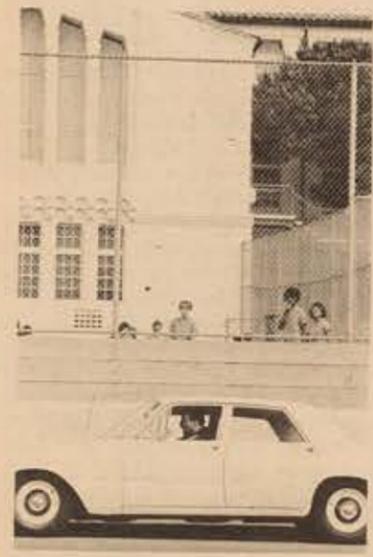




Fremont Students felt harassed by uniformed police in marked and unmarked cars



ON TOP OF

THE PROBLEM

At the September 20th meeting of the Oakland Board of Education, Director Caughell asked what control there was for "hangers-on" around the campuses of junior high, high school, and elementary schools.

Superintendent Phillips said that was one of the key problems facing the school system. Before school and at noon, youngsters were harassed by non-enrolled students, particularly at high schools. He said he had talked to Chief of Police Preston about this. After school is dismissed,

there is no way of knowing who is a student and who is not, but a patrol car circles the campuses at other times to apprehend loiterers. He stated there was no pat answer yet for solving the problems.

Caughell was comforted by this reply — particularly by the fact that Phillips had discussed the problem with Preston. "If the problem is getting worse, it means more supervision and that's all there is to it. I'm glad to hear we're on top of the problem."

Ad Hoc Hears the News

On Wednesday, October 5th, the Steering Committee of Ad Hoc heard the story of Margaret Nelson. The incident was only several hours old. Louise Smith, whose daughter Alice witnessed the incident, spoke at the meeting: "I think the kids in Oakland should stay away from the schools until the policemen do. The counselors and teachers are supposed to be there controlling the kids. If they can't do it, send them down to city hall twelve hours a day."

Mrs. Smith has been going to Fremont School and talking to the principal for some time. She has been her own Ad Hoc committee, protesting against the schools and what is happening to the students. The principal approaches her with comments like, "Why are you here? Why do you come to make trouble? Why don't you go away so I can give my time to something else?" But Mrs. Smith has stayed and kept on fighting.

Speaking of suspended students she said, "When I go to that school, I am interested in the child who is going to get the education. He can be any color.

white, black, yellow, brown, blue — but I'm going to fight to get him back in school."

Alice Smith described the situation at Fremont. She stated that the whole atmosphere is strongly black against white, that groups of students in each race are full of hatred for each other. The relationship between students and their principal evidently does not exist. "If a Negro kid gets called up before the principal, everyone knows he'll get his yellow slip and get kicked out," said Steve Morgan

"A Negro kid doesn't go to the office to talk."

He also pointed out, "The social committee for dances and games and everything is all Negro this year — but they don't have any money because of the cut in the budget. But the rally committee is all white. They have all the money. . . they get the money."

He was also present when a policeman was pushing kids around. "I said 'See that?' to the vice principal. They go blind when anything happens. They never remember it afterwards."

THE SPARK

Young Girl Stunned by Billy Club

Margaret Nelson Story

FLATLANDS tried to find out School on Wednesday, October 5. But the more we asked, the more we realized that the one incident, involving Margaret Nelson was part of a whole stream of trouble. We have tried, in this issue, by telling several small stories, to give a picture of what the air is like around Foothill and High Streets, and to talk about what kind of response this trouble will bring.

The basic fact is simple: one member of the police department of the City of Oakland saw fit to hit a young girl across the neck with a heavy billy club. That is the matter of most concern.

The rest is not so simple. There were many witnesses to the incident, adults and students. FLATLANDS has talked to several people and pieced together the following story:

After school that Wednesday, several groups of students were standing around talking in small groups — not an unusual thing. There were white groups and Negro groups; also no unusual.

For some reason, the police were trying to break the Negro groups up and send the children home. Tension was high in the neighborhood; many rumors had been circulating about a fight — the school had called the juvenile authorities the previous Friday. Talk of several arrests was going around. At any rate, the police must have expected something — they had two paddy wagons there.

"Go home or I'll . . ."

One officer walking down the street told a group of boys something like "Go home or I'll beat your butts in" according to one witness. The officer then came to a group of girls, which included Margaret Nelson, and said "I want you all to go home right now." For some reason, he picked Margaret out, according to witnesses, and said "You go home or I'll . . ."

The girls started to walk away. Margaret was somehow separated slightly from the group. The officer, we are told, came up behind Margaret and said "I thought I told you to go home. . ." and said something threatening about arrest. He then grabbed her arm. Margaret evidently answered that she could walk by herself.

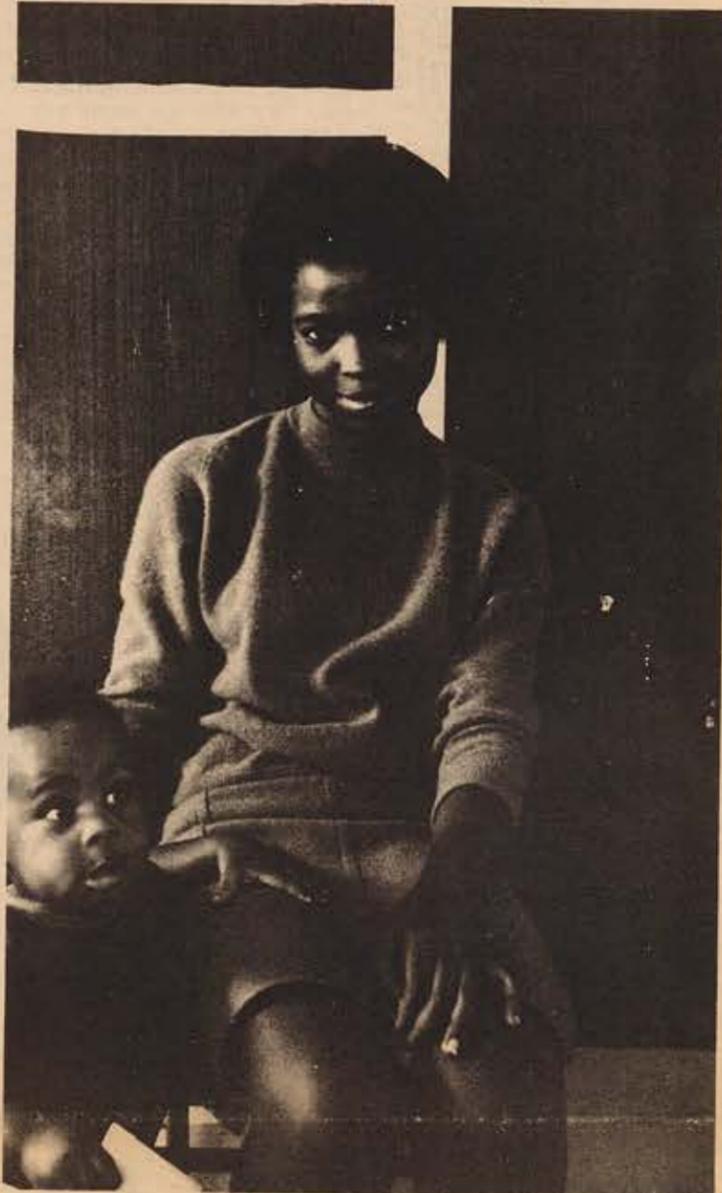
At this point, according to several witnesses, the policeman spun Margaret around and hit her across the neck with his billy club, then grabbed her by the throat. This apparently stunned the girl and she remembers little or nothing after this point. Witnesses report that she kicked at the officer; one witness told of seeing one officer hold her while another hit her about the legs.

"Like she was a dog."

One adult on the scene says that, after Margaret had been pulled back to the paddy wagon, "Six officers grabbed her and threw her in like she was a dog."

According to several reports the principal of Fremont, Dr. Adams, was standing very near the paddy wagon when this happened; a Negro counselor from the school was also reported nearby. No one made any move to stop the officer, although one witness reports having tried to do so.

After Margaret was taken away



Margaret Nelson: Charged with Disturbing the Peace and Resisting Arrest

the officer who had hit her, according to one adult on the scene, continued to walk about the street, shoving girls out of the way with his billy.

We talked to Margaret Nelson and her mother about a week after the incident. Margaret is an attractive and quiet-spoken girl; she dresses quite conservatively — it is difficult to imagine why the police officer would single her out.

"A scratch on her neck"

*Mrs. Nelson first heard of the incident from her son, Clifford: "Cliff came home and told me. He said, 'Margaret got beat up by the police.' I didn't believe him. 'A cop hit her; they put her in a paddy wagon and took her downtown — she's in jail.'"

"I asked, 'What was she doing?' He said, 'Nothing, she was just standing there.'"

"Different kids came home talking about it. I called the hospital — they said try the Juvenile Hall or 18th and Poplar. Information said no listing at 18th and Poplar, only 400 Broadway. This was around 6; I called and they

said, 'Yes, we have your daughter. We're going to send her to Highland. She's got a scratch on her neck.'

"You mean she's been beaten?" I said. "I went to get her at Highland. The doctor there said he couldn't see anything — to take her to a private doctor if her neck was sore. Next morning her neck was so swollen she could hardly turn it."

"Police are supposed to be trained"

Margaret received no medical attention for some hours after her arrest. Mrs. Nelson told us that her daughter had been to a private doctor for a complete series of tests and X-rays.

They had been to a hearing with the probation officer that day. Margaret is charged with disturbing the peace and resisting arrest.

Mrs. Nelson summed things up: "It's wrong to resist arrest. Still, a policeman shouldn't hit a child. Police are supposed to be trained — not supposed to let their emotions take over."

WATCH FOR

B.U.M.P.

PAGE IN OUR NEXT ISSUE

FLATLANDS SEEKS AN EDITOR

RESPOND TO:

FLATLANDS BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BOX 10287
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94610