real action is taken. Some forces in the San Francisco ghetto are waiting and watching for a full-scale riot. The Watts and other locales like children are watching. These forces are saying “White America has not met fully with the, police and accepted black leaders, so the fire next time (and I do believe there will be a next time, if the power structure fails to act) will be felt on earth.”

I talked with a member of the underground movement, and I thought he would tell me “just what is wrong,” but he had a deep desire to carry out the idea of his movement. In short, he was saying, “if I can get the power structure’s attention, I’ll show you how to save America.”

He made it very clear to me that there was a relationship between a riot and a revolt. A revolt is “self-starting or has little organization.

A revolt has organization and leadership.”

Will eyes open?

My experience in San Francisco’s Hunters Point and Fillmore districts made me remember a statement by James Baldwin (in the various race riots in the area). Many people are asking about the causes of riots and unrest. In this, I think, the eyes need to be opened.

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For example, the riots in the Watts district, the San Francisco riots, and the Los Angeles riots are all elements for a much greater Oakland racial unrest exist in the city.

One of the main problems that is causing the strain is that the black Americans are not being allowed to control the police force. The police and military police are not being used to control the civil disturbance.

On the street

Approximately one hundred police officers with their nightsticks and shotguns were moving up the street. They have the kids blocked off, now they’re going to arrest and keep going.

(To the kids) keep moving, keep moving, keep going, keep moving on.

Now the Highway Patrol and the riot squad are moving in, clearing the street at 3rd and Newcomb. One Negro has been shot in the street (in police were in front of the liquor store shooting at the crowd). The kids were in front of the crowd.

(At this point, Mark shouted “Run away!” The kids did for a moment, then they turned around and started running.)

(To the kids) keep moving, keep running, keep moving, keep moving.

(Talking to kids) “You can’t run, why don’t you run? They’ve got the kids that aren’t going nowhere.”

One Negro in a white shirt was shot in the back of the head.

(Since the shooting, a boy who was wearing a white shirt was shot in the back of the head.

About 10:30 p.m. I arrived at the police station in the middle of the street. At each corner large groups of Negroes marched in the area, shouting, “Kill that Nigger killer,” “Whitney is a dirty dog and must die.”

Large crowds, mothers, fathers, and small children, were standing around, like spectators waiting for something to happen. At the 4000 block of 3rd St., a crowd of Negroes decided to plan a strike on downtown San Francisco along Market street.

No issue was raised, except to burn the police station. This is a true story. When the police were asked what they thought of the violence, they said, “We are just doing our job.”

A block away from the riot area, police went into the streets to clear the area. This was done with tear gas and clubs.

Long lines of police formed and marched down 3rd Street, clearing away Negroes. The police are on the corners of both sides of the street. Some Negroes weren’t doing anything but watching and didn’t like being shoved around for nothing. So the police decided to use force and try to push the police, but there were three policemen to each rebellious person.

Most of the young people moved quickly away from the skirmish, but older people were taking their time. The police warned that there were going to be arrests in the area faster than they would be able to.

So Negroes were pushed up and the hill is being cleared away. They started shooting “back.” You can feel the spit of their bullets as they come from away from here. If you don’t, Whitney, you can bring them on the hill with you and show all of you.

Some boys and girls began to drop like napalm bombs on the backs of faces of policemen and civilians. Some people had been running down the hill to discuss what to do next. A small group of Negroes was being pushed up the hill through the police. Because bricks and bottles were coming down, they had to push them forward, a reporter was taking pictures when struck by the arm of a policeman.

One of the top brass arrived and the other brass lined up the street, one police sent a bullet like a yellow when some of the Negroes, seeing two lieutenants, approached, retreated to the top of the street. They were in front of the crowd area; here they stood firm and started fighting. As Negroes were bashing into one another, a small group went to another street to protect the corner.

With 75 or more policemen in on them, all of them got away from the area. By the time they were ordered to stand with their backs to the hill, they were in line and paddy wagoned. I witnessed the Negroes being moved from one area to another by the police.

Earl Alexander, was standing in the street and told the reporter to talk to the cops. He was punched in the face by a cop and standing in the back of the wagon.

Soon the area below was beginning to look like a ghost town.
Comfort Report
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There are now six cops on top of the center with shotguns, and also a couple M-1s, so these guys are not playing games.
The last brother who was taken away was carrying a mike, trying to keep things down.
"I've got a feeling this is going to make things worse, I really do."

Dr. Goodlett spoke again, "This is what happens when men resort to violence. You know, I'd go and get the man if the cops don't feel like it's safe to get him but then I'd about get shot."

Some of the cops on top of the roof are laughing—I guess they think this is funny. Police officers are making themselves comfortable in this situation (this referred to one officer sitting in a chair on the street. Here's what he said, he answered, "I might as well."

Someone from the Center tried to speak:
"Now that the police and the National Guard are coming in, we need to make some positive move. Here's what we'd like to do; we'd like to get some people who are spirited about protecting the Hunter's Point community. We need people who are willing to get out on the street."

Others spoke up: "We're going to have to go beyond 3rd St. with this, we're going to have to go downtown."

"This afternoon, I have witnessed a lot of children who look like my son who doesn't even know what this world is all about."

Finally, one man called out: "This is an American problem; for 400 years, this is an American problem."

The two boys are lying on the street. One is crawling to the other—now one is limping trying to run, he gets away, the other is still on the street.

"None of these kids were armed, they are now victims of the police force."

Now fourteen cops coming up the street (Newcombe) with shotguns, telling people to move it out; there are still groups of black people on the corners. Some shouting "we don't have any guns at all."

A couple of Negro boys moving up with some stretchers, the ambulance now moving up. One man who was trying to stop the riot was shot; Adam Rogers, an EOC aide, was shot in the leg.

The shooting was quite heavy at this point. Dr. Carlton Goodlett of San Francisco was speaking for a television cameraman.
"Two or three of the young people were shot. The important thing is that violence is not the way and I'm hoping that this tragedy . . ."

"I know we have the resources in this community to deal with the problem of jobs for these young people . . ."

As Dr. Goodlett spoke, two boys were wounded.

All telephone lines were cut off; can't get anything out. No Negro reporters in the area at all.
"I wish the black man would wake up to the fact that the white man is out to kill him."

"There's a man wounded, they are searching his pockets."

"Two wounded on the streets, Cadillac all shot up. We're all taking a chance to be shot in the back. Can the black people fight back . . . maybe this will wake them up."

The officers had their shotguns aimed at the windows at the top of the Community Center. At 6:30 the ambulance came up (one newspaper reported the ambulance wasn't allowed through.
"You little kids get off the street; they don't care who they shoot, everything that's black."

"I've never witnessed anything like this in my life; these people don't care who they hurt. You can break out windows and do what you want, you're not going to get anywhere till you hit 'em where it hurts."

"They started to shoot everything that didn't get out of the way."
The worst and saddest thing about riots is that they seem to work for a while. When hundreds of people will stand in front of guns, lots of other people start to ask why. And when they think they've found the "cause," they come up with the cure:

Did it happen because one white policeman shot one Negro boy? Then you suspend the white man and send Negro policemen to the boy's funeral.

Did it happen because the shooting made the gangs mad? Then you make a curfew and even stop the football games so the gangs can't meet anyone they might get mad at.

Did it happen because it was too hot, or because the moon was full? Then you can only hope it will get cooler—the moon's bound to change, at least.

Did it happen because of "outside agitators"? (Sounds like Mississippi). Then you announce an investigation.

Did it happen because there weren't enough jobs? Then presto! You fine 2,000 jobs right away.

And so on.

But these are small wounds, not causes, and the cures that go with them are bandages—they might hide the trouble, but they won't make things better. Bussing school kids is that kind of a bandage; the Job Fair was that kind of a bandage; San Francisco had a Job Fair months ago.

No. The grade school teacher must learn the language her Negro pupils speak, just as they must learn her language. The high school counselor must learn to look at grades and scores instead of skin and clothes. The man who hires must learn to think about people who want to get in instead of those that are already in. The unions must remember—because they're supposed to know it already—that all men have the right to decent work for a decent wage.

Nobody in the flatlands has a magic wand big enough to do all this at once. But there are a few chances to chip away at the fixed ideas of the schools, the businesses, the unions, the powers—that-be. Maybe, if the people act strongly and peacefully in boycotting the schools so that everyone in Oakland is forced to see that real changes are needed; if the unions and those who hire will reach out, then maybe no little boys will be wounded by rifles in the streets of Oakland—because someone was killed, because it was a hot day ...