

Ramparts: Memo

Date:

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To:

From:

Subject:

monstrators were very nervous as the police advanced. They would break ranks and flee while the monitors and the cooler heads usually succeeded in holding people so that the demonstrators moved back no faster than the police advanced. A few tear gas charges went off down the street from where I was. So far as I know no MACE was used. At this point it was still very much touch and go as to just what form the demonstration would take. After the cops had advanced to the positions they wanted to hold, they fell back and their places were taken by Highway patrolmen in a single line. There were some demonstrators who were talking about flanking or breaking these lines, but it seemed very plain to me that not many of us had the stomach for that. ~~This~~ The situation at this point was very tense. A false move on either side would probably have led to some pretty bad violence.

THE BARRICADES

At this point daylight was coming and the crowd was swelling rapidly. The cops' lines were pretty well stationary and the demonstrators were beginning to get used to the situation: to know how to pull back and where to hold. What happened next was the key to the whole success (?) of the demonstration. People began to set up barricades across all the streets leading to the positions the police were holding. We would find unlocked cars, roll them out into the intersections and let the air out of the tires. Within an hour most of the streets in downtown Oakland were barricaded. The ostensible purpose of this action was to stop the busses carrying the inductees from getting through to the center. But the result was to turn downtown Oakland into a young people's amusement park with the police and the Highway Patrol guarding a deserted area in the middle. From what I can gather the barricade tactic had been planned by certain of the leaders the night before. But I doubt whether they could ever have foreseen the character it would give to the demonstration. A couple of funny stories come out of the barricading operation. I watched a coke delivery truck drive into an intersection and get stopped by a line of demonstrators. Then one fellow jumped up on the running board to talk to the driver while another got into the hood and pulled the battery wires. By the time the police had advanced their lines to the truck, the tires were flat and the driver was walking. We persuaded good numbers of people to turn around and jam traffic around the ~~block~~ barricades. Some people even agreed to leave their cars there to add to the mess. The best story (unconfirmed) was of a teamster driving a big semi who, after he had been stopped for a while in an intersection got out of the cab, said "fuck it" and took the air out of his own tires.

THE PICNIC

Now there were at least 15,000 demonstrators and probably quite a few more. The incredibly thing was that all the demonstrators were KIDS. By now they had quite a bit of

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confidence in what they were doing. They were moving about freely around the perimeters of the police lines. They were sitting and talking, singing, holding hands, playing recorders and generally enjoying themselves. It was really a demonstration of YOUTH against the draft. Downtown Oakland was turned into a big picnic. Everyone's spirits were very high. I only wish that we had had a sound truck playing rock and roll so that everyone could dance. There were a few instances of violence as the lines of cops advanced or retreated, or as one of the cops in the line would lose his temper at a heckler. But I saw no ~~xxx~~ violence and this was far from the general temper of the demonstration. Most of the kids were white, but there were all sorts among them and an awful lot of high school students. In general, I was very, very impressed, because it seemed to me that the demonstration made it very clear how much KIDS are opposed to the draft and the war. It was also impressive because it established a real presence all the hell over downtown Oakland. The ostensible purpose of the barricades was to stop the busses, but everything else had to stop too.

THE NATIONAL GUARD

At about ten o'clock the busses carrying the inductees came through. This wasn't much of a job because, as we all knew before, the police had established their lines so that they could break a path for the busses. But just before the busses came word came through that the national guard had been called out. This was greeted with a great cheer among the demonstrators, partly out of a feeling of our own importance, partly from the realization that our tactics had been & very successful. The word went out that when the guard actually arrived we should split, something I thought was a hell of a good idea. So this was the point at which I left. The reports I got afterwards were that this tactic was carried out and that there were a few brawls and a few arrests, but that in general the kids left Oakland for the cops to clean up.