

MAYOR JEROME P. CAVANAGH of DETROIT

"The Summer of 1967:

What Did We Learn From It?"

Memorial Auditorium
Stanford University
February 8, 1968

SUMMER 1967--WHAT WAS LEARNED?

Jerome P. Cavanagh is well-known in the United States as one of the finest mayors in office. Before the Detroit Rebellion of last July, it was generally believed that under Mayor Cavanagh's astute leadership Detroit had solved its "race problem." However, last July, 12th Street erupted in what the UPI described as "the worst urban violence in modern US history." Forty-three persons were left dead, hundreds were injured, 5000 people were left homeless, and there were nearly 5000 prosecuted arrests. What have Detroit and Mayor Cavanagh learned?

Let's look at the actions taken by the mayor and the Detroit Common Council since the rebellion. The Common Council passed a Fair Housing Law. However, the law has been nullified for the time being by a white home owners petition which gathered some 120,000 anti-open occupancy signatures in less than two weeks, thereby forcing a referendum which will not be held until next August.

The city has embarked on a \$4 million "urban beautification" plan which, in the words of Michael Conlon of UPI, will "turn 12th Street into a tree-shaded boulevard lined by parks and low-rent housing." Mayor Cavanagh has also suggested that 12th Street be renamed because of its "negative connotations."

However, aside from the usual calls for open occupancy, urban renewal, more employment opportunities, etc., Mayor Cavanagh has done little to change the basic colonial situation which characterizes Detroit's black ghetto. In fact, Mayor Cavanagh has been instrumental in fighting for a beefing-up of the Detroit police force (often referred to as an "occupation army" by the black people of the ghetto). Cavanagh has pledged increased police manpower against the black population of Detroit (referred to as "criminals in the streets" in a Detroit News interview on October 16, 1967). Along that line, the city has activated the police emergency reserves, is training 500 "police volunteers" and has plans to train another 500. Although official pronouncements claim these are not "volunteer riot troops," the UPI states that the purpose of this force is "to assist firemen, guard public installations,

and control crowds in the event of future troubles. The force will be issued guns only when trouble breaks out."

In addition to increasing the number of police and riot troops available, the Police Department (with Mayor Cavanagh's support) requested fantastic increases in equipment and modern weaponry. Among the items requested by the Detroit Police are the following: 100 Stoner 63 System Assault Rifles, 700 12-gauge shotguns, 1000 M-1 carbines, 5000 mace dispensers, 500,000 rounds of ammunition, 4000 gas grenades, eight armored personnel carriers, and increases in communications equipment, including scrambling devices (Police Department Sources). Although the police have been unable at this time to get all of the requested equipment, Mayor Cavanagh supported the full request. Fortune (Jan., 1968) reports that \$790,000 worth of equipment has been approved to date.

Apparently Mayor Cavanagh has finally recognized that Detroit, like any other U.S. city, has a serious race problem. However, Cavanagh's approaches indicate that he sees the black people as the problem, rather than as the victims of white supremacy. The Mayor's Development Team Report in a section entitled "Rationale for the Use of Television Media" recommends the use of T.V. for "communicating information and effecting behavioral changes among large numbers of people living in the inner city. . . . It could serve as a vehicle for alleviating unrealistic fears that 'lower class' persons generally have of middle class culture, thus ameliorating the negative 'mental set' that the former tend to hold toward institutions of the power structure." The approach is to "pacify" the people of the ghetto, in short, "to win their hearts and minds." Finally, in a post-rebellion speech given in Miami, Florida, Mayor Cavanagh suggested that the Federal Government might do something "to make rural life more attractive." He suggested this could be done through "easy credit terms to sharecroppers. . . . This would be far cheaper than transferring that same family to the welfare rolls of a northern city."

In either approach there is little or no consideration given to the needs and desires of the black community. Is it not possible that black people might have good reasons for fearing the middle-class culture which has oppressed them for several hundred years?

(continued on back page)

Doesn't Cavanagh realize that black people are a little sick of being sharecroppers? Does Mayor Cavanagh still fail to understand the desire for self-determination within the black community?

We believe that the black community must be provided with the resources - financial, educational, political - with which to determine its own destiny. The pacification approach can be no more successful in Detroit than it has been in Vietnam. Mayor Cavanagh should be listening to the demands of the black community rather than those of his Police Commissioner.

Ask Cavanagh the following questions:

Of what benefit is a fair housing law to black people in the ghetto?

Were black urban residents given decision-making power in the urban renewal plan devised?

What is the racial composition of the 500-man auxiliary police force?

Do you believe massive armaments will prevent and control future rebellions?

What, in your opinion, was the underlying cause of the July rebellion?

Supporters of People Against Racism