



ARMED PROTESTORS IN CAPITOL—Members of Black Panther Party in corridor outside Assembly chamber. (AP Wirephoto)

Heavily Armed Negro Group Walks Into Assembly Chamber

BY JERRY RANKIN
Associated Press Writer

SACRAMENTO—A band of young Negroes armed with loaded rifles, pistols and shotguns entered the Capitol Tuesday and barged into the Assembly chamber during a debate before police seized some of their weapons.

The guns taken away were unloaded and returned to the group, which later marched out of the building only to be arrested by city police at a gasoline station four blocks away.

Twenty-six men aged 17 to 25 were booked on suspicion of a variety of charges, including brandishing a gun in a threatening manner and possession of two sawed-off shotguns.

Fifteen weapons were confiscated. It was one of the most amazing incidents in legislative history—a tumultuous, traveling group of grim-faced, silent young men armed

with guns roaming the Capitol surrounded by reporters, television cameramen, stunned state police and watched by incredulous groups of visiting school children.

And it occurred just at the time Gov. Reagan was to meet an eighth-grade social studies class on the Capitol's west lawn for a fried chicken lunch.

Aides kept him in his office for a while, but the governor eventually appeared outside just as the armed group was walking to its cars.

There was no confrontation.

During the incident there was no real violence, no shooting occurred, and occupants of the eastern part of the building were unaware of what was going on.

Claim to Represent Party

Members of the group said they represented the "Black Panther Party for Self Defense" of the Oakland area and came to protest a bill restricting the carrying of loaded weapons within city limits.

One shouted that the bill was introduced for the "racist Oakland police force."

A warm noontime sun bathed the Capitol and reporters were waiting on the west steps for Reagan when the Negro group nonchalantly walked up, passed through gaping school children and—surrounded by newsmen—entered the building.

After a slight delay they went upstairs to the second floor past startled employees. By this time, two or three of the special police who guard state buildings and grounds had arrived on the scene and were caught up in the crowd.

They made no apparent attempt to stop anyone. When the band reached the closed swinging gates that stand about 50 feet in front of the Assembly chamber, they barged through, and Jim Rooney, one of the three assistant sergeants-at-arms manning it, was knocked into a chair.

Half Dozen Enter Chamber

About half a dozen of the group actually entered the Assembly chamber and stood in the rear.

Assemblymen and others sitting in the area reserved for visitors just off the floor looked around in amazement at the armed youths who had interrupted a long debate on organization of firemen.

Assembly Speaker Pro Tem Carlos Bee (D-Hayward) could see only the television cameras from the rostrum where he was presiding and angrily

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ordered the unauthorized cameras out.

At that point, the sergeants-at-arms and state police combined to move the men out.

Then, as TV cameras recorded the scene and microphones were thrust in the faces of police and the armed men, the police wrested away some of the weapons.

The protestors were taken to the police office downstairs, loudly complaining "we have a constitutional right to bear arms."

As a large crowd watched, the police unloaded some of the weapons but did not arrest anybody. During this, spokesman Bobby Seale was reading a statement to reporters.

Statement Quoted

It protested the bill—scheduled to be heard Tuesday afternoon and evening—and referred to the "racist California Legislature . . . now considering legislation aimed at keeping the black people disarmed and powerless at the very same time that racist agencies throughout the country are intensifying the terror, brutality, murder and repression of black people."

They also deplored the "racist war of genocide in Vietnam."

Reagan appeared on the upper Capitol steps while the group walked away on the lower steps. Asked about the demonstration, he agreed there is a right to bear arms, but added "There's no reason why on the street today a citizen should be carrying loaded weapons."

He called it a "ridiculous way to solve problems that have to be solved among people of good will."

Sit on New Carpet

The incident forced the picnic indoors, and the chattering students sat on the new red carpet in his office munching on chicken.

The author of the gun bill the Negro group protested, Assemblyman Don Mulford (R-Piedmont) called the incident "the worst invasion on the Legislature in its history." He called it "ridiculous to think this legislation is aimed at any ethnic group . . . It is aimed at white people as much as any one."

A Negro assemblyman, Willie L. Brown Jr. (D-San Francisco), agreed that the bill doesn't have the racial implications but said Mulford's motives might be racially inspired.

Change Charged

Mulford previously opposed such bills, he charged, "until Negroes showed up in Oakland—his district—with arms, and then he seeks restrictive legislation."

Another Negro, Assemblyman Leon Ralph (D-Los Angeles), said he doesn't view the bill from a racial angle. "I think it is aimed at Nazis, the KKK, the Minutemen and others, and that it should be applied equally to all, black or white."

Black Panther Group Linked to Other Units

OAKLAND (UPI)—The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was organized in the San Francisco bay area about six months ago, according to Huey Newton who lists himself as its "defense minister."

The party was "stimulated" by the Lowndes County (Alabama) Freedom Party, which uses the Black Panther as an emblem. The party's bay area membership is estimated at about 40 and is loosely associated with similar groups in New York City, Detroit and Tennessee.

Newton has described himself as unsalaried but full-time head of the party. He has an Oakland arrest record which includes petty theft and assault with a deadly weapon for which he spent six months in county jail.

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