

Tear Gas and Broken Glass: Policing, Protesting, and the New Left in 1960s Madison

By

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I: Inspiration and Introduction

At noon on May 30th 2020, over one thousand protesters marched to the Wisconsin State Capitol Building in Madison, Wisconsin. Following the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis five days previously, protests against police brutality had begun around the country. The protestors walked around the Capitol building with signs stating, “No justice no peace”, “Black Lives Matter”, and “I can’t breathe”¹, as well as chanting in order to express anger and grief that came with seeing another unarmed black man murdered by a police officer.

Officers from the Madison Police Department (MPD) and the University of Wisconsin Police Department (UWPD) arrived to ensure that protesters remained peaceful throughout the day, and this was the case for most of the evening. However, the peaceful protest devolved into a violent clash between police and protestors. According to a report from the Daily Cardinal, a student publication from the University of Wisconsin, some 150 protestors began walking down State Street, a popular pedestrian mall that stretches directly between the University of Wisconsin campus and the state capitol building. When these protestors reached the bottom of State Street, the intersection of State Street and Lake Street, they were met by a full SWAT team. Police authorities began to fire tear gas and pepper spray into the crowd of protestors, inciting the violence that would overshadow the previous peaceful events of the day. Through the course of the evening of May 30th and into the early morning of the 31st, police and protestors would clash, police deployed tear gas at least six times, protestors broke storefront windows and looted, and a police car was set ablaze.² This event was the inspiration for this project. These

¹ During the nine-minute video showing Derrick Chauvin, a former Minneapolis police officer, kneeling on the neck of George Floyd, Floyd can be heard saying repeatedly “I can’t breathe”.

² Nathan Denzin, “I Can’t Breathe’: Madison Erupts in Riots after a Peaceful Protest Supporting BLM,” The Daily Cardinal (The Daily Cardinal, May 31, 2020), <https://www.dailycardinal.com/article/2020/05/i-cant-breathe-madison-erupts-in-riots-after-a-peaceful-protest-supporting-blm>.

demonstrations and the images they produced of police officers in riot gear, tear gas flooding streets, and protesters holding signs and chanting are the status quo in terms of protesting in Madison. The relationship between police and protestors has deteriorated to the point that many activists view the police as oppressors rather than protectors. A key component of protests during the past year was the protesting of policing itself. In Madison, these protests were followed by more peaceful actions in the following days with a clear call to defund the police department.^{3, 4}

After seeing these protests ravage Madison, the goal of this project was to discover the origins of this dynamic between police and protestors. The answer comes from one of the most pivotal decades in American history, the 1960s. The struggle for Civil Rights and the further development of the Cold War reshaped the political and social landscape of the US, and both had a significant impact in Madison. The 60s would be a turning point for New Left activists as well as police authorities in Madison. The term “New Left” is a broad political movement of the 1960s and 70s which fought for a range of social changes with one of the most prominent being civil rights.

The study of the development of the New Left in Madison has been covered extensively, with one key work being Matthew Levin’s Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the 60s.⁵ This work details the growth of the New Left at the University of Wisconsin, and he argues that the primary catalyst for this growth was the increased funding the University received from the federal government. Another key piece of literature for this period is the recent book by

³ State Journal Staff, “Police Protests: How Madison Answered the Police Killing of George Floyd, in Photos,” madison.com (Wisconsin State Journal, July 11, 2020), https://madison.com/wsj/news/local/crime-and-courts/police-protests-how-madison-answered-the-police-killing-of-george-floyd-in-photos/collection_6f505717-2494-52cb-b81b-2d6b6810b86c.html#34.

⁴ The budget for the MPD was \$86,783,406.00, the highest portion of the entire city budget. See *City of Madison 2020 Adopted Budget*.

⁵ Matthew Levin, *Cold War University: Madison and the New Left in the Sixties* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2013).

Stuart Levitan, Madison in the Sixties.⁶ The book serves as a comprehensive overview of the changes that occurred in Madison during this pivotal decade.

While these works are crucial for understanding Madison during this period, the drawback of these sources is their mistake in not connecting the simultaneous development of the New Left and policing. The radicalization and growth of the New Left in Madison led to an increasingly militarized response from police authorities. Rather than remedying this relationship, these actions, as well as inaction from the University of Wisconsin and city of Madison, served to further radicalize protesters and led to more violent clashes.

This project will follow a chronological path through the 1960s and early 1970s to demonstrate this simultaneous growth. Starting in the early sixties will show the role of police authorities, both campus and municipal, and how they interacted with their communities through the Civil Rights Movement. Moving into the late sixties will see the significant growth of the New Left at the University of Wisconsin, growing radicalization, and the response from the University. This section will also examine the militarization of police forces following clashes with protesters, and it will show the direct impact these protesters on police development. The early 1970s will show the furthest extent of New Left radicalism, as well as the continuity of militarized policing.

Some context is necessary for fully understanding this dynamic. In Madison, there are two primary police authorities. The first is the Madison Police Department (MPD). The department serves all of Madison, and it is the primary police authority in the city. The second police authority is the campus police force of the University of Wisconsin. This department,

⁶ Stuart D. Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2018).

having existed in some capacity since the 1930s, has gone by various names. The department officially fell under the name Department of Protection and Security, but it was referred to as the “campus police” “University Police”, and “campus police department”. For the sake of clarity, I will be referring to it as the University of Wisconsin Police Department (UWPD) throughout this thesis.⁷

Understanding the origins of the dynamic between policing and protesting is fundamental for addressing the current attitudes towards policing. By examining the ways protesting and policing built off of each other, we can understand how to remedy the relationship between police authorities and the communities they serve.

II: The Early 60s

Throughout its history, Madison gained the reputation for being a progressive city. This moniker developed early on in its history, beginning in the early 1900s with the growth of the progressive party and the work of Robert LaFollette, a three-term governor of Wisconsin, United States senator, and presidential candidate. LaFollette used his position to implement progressive reforms including breaking business monopolies, implementing direct primary elections, and protecting workers’ rights in Wisconsin.⁸ The work of “Fighting Bob” LaFollette, as well as other progressives, helped to build Madison’s reputation for progressivism. This reputation, however, is misleading. Madison gave off the appearance of a model progressive city, but in

⁷ It is important to note the different jurisdictions of the two police departments. The UWPD was specifically in charge of policing and security on the University of Wisconsin Campus, while the MPD was responsible for policing Madison at large. However, the MPD would be involved in disruptions on the University of Wisconsin Campus to aid the UWPD. The National Guard would also be involved in some situations if the police departments were deemed unable to contain the situation.

⁸ For more on Robert LaFollette, See *Fighting Bob LaFollette: The Righteous Reformer* by Nancy C. Unger.

reality, the city was home to a number of social issues including significant racial and gender discrimination.

The Southern Civil Rights movement gained traction in the years following the Second World War, but many Madison residents saw Civil Rights as a Southern issue. In Madison, black and white residents were able to dine together, work together, and go to the same schools. However, these appearances did not reflect the reality of discrimination in Madison. For many years, job opportunities for African Americans were exceedingly limited. While they were allowed to work in white owned businesses, they were limited to unskilled positions such as maids and porters. Almost no manufacturing or industrial jobs were available to African Americans, and when businesses found themselves in financial hardship, their black employees were the first to be let go. In addition to employment discrimination, housing discrimination was clear in Madison. Different zoning codes kept Madison's black population confined to three small areas on the south and east side of the Capitol building. The housing in these areas was often in poor condition and poorly located, often near railroad tracks, factories, or foundries.⁹

Despite these clear points of discrimination, the Civil Rights Movement built slowly in Wisconsin, with the most obvious reason for this slow growth being the small black population in Madison. As historian Erika Janik states, the black population of Madison was so small that "many residents concluded that Madison had no race problem".¹⁰ It is interesting to note that policing in the 1960s did not show evidence of racial discrimination. The Madison police department had clear instructions to not discriminate against any member of the Madison

⁹ Charles O'Reilly, "The Negro In South Madison," 1966, <https://cdm15932.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/tp/id/86969>.

¹⁰ Erika Janik, *Madison: History of a Model City* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010).

community.¹¹ In addition to these instructions, in 1954 the Mayor of Madison, George Forster, created the Mayor's Commission for Human Rights (MCHR). The purpose of this commission was to ensure equal and equitable opportunities for all of Madison's residents, and improving police-community relations was a key aspect of their work. An MCHR ordinance from 1963 detailed the origins of the commission, as well as its goals and methodology. For policing, the ordinance dictated that a police-community relations program would be implemented in order to create better understanding and cooperation between police authorities and the general public in Madison.¹²

Madison was also unique in that, outside of the University of Wisconsin, the leaders of the black community actively advised against protesting for Civil Rights. In a piece written on him in the Wisconsin State Journal, the NAACP president Marshall Colston advised against demonstrations for Civil Rights in Madison despite the urging of many members of Madison's black community. He reasoned that demonstrations would not have the same purpose in Madison that they had in the South. However, he did explain that if a demonstration did occur, it would be disciplined, and it would have a clear goal in mind rather than conducting a demonstration to only incite excitement and disruption.¹³ However, the lack of protesting clearly did not help Madison's black residence, especially with housing. One of the most blatant examples of racist housing policy came with the redevelopment of Greenbush in the early 1960s. Greenbush, an area populated mostly by blacks, Italians, and Jews, was an area of Madison that had fallen in

¹¹ Wilbur H Emery, "Rules and Regulations of the Division of Police," March 1, 1962.

¹² Madison Commission on Human Rights, "Ordinance", 1963, 2. Found in Equal Opportunity Commission Records 1958-2006 Box 8, By Laws (City and State) Mayor's Commission on Human Rights, 1963, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

¹³ "The Negro in Madison: Meet NAACP Leader in City," *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 30, 1963, 2. NewspaperArchive, <https://access.newspaperarchive.com/us/wisconsin/madison/madison-wisconsin-state-journal/1963/07-30>.

standing during prohibition due to the extensive bootlegging in the neighborhood. The Madison government, using urban renewal funds, bought most of the property in Greenbush, and between 1962 and 1964, entire blocks of the neighborhood were demolished, thus displacing a significant number of Madison's black residents.¹⁴

While demonstrations did not play a large role in Civil Rights in Madison as a whole, the students at the University of Wisconsin held a strong desire to show their support for the movement. The growth of the New Left at the University of Wisconsin was evident in their work during the Civil Rights Movement, and their work served as a proving ground for their more substantial work in the late 1960s and the anti-war movement. The primary focus of Civil Rights protesters in Madison was to help support the Southern movement, with the most notable actions being done by the freedom riders from the University of Wisconsin. In June of 1961, 150 protesters from the University of Wisconsin marched to the Capitol building to petition that the governor Gaylord Nelson to oppose the arrest of the freedom riders in Mississippi.¹⁵ A month later, four University of Wisconsin students participating in the freedom rides were arrested and jailed in Mississippi for attempting to integrate a restaurant. These students, upon their release and return to Madison, spread word of their work down South, and eventually one, Paul Breines, became a prominent leader of the Socialist's Club at the University of Wisconsin.¹⁶ The Socialist's Club at UW-Madison was a prominent student organization associated with the New Left. Many activists during the Civil Rights Movement and the upcoming Anti-War Movement were also members of this student organization.

¹⁴ Stuart D. Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties* (Madison, WI: Wisconsin Historical Society Press, 2018). 9-18.

¹⁵ "Student March Here Protests Rider's Jailing," *Wisconsin State Journal*, June 24, 1961, 3. NewspaperArchive.

¹⁶ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 40.

Policing at these protests was minimal. Activists were able to march up to the Wisconsin capitol building without any interference. The purpose of police at these protests was to keep watch, but there were no reports of any officers entering confrontations with protesters. However, this does not encapsulate all the interactions between police authorities and students in Madison. Indeed, on multiple occasions police officers from the Madison Police Department came close to having violent confrontations with protesters. One such example came on October 8th, 1961. Following a football victory, a drunken mob of students on the hunt for panties surged onto State Street and Langdon Street. These inebriated masses pushed cars and even threw stones and beer bottles at nearby Madison police officers. It was not until a police car was damaged that the officers began to threaten the crowd with tear gas and large fire hoses. The officers never resorted to using the tear gas, but they did end up arresting five people in total, two of them being students from the University. Five students from the University of Wisconsin were placed on academic probation and subsequently suspended for following Spring semester as a result of their behavior during the unrest.¹⁷ This is also a perfect event to examine the attitudes of the University towards disruptive students. The University of Wisconsin in the 1960s was adamant in supporting free speech, productive debate, and peaceful student protests. The administration, however, was quick to punish those who caused chaos and disruption. Their quick response to punish disruptors and violent actors stems back to the 1950s and the “panty raids” that would lead to destruction on campus and the greater Madison community.

This swift action is emblematic of the University’s response to violence when compared to peaceful disagreements and discourse. Looking back earlier in the same years proves this

¹⁷ David Bendarek, “Police Block Attempted Raid,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 9, 1961, 1-2. NewspaperArchive.

attitude to be true. On April 21st, 1961, over 1000 students were gathered in the Wisconsin Union Theater engaging in a protest-turned shouting match regarding the American involvement in the Bay of Pigs invasion in Cuba. The two clashing groups were members of the UW-Madison Socialist Club and another group called the Goldwater Conservatives¹⁸. The two groups seemed close to coming to blows until order was restored and the event transformed into a lively debate between the groups. The Dean of Students, LeRoy Luberg, was present for the entire event, even encouraging the debate to commence despite the passionate attitudes of those in the theater.¹⁹ Luberg's attitude toward the event reflected the opinion of the majority of the administration that debate and discussion as well as peaceful protests were constructive for the campus community, and that they indeed led to the intellectual and social growth of everyone involved.

In reality, the police-student interactions of the early 1960s were, for the most part, the result of too much drinking following football games and, in one instance, an enormous snowball being used to block an intersection on Campus.²⁰ The actions of Civil Rights protesters did not lead to violent interactions between police officers and students or community members, either on campus or off. However, an important event that often gets overlooked is the Gay Purge of 1962. The Dean of Men, Theodore Zillman, in conjunction with the UWPD worked to interrogate, out, and expel as many gay students as possible at the University of Wisconsin. From the UWPD, detective Peter Rordam led the investigation to root out and expunge homosexual

¹⁸ This group was likely a subgroup of students who were members of the larger Wisconsin Conservatives Club. These students were in direct opposition to the New Left on college campuses. For more on the Wisconsin Conservatives Club and their work in the 1960s, see Andrew J Sheean, "IN THE EYE OF THE STORM: CONSERVATIVE STRUGGLES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN, 1956-1968," n.d., 26.

¹⁹ Samuel Reynolds, "Castro Rally at U.W. Backfires: Socialist Club's Call Brings Out Fidel's Opponents," *Wisconsin State Journal*, April 22, 1961, 1-2. NewspaperArchive.

²⁰ "UW Has a 'Snow Ball': 500 Halt Cars, Pelt Policemen," *Wisconsin State Journal*, March 9, 1964. A note on this event, no one was arrested following this interaction.

men from the University of Wisconsin.²¹ Rordam worked to uncover as many homosexual students as possible, even relying on hearsay in order to identify more homosexual men. Students suspected of being homosexuals would be harassed by both Zillman and Rordam until they agreed to appear before the Committee on Student Conduct and Appeals, even so much that Rordam would go to students' homes or workplaces to demand that they appear before the Committee, and in some cases, students were arrested because they were suspected of intending to commit homosexual acts.²² The Gay Purge resulted in the expulsion of numerous homosexual men, and it also proved that the UWPD was willing to invade the lives of students they deemed to be a danger to the University.²³

During the early 1960s, the New Left continued to develop slowly among the students at the University of Wisconsin. Significant civil rights protests continued throughout the early 1960s, and the students continued to organize. One of the most important student political groups, the Students for a Democratic Society, became an official student group in 1964. This group, comprised of primarily Socialists and Liberals, would play a prominent role in the future activism of the New Left. 1964 proved to be an important year for Civil Rights on campus. The university administration took action regarding discrimination in Greek organizations, requiring that any Greek organization remove discrimination clauses from their constitutions. The Summer of 1964 was significant for Civil Rights protestors as well. Some 15 students and alumni from UW-Madison participated in the Freedom Summer voter registration project in Mississippi, showing the continued effort of UW students to aid the Southern Civil Rights Movement. One

²¹ "Gay Purge: The Persecution of Homosexual Students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1962–1963," Public History Project, 2021, <https://publichistoryproject.wisc.edu/gay-purge-persecution/>.

²² Ibid.

²³ For more details on the Gay Purge, see "Gay Purge: The Persecution of Homosexual Students at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1962–1963," Public History Project, 2021, <https://publichistoryproject.wisc.edu/gay-purge-persecution/>.

former UW-Madison student, Andrew Goodman, was murdered by the Ku Klux Klan, sparking a protest in Madison where about 150 students protested at the Wisconsin Capitol building, demanding that Civil Rights workers be granted federal protections. Later in the year, 8000 students participated in the Thanksgiving Fast for Freedom, a fundraising effort where about one fourth of the student population at the University of Wisconsin chose to forgo meals and instead send the money they would have spent to Mississippi to buy meals for impoverished households.²⁴

As the United States became more involved in the conflict in Vietnam, New Left activists became more interested in finding ways they could show their opposition to the conflict. In 1962, the Socialist Club at UW-Madison drafted a policy statement which clearly expressed their opposition to the actions of the United States in South Vietnam. Later in that same year, the editorial section of the *Daily Cardinal* published an article requesting that the United States government explain to the American people the truth of what was happening in South Vietnam and why the U.S. military was being sent there without warning. The first official demonstration against the United States' involvement in Vietnam came in 1963. Roughly 300 students gathered on the steps of the Memorial Union to protest the actions of the United States in Vietnam. The protest remained peaceful, and there was no note of any police interactions or confrontations with the protesters. The protest was organized by a number of prominent New Left groups, including UW-Madison Socialist Club and the UW-Madison Young Democrats.²⁵

1965 marked the changing focus of New Left activists and groups in Madison. While civil rights were still an important aspect of the New Left's work, the increased involvement of

²⁴ Mark Lipschutz, "Freedom Fast's Goals Exceeded," *Daily Cardinal*, November 17, 1964.

²⁵ John Efferding, "Campus Groups Protest U.S. Action in Vietnam," *Daily Cardinal*, October 18, 1963; "350 Gather for Viet Nam Rally," *Daily Cardinal*, October 19, 1963.

the United States in Vietnam led New Left activists to shift their focus towards the growing conflict. Following a bombing in North Vietnam, over 200 students from the University of Wisconsin marched to the Capitol for a demonstration condemning the actions of the United States government. Though the students endured freezing rain and the occasional snowball thrown by onlookers, the protest remained peaceful. However, the Madison Police Department used this protest as an opportunity to conduct reconnaissance. Officers from the MPD were present filming and photographing the rally from an upper balcony in the Capitol Building, clearly gathering intelligence on the protestors.²⁶ This was one of the first overt actions taken by the MPD, showing that they were preparing a response to Anti-War protesters and activists in Madison. The intelligence gathering of the MPD became far less visible following the scrutiny from the February protest. This also demonstrates the direct impact of the New Left on policing. The Anti-War demonstrators became more active between 1965 and 1966, thus forcing the police authorities in Madison to begin preparing for a new response to protesters.

The early 1960s demonstrated that policing and protesting, for the most part, were not closely intertwined. The protesting of New Left activists remained peaceful, and police had no justification for interacting with the protesters. Police interactions with students were primarily due to celebrations and inebriation, the panty raids of 1961 and 62 being clear examples. However, the actions of the MPD in February of 1965 demonstrate that this dynamic was shifting. While Civil Rights protests were primarily focusing on support for the southern movement, the Anti-War protests posed a larger problem for police authorities. In the following years, the New Left activists and police authorities would clash on multiple occasions, causing

²⁶ William Witt, "'Anti-War' Rally Draws 200," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 10, 1965; Edwin S. Kohn, "Police Admit Demonstration Dossier," *Daily Cardinal*, February 24, 1965.

fundamental changes to the ways police respond to protests in Madison, and the way the New Left developed.

III: The Late 60s, DOW, and the Shifting Police-Protest Dynamic

The early 1960s demonstrated that Madison, while often deemed to be a progressive city, had many underlying social issues both at the University of Wisconsin and the city at large. However, there was a clear effort to remedy these problems. The establishment of the Mayor's Commission for Human Rights showed a strong desire to remedy the racial discrimination that had permeated throughout Madison's job market, housing, and education. The protests for civil rights at the University of Wisconsin and the work of student activists going to aid in the Southern movement also acted as a proving ground for the growing New Left at the University of Wisconsin.

Policing in the early sixties also showed efforts to improve its relationship to the community. A key goal of the Mayor's Commission on Human Rights was to improve police and community relations, as evidenced in the informational pamphlets referenced previously. There were also explicit anti-discrimination clauses present in their rules and regulations from 1962, a sign that, at least at a small level, city leaders were attempting to create a positive relationship between Madison's police force and the people of the city.

However, the increasing involvement of the United States in the Vietnam War in the 1960s would create a new set of problems for the police authorities in Madison. A growing protest movement fueled by a developing New Left ideology would bring unprecedented demonstrations to underprepared Madison police authorities, and their reactions to this growing movement would set the precedent for the future of protesting in Madison. The catalyzing event

that would radicalize so many people in Madison during the late 60s was the DOW Chemical demonstration and riot of 1967. To fully understand the implications of this pivotal event, one must first examine the role of the New Left during the Anti-War movement.

The year 1966 was a year of marked escalation for the New Left protests in Madison, particularly at the University of Wisconsin, while also showing their separation from the rest of the campus community. On February 4th, the Committee to End the War in Viet Nam (CEWV) held a twenty-one-hour vigil at the state capitol building protesting the United States' involvement in the South Asian conflict and to commemorate the one-year anniversary of the establishment of their committee. This small demonstration, only gathering roughly 200 participants, drew a number of counter protesters who threw snowballs at the demonstrators. While relatively peaceful, the demonstration was only the beginning of an escalation that would characterize the rest of the year.

Small protests were present in the early months of 1966, but the most prominent demonstration of the first half of the year was the draft sit-in in May. Taking strategies from their work during the Civil Rights Movement, New Left activists protested the relationship between the University and the draft. This protest developed in the shadow of the draft of December 1966 in which 40,200 men were drafted into the United States Armed Forces through the Selective Service system, and many were fearful that “marginal students” would soon be drafted and shipped off to Vietnam.²⁷ Occurring during alumni weekend at the University of Wisconsin, the ad hoc Committee on the University and the Draft created a list of demands for the University of Wisconsin regarding the draft, claiming that the use of intelligence tests and academic records to

²⁷ Levitan, *Madison in the 60s*, 209.

determine draft eligibility was an unjust and inequitable form of selection that put the lives of students in jeopardy.²⁸ On Saturday, May 13th, some twenty students from the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) picketed outside of the University field house while thousands entered to take the draft deferment exam.²⁹ The following Monday, university administration members met with members of the Committee on the University and the Draft to reject their demands, reasoning that the students had the choice to deny the release of their academic information, and that it was the duty of the university to uphold the students' freedom of choice in that matter.

Over two hundred other protesters were waiting outside of the administration building during this meeting. Upon learning that the administration had rejected their demands, the group led by the SDS moved to occupy the building. By the mid-afternoon on May 16th, after word had spread around campus, over five hundred students had occupied the building. The group had agreed that they would not obstruct any operations occurring inside the building, an action that was appreciated by the administration of the University, as they elected to keep campus and city police from the building.³⁰ While this first night of protest went by peacefully, it is important to note that a clash with police was narrowly avoided. The MPD chief Wilbur Emery was in favor of clearing the building as he saw the event escalate very quickly during the day due to the number of students occupying the Administration building. He was only dissuaded by then

²⁸ The demands were: "That the faculty hold a special meeting 'to discuss the relation of the University to the Draft,'. That the administration 'publicly protest the use of class rank and intelligence tests as criteria for military exemption and the interference of the Selective Service System (SSS) with the freedom of the academic community,' and That the university 'refuse to cooperate with the Selective Service System' by releasing class rank and/or grades or allowing SSS exams to be held in university facilities." Found in *Ibid*, 210.

²⁹ Dale Wirsing, "2300 in UW Draft Test: Student Pickets Protest," *Madison Capital Times*, May 14, 1966, NewspaperArchive. The SDS was appealing to many New Left activists due to the fact that it was not a single-issue student group. For more on this, listen to the Oral History Interview with former student Henry Haslach.

³⁰ John Hunter, "Clash Avoided at UW Draft Sit-In," *Madison Capital Times*, May 17, 1966, NewspaperArchive.

chancellor of the University Robben Flemming who decided that as long as the students did not disrupt any operations they could remain, though Emery did state that he had half of his police force on standby to clear the building and surrounding area should the need arise. Some students ended up staying the night in the building. The only direct confrontations during this demonstration came from the shouts of counter protesters who did not ally themselves with the New Left activists.³¹

This demonstration, which lasted throughout the entire next week, is proof of the escalation of 1966. The New Left activists led by the SDS acted spontaneously to occupy a university building, and while they were not actively disruptive, their numbers were extraordinary, and they showed that they would not let the choices of the university administration deter them from having their voices heard. The words of Wilbur Emery also show how the actions of protesters was beginning to influence the actions of the MPD. Emery was completely prepared to use an unprecedented amount of police manpower to remove the students from the Administration building because he was alarmed by the sheer number of protesters. It is important to note here that the UWPD, under the direction of the University of Wisconsin administration, were stationed around the building in order to protect the activists. Levitan notes that some students opposed to the demonstration, while throwing eggs, struck the UWPD chief Ralph Hanson.³² The aftermath of the sit-in is also notable, as it demonstrated that the University of Wisconsin was receptive to demonstrators. Not only did the administration use the UWPD to protect demonstrators from hecklers, but they also scheduled a faculty meeting for the sole purpose of discussing the requests of the protesters. At this meeting on May 23rd, the University

³¹ Ibid.

³² Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 212.

of Wisconsin faculty discussed the resolution from the Committee on the University and the Draft, and they overwhelmingly decide to adopt the resolution that class rank information would not be transmitted onto draft boards. However, they also decided that the university facilities would still be used for draft deferment exams.³³

This protest left administrators with some confidence due to the lack of violence in relation to the protest. Similar protests at college campuses across the country had resulted in large violent confrontations, so seeing this protest begin and end peacefully left administrators with a small sense of security. However, the DOW protests the following year would make the 1966 draft sit-in appear to be the calm before the storm of student protests during the Vietnam War. Small protests continued throughout 1966, but none drew nearly as much attention as the draft sit-in. The continued protests did, however, continue to draw the attention of the Madison Police Department. On the Fourth of July in 1966, a small group of anti-war activists were distributing and selling literature regarding the war in Vietnam in Vilas Park, just south of the University of Wisconsin campus. MPD officers under the supervision of sergeant D. O. Jensen asked the group to leave the park after some verbal confrontations with people supporting the war effort. The police officers cited a city ordinance that did not exist at the time in order to make the anti-war activists disperse from the park.³⁴ The growing concern of municipal police officials over the anti-war protesters was clear. Fears of future violence lingered, creating tension which would soon be released during the DOW Chemical demonstration and riot the following year.

³³ Ibid, 215.

³⁴ "Police Cite Non-Existent Ordinance, Force Peace Pickets from Vilas Park," *Madison Capital Times*, July 5, 1966, NewspaperArchive; "Madison Hosts 2 Protest Events," *Wisconsin State Journal*, July 5, 1966, NewspaperArchive.

Protesting and policing in Madison would be defined by one word in 1967: Dow. Dow Chemical was a Michigan based company which was well known for manufacturing napalm for the United States military during the Vietnam War. Protests against the company had already occurred in Michigan during the previous year, and it was a primary goal of the SDS chapter of the University of Michigan to stop the company from producing the weapon of war.³⁵ Scrutiny of the napalm manufacturer transferred over to the University of Wisconsin the following year.

The first protest of Dow Chemical at the University of Wisconsin occurred in late February. It was publicly announced that the SDS would occupy buildings where Dow Chemical was conducting interviews, but they had agreed that they would only stand and picket rather than obstructing the interview process itself, thus remaining in accordance with the University's policy on demonstrations. Their goal was to "disrupt some minds, perhaps, but not university operations".³⁶ On February 21st, a group of over one hundred demonstrators took to picketing the Dow Chemical interviews. The group split, with one group led by SDS president Hank Haslach occupying the Chemistry Building, and the other entering the Commerce Building. However, despite the desire to have the protest remain peaceful, the situation began to escalate. A misunderstanding of whether or not picket signs were allowed to be used in buildings resulted in the first arrests of political protesters on campus. Hank Haslach was arrested by the UWPD for disorderly conduct, and Bob Cohen, another New Left activist, was arrested for the same infraction.³⁷

³⁵ For more on the protests against Dow Chemical at the University of Michigan, see "DOW Chemical · Exhibit · Resistance and Revolution: The Anti-Vietnam War Movement at the University of Michigan, 1965-1972," accessed March 9, 2021, https://michiganintheworld.history.lsa.umich.edu/antivietnamwar/exhibits/show/exhibit/military_and_the_university/dow_chemical.

³⁶ Clifford Behnke, "'Anti-Dow' Protesters Plan New Sit-In at UW," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 22, 1967, NewspaperArchive; Levitan, *Madison in the 60s*, 247.

³⁷ Behnke, "'Anti-Dow' Protesters", *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 22, 1967, NewspaperArchive.

Following this first day of protesting, February 22nd showed a further escalation of the situation on the University of Wisconsin campus. Seventeen protesters were arrested by the UWPD at Engineering Hall at the request of a professor who witnessed the students disrupting the everyday operations of the building. The UWPD officers swiftly arrested eleven of the protesters, and then six more who attempted to disrupt the arrests by throwing themselves under the squad cars. This day of protest did not end with the arrest of these demonstrators. Over 300 New Left activists, many from the SDS, marched on Bascom Hall to confront university administrators. The protest leaders confronted and spoke with University president Harrington, Chancellor Robben Fleming, and Dean Joseph Kauffman. After speaking for over three hours, Kauffman wrote a personal check to pay the bail for the seventeen who were arrested previously that day.³⁸ Protests continued on the 23rd of February, but the protests did not cause any obstruction, instead mirroring the draft sit-in of the previous year. However, a special meeting of the faculty that afternoon resulted in a subtle warning to the increasingly disruptive New Left activists. The faculty reaffirmed that the students are fully able to protest by any legal means as long as they do not disrupt the daily regular operations on the University of Wisconsin campus. However, Chancellor Robben Fleming notes that should an escalated conflict occur, the university would need to bring in “substantial” outside force in order to restore order.³⁹ This sentiment was shared by the city administrators in Madison, many of whom implored the university to take swift action to quell the protesters. Fleming was also quoted saying that the

³⁸ Behnke, “UW Officials Blockaded.” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 23, 1967; Taylor, “A Brief Chronology of the Development of the Student Protest Movement on the UW Madison Campus, 1965-Sterling Hall Bombing,” 7. May 7, 1972, Student Unrest Subject Files, Box 1, Folder 3, University of Wisconsin Archives.

³⁹ Matt Pommer, “Fleming Backed by Faculty, Says U. May Need Additional Forces,” *Capital Times*, February 24, 1967, NewspaperArchive. At this time, the UWPD was still very small, only having 20 officers employed.

combined forces of the UWPD and the MPD would not be able to contain the growing protest movement.⁴⁰

These first DOW protests continue to show the cyclical development of New Left activism and policing, though this instance is of particular importance because it shows the clear emboldening of the UWPD. Up until this point, the UWPD had not engaged with political protesters on campus, but the arrest of 19 demonstrators over two days shows that the UWPD, and the university administrators backing them, were beginning to react more harshly to the increasingly more volatile and disruptive New Left protesters. The quotes from Robben Fleming also show that the administration of the University of Wisconsin was beginning to acknowledge that they were not prepared to maintain order if a protest were to escalate too much, though they maintained the naïve opinion that such a protest would not occur.

The New Left protesters were growing not only in numbers, but also in intensity. Previous protests just a year previously did not result in any arrests or significant obstruction, but the first Dow riot, as it would be called by later scholars, showed that the ideology of the New Left was permeating throughout the campus, and these activists were willing to come into direct confrontation with police officers and university authorities in order to have their voices heard and their demands met. In the end, this first round of protests in early 1967 would still be greatly overshadowed by what was to come in October of that same year.

Another important police-protest interaction was the wrong way bus lane protest in May of 1967. Students were protesting the transformation of a major campus road into a one-way

⁴⁰ Ibid; Clifford Behnke, "Extra Police Need Eyed for UW Rifts," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 24, 1967, NewspaperArchive; Robert Davis, "Aldermen Slap UW Protesters," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 24, 1967, NewspaperArchive.

street with a bus lane still running the opposite direction. Claiming that the new traffic flow was a danger to pedestrians, as evidenced by a student losing her leg, over 2000 students came out to protest. Though the university administration and the city were unmoved, it showed that students as a whole were more willing to come out and protest in large numbers. The comments of MPD Chief Emery are also notable: ““We won’t let the students run the city... We’ll crack their heads together if we have to, to protect our citizens””.⁴¹

The return to campus for the Fall semester in 1967 saw the return of many New Left activists to Madison, as well as the return of recruiters from Dow Chemical. Once again, New Left activists saw a clear need to protest the napalm producer’s presence on campus. The two groups leading the protest organization were once again the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), and the Committee to End the War in Vietnam (CEWV). However, these two prominent New Left organizers were joined by additional student groups. A notable addition was the prominent Civil Rights group Concerned Black People. The group helped aid the planning of the Dow protests in the Fall of 1967, and they were a particularly important addition to the “overwhelmingly white New Left”.⁴²

The New Left at the University of Wisconsin, it must be noted, was not completely unified in their methodology. Upon returning to campus, many saw that the University’s allowance of Dow to return to campus was a direct rejection of the students’ request in February. The university administration, however, maintained their viewpoint that though it may be unpopular, it is not up to the university to restrict which employers can use campus facilities to conduct interviews for interested students. There were even some administrators who expressed

⁴¹ Quoted in Matthew Levin, *Cold War University*, 140. Quoted in Matthew Levin, *Cold War University*, 140.

⁴² Levin, *Cold War University*, 144.

a clear opposition to the war in Vietnam and further escalation of the United States, the most notable being Chancellor William Sewell.⁴³ New Left activists, seeing the rejection of their previous demands, met in the weeks preceding the October interviews to discuss and debate how they should move forward. Sitting by was not an option for the New Left activists. Some members of New Left aligned student groups wanted to continue with previous protest methods: sit-ins, picketing, and other *non-obstructive* demonstrations. Other New Left leaders believed that the previous methods had clearly not swayed the feelings of university officials, so more civil disobedience must be the next step in their work.⁴⁴ In the end, activists decided that the protests would take place over two days. The first day would be dedicated to an unobstructive protest against Dow Chemical, and the second day would be a full obstruction of the Dow interviews at the UW-Madison Commerce Building.⁴⁵

The Madison police authorities had, at this point, already been greatly influenced by the work of New Left demonstrations. Over the past two years especially, the protests of the New Left were becoming more disruptive, leading to more direct interactions between protesters and police and also more arrests. It was obvious to police authorities that protests surrounding Dow were bound to occur once again in the Fall, so they inserted undercover police officers into the groups planning the Dow protests. According to the undercover officer, the protesters were told to not get into physical confrontations with police officers, but that if they were struck first then they should try to defend themselves. The statement from this undercover officer did little to quell the worry of the MPD officers, putting many of them on edge the day before the first of

⁴³ Sewell had previously been a professor of Sociology at the University of Wisconsin, and he had signed petitions in 1964 for President Lyndon B. Johnson to withdraw American troops from Vietnam. David Maraniss, *They Marched into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 119-138.

⁴⁴ Levin, *Cold War University*, 148-149.

⁴⁵ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 254.

two days of planned protests.⁴⁶ Police, therefore, were prepared for direct, and possibly violent, confrontations with demonstrators, which would be evidenced by their donning of riot gear for the protest on October 18th. This was not the case for the UWPD. Ralph Hanson had hired twenty officers from the Madison Police Department to aid the small UWPD forces, but he also informed them that the protesters were not a violent group, and that they were ““too sophisticated for this sort of thing””⁴⁷

The first day of protest, however, was as peaceful as it was planned to be. Some four hundred students picketed outside of the Commerce Building, chanting and spreading information to those entering and leaving the building and the surrounding area. Many carried signs and photographs of children suffering from the grievous effects of napalm use in Vietnam. The peaceful protest was even commended by the head of the University of Wisconsin Police Department, Ralph Hanson, who was quoted commenting on the weather and that it was too nice out to make a disturbance.⁴⁸ This calm atmosphere would be completely shattered by the events of the following day.

At 10:30 in the morning on October 18th, about three hundred protesters gathered and began their march to the Commerce Building, modern day Ingraham Hall, from the bottom of Bascom Hill. Upon reaching the Commerce Building, roughly forty protesters entered the building and occupied the hallway where the interviews were taking place, blocking the door and surrounding the UWPD officers standing outside. These initial occupiers were joined by at least two hundred more people, packing the hallway to the point where one could barely move their

⁴⁶ Special Assignment Officers Report, Madison Police Department, October 16, 1967. Quoted in Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 255.

⁴⁷ Ralph Hanson, October 18, 1967, Quoted in Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 256.

⁴⁸ “UW Protesters Hit Dow’s Line Again,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 18, 1967, NewspaperArchive; Matt Pommer, “Picketing of Dow Starts Peacefully,” *Madison Capital Times*, October 17, 1967, NewspaperArchive.

arm. The crowd of protesters blocked any and all people who attempted to attend a Dow interview. At this point, Ralph Hanson informed Joseph Kaufman that the students were intentionally obstructing university operations, clearly in violation of rule 11.02.⁴⁹ Outside the Commerce Building, a crowd of close to one thousand people was growing. Inside, Ralph Hanson attempted to arrest the students who were blocking the door, but the protesters linked arms and eventually the attempt was halted, as Hanson was adhering to his own guidelines.

At this point, Hanson struggled to leave the building, engulfed by the dense crowd of demonstrators, but eventually he was able to leave the area and contact Chancellor Sewell, who then gave the order to contact the Madison Police Department to ask for their support. The officers from the MPD arrived close to noon wearing full riot gear and carrying nightsticks, a spectacle that drew even more spectators. With MPD officers awaiting the order to enter and clear the commerce building, Ralph Hanson made a final attempt to remedy the situation peacefully. He spoke to the leaders of the protest, asking if they would be willing to leave if the Dow recruiters left as well, and a delegation of four protesters left to meet with Chancellor Sewell and Dean Kaufman. Unfortunately, Sewell and Kaufman refuse the demands of the students.⁵⁰

At 1:30 in the afternoon, Hanson returned to the Commerce Building and declared that the gathering of New Left protesters was an unlawful assembly, and that they must disperse from the building immediately. However, under five minutes after Hanson had given his final warning

⁴⁹ Rule 11.02 of the University of Wisconsin rules and regulations was a rule that prohibited the willful disruption of university operations. The rule, often called the Kennedy Rule, was put in place after members of the Committee to End the War in Vietnam heckled Senator Edward Kennedy during his visit to the campus. Rodger Gribble, "New Policy Will Protect Speaker From Hecklers at UW Facilities," *Wisconsin State Journal*, November 17, 1967, NewspaperArchive.

⁵⁰ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 256-257.

to the protesters, he moved forward towards the Commerce Building while leading forty MPD officers armed with riot gear and nightsticks. What ensued was “a battle scene without bullets”.⁵¹ The protesters had formed a human wall in an attempt to hold their position. Seeing officers with their nightsticks raised, the protesters surged forward, trying to hold their place in the hallway. Police officers, many of whom having removed their badges, moved into the building flailing their nightsticks and beating protesters in the hallway outside the Dow interview room.⁵² At this point, neither the officers from the MPD or the UWPD had been trained in how to use their batons in a dense crowd, as none had undergone any significant riot training, so many simply swung their clubs wildly and violently in a crowd of protesters.⁵³ Even those attempting to leave the building were being struck by the indiscriminately swinging police officers. Cries and screams echoed through the hallways of the Commerce Building as the police forced their way through the crowd of protesters. Witnesses saw men and women being beaten over the head by police officers, and others saw those who had already dropped to the ground being hit by officers. They described the sound like “someone breaking watermelons with a baseball bat.”⁵⁴

At this point, the officers were making no attempt to arrest any of the protesters, instead just beating those they found in the hallways (some of whom were students completely uninvolved with the demonstration but attempting to get to class).⁵⁵ In the chaos and violence that occurred inside of the Commerce Building, protesters also began to fight back against the

⁵¹ June Dieckmann, “76 Hurt in Campus Rioting; Campus Strike Results: Police Hemmed; No One Jailed,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 19, 1967, NewspaperArchive.

⁵² Officers said they had removed their badges for safety. However, many protesters believed that the badges had been removed so that the officers could not be easily identified by those they were attacking and removing from the building.

⁵³ David Maraniss, *They Marched into Sunlight: War and Peace, Vietnam and America, October 1967*, Kindle (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2004) 376.

⁵⁴ Jim Rowen, Quoted in “Two Days In October,” This American Experience. Transcript. PBS.

⁵⁵ Maraniss, *They Marched into Sunlight*, 374-377; Dieckmann, “76 Hurt in Campus Rioting; Campus Strike Results: Police Hemmed; No One Jailed.”

onslaught of police officers. Using bricks, shoes, and fists, some protesters responded with violence. Even the chief of the UWPD Ralph Hanson, who had not been able to enter the building during the initial surge, recalled being punched multiple times as he entered the building.⁵⁶ Detective Tom McCarthy of the MPD was struck by some flying object (thought to be a brick), and he was knocked unconscious and suffered facial fractures.⁵⁷

At 2:15, MPD chief Emery calls for reinforcements, and police deployed tear gas for the first time at any college campus protest. The gas burned the eyes of police and protester alike. The MPD, untrained in the use of tear gas, used the weapon haphazardly, resulting in the spread of the gas due to the winds coming off of nearby Lake Mendota.⁵⁸ In total, it took around thirteen minutes for the police officers to clear the protesters out of the Commerce Building, but the commotion continued outside. The spectacle of the battle between the New Left activists and police forces had drawn a crowd of over three thousand people.⁵⁹ Once the building had been emptied, the MPD formed a perimeter around the Commerce Building, and they waited for the crowd to disperse. By around 4:30 in the early evening, the riot and melee had come to an end.⁶⁰

The second Dow Chemical demonstration and riot was a clear turning point in the relationship between protesters and police authorities. The actions of the MPD officers in removing student protesters from the Commerce Building was the explosion of a build up of tension during the previous years of protest. The officers were willing, and in some cases eager, to have violent confrontations with the protesters, many of whom the police officers saw as

⁵⁶ Maraniss, 379.

⁵⁷ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 259; Maraniss, 387; Interview with William H. Sewell, interview by Laura Smail, Tape, 1977, University of Wisconsin Digital Collections, <https://ohms.library.wisc.edu/viewer.php?cachefile=Sewell.W.101-1.xml>.

⁵⁸ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 260.

⁵⁹ Levin, *Cold War University*, 155.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 156.

privileged youngsters who were acting based on emotions rather than rationality. Keith Hackett, an MPD officer, noted his mentality going into the fray: “If you got a student, you tried to make sure that he didn't return, that he didn't want to come back. And if that meant, you know, breaking his kneecap, that's what you did”.⁶¹ The protesters for their part demonstrated that they were not willing to go down without a fight. Despite not truly being given the opportunity to leave the Commerce Building peacefully, there were few who would have done so. This violent clash demonstrated that New Left activists were entrenched in their views to the point that they would physically fight back against those they saw as oppressors. This pivotal event would set the groundwork for the future of police-protester interactions, and the aftermath of the Dow Chemical riot would then continue to influence the development of policing and protesting in Madison for years to come.

IV. The Aftermath of Dow, The Black Student Strike, and the Extent of New Left Radicalism

Following the Dow Chemical protest and riot, the Madison Police Department and the University of Wisconsin Police Department would greatly factor the events of that day into their future planning, showing the influence of New Left protesters on their development. One clear example of this is from a report given to the University of Wisconsin Board of Regents by University of Wisconsin President Fred Harvey Harrington. Following the events of Dow, the university underwent a study of the campus security capabilities, and it provided a report on their findings and where improvement could be achieved.⁶² The primary basis for concern listed in the

⁶¹ Keith Hackett, quoted in “Two Days In October,” This American Experience. Transcript. PBS.

⁶² Herman Goldstein, “Protection and Security Services for the University of Wisconsin: A Review with Recommendations for Improvement” (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Madison, October 23, 1968), Physical Plant Police and Security Subject Files, University of Wisconsin Archives.

report was the increasing number and volatility of demonstrations on the campus. Herman explained that the UWPD in 1968 did not have the resources to deal with the increasing volatility and frequency of protests without the risk of violence. In his recommendations for improvement, Herman explained that the UWPD must form a more formal relationship with the Madison Police Department. He went on to explain that the UWPD had previously hired officers from the MPD during different events and protests, including the Dow protests a year previously, but following that event, MPD Chief Emery altered their existing agreement. Following Dow, the UWPD would only be able to hire off duty MPD officers if the MPD was involved in the planning for the policing of events.⁶³

The report directly addresses the unique problems faced by the UWPD regarding demonstrations and violent protests. Herman explains that the easiest way to minimize violent confrontations between police authorities and demonstrators is to have adequate planning for the demonstrations, but that is only possible if there is frequent and comprehensive communication between the leaders of the demonstrations and the police authorities.⁶⁴ It is interesting to note that in this report, Herman acknowledges that the presence of police at a protest could in itself be provocative. Herman writes “the presence of too many officers at the scene of a demonstration, especially if they are equipped with riot gear, may provoke an incident that might not have otherwise occurred”.⁶⁵

Herman also touches on the issue of the use of force. He elaborates, writing that it is far more likely that police officers will deploy the use of force in any situation where they are outnumbered. Therefore, the easiest and “most effective way to minimize the necessity of using

⁶³ Ibid, 19.

⁶⁴ Ibid, 22.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 23.

force is through the employment of large numbers of police personnel.”⁶⁶ In the section dedicated to possible improvements to the UWPD, Herman clearly lays out that the UWPD requires more personnel to help deal with the growing problems on campus, especially the increasingly volatile and crowded protests. He also explains thoroughly the need for “improving the caliber of University police”.⁶⁷ This came in the form of increased training, similar to the training of municipal police departments. In addition to this, the department would need to be supplied with better equipment, and they would need more training on how to properly use their new tools.⁶⁸

Dow left a significant impact on New Left activists as well. Those who organized and participated in the Dow Chemical demonstration and riot were blamed almost entirely for the violence on October 18th. Two of the leaders of the protest, Bob Cohen and Evan Stark, were expelled for their actions. However, what is more important is the emotional impact following Dow. The violence from the day was shocking for those involved and those viewing it from the outside, so much so that protests on the University of Wisconsin campus were largely invisible during 1968. New Left activists saw that the university and the community had betrayed them, as the faculty and the greater city and state governments had shown their support to Chancellor Sewell for his decision to use the police on October 18th.⁶⁹ Even when Dow returned to campus during the following year, nothing close to what occurred during the previous year came to pass. There was some picketing outside of where their interviews occurred, and two people were

⁶⁶ Goldstein, “Protection and Security Services for the University of Wisconsin: A Review with Recommendations for Improvement.” 28.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 44, 47.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ John Keefe, “UW Will Employ Force If Needed to Still Violence,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, October 26, 1967, NewspaperArchive; Matt Pommer, “UW Campus Near Normal Despite Some Picketing,” *Capital Times*, October 20, 1967, Student Unrest Subject Files, Box 1, University of Wisconsin Archives.

arrested for blocking the door to the interview space, but no other significant interaction occurred.⁷⁰

The impact of the Dow Riot and the actions of New Left protesters on the Madison Police Department was more direct. In the summer of 1968, the Madison city council approved an \$8300 payment to the MPD to purchase more riot control equipment including, riot shields, night sticks, and gas masks.⁷¹ The request made by MPD chief Emery was emblematic of the direction of policing in Madison following the Dow Chemical demonstration. Fearing further violence from New Left activists, Emery and the city of Madison saw the need for a better equipped police force, despite the fact that the MPD officers had yet to be trained for riot and crowd control.⁷²

Despite the lull in New Left activism during the year following the Dow Chemical riot, the leaders of the New Left had not stopped working, and in early 1969 New Left activists would take a stand against the marginalization of black students at the University of Wisconsin. On February 7th, following the conference entitled “The Black Revolution: To What Ends?”, a group of ten black students led by Willie Edwards of the Black People’s Alliance, a group that had helped in the planning of the Dow demonstrations in 1967, gave a list of thirteen demands to the new chancellor Edwin Young.⁷³ Their primary demands were for the university to actively recruit more black students and faculty, and for the creation of a black studies department that would be operated by black faculty members and students.⁷⁴ Later that same day, about three

⁷⁰ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 315

⁷¹ Richard Brautigam, “Counsel Passes Buck on Gun Curbs,” *Madison Capital Times*, July 12, 1968, NewspaperArchive.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ “Statement by the University of Wisconsin Administration” (University of Wisconsin, February 12, 1969), History Students Association Records 1968-1970, Wisconsin Historical Society Archives.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

hundred students marched up Bascom Hill and entered classrooms, disrupting usual operations, in order to read the demands of the Black People's Alliance and explain them to fellow students and faculty. The crowd grew to about five hundred people, and in the evening a meeting of over one thousand people at the Union Theater saw the formal beginning of the strike and a call for disruption on campus until the demands of the Black People's Alliance were met.⁷⁵

On Saturday, strike leaders marched with roughly six hundred demonstrators to the field house to cause some disruption at the Wisconsin v. Ohio State basketball game. However, the University was informed of the potential disruption by agents they had within the New Left, and they deployed some 150 police officers armed with nightsticks, riot helmets, and tear gas to the game to head off the protesters. The protesters had a small clash with the police officers outside of the field house, but they are unsuccessful in entering or causing any significant disruption. In the end, tear gas was not used on this group, and only four demonstrators were arrested for disorderly conduct.⁷⁶ Following this brief interaction with the police, Chancellor Young issues a response to the protesters, reaffirming the University's stance that peaceful picketing is allowed and encouraged, but any obstruction to the daily operations of the University would be punished with utmost severity.⁷⁷ The Next week began with peaceful picketing outside of classes, and peaceful talks in classrooms where demonstrators were given permission to speak about the demands and goals of the Black Student Strike. However, this peaceful demonstration would be short lived.

Once again, New Left activists would resort to more disruptive actions in order to have their voices heard. Starting on Tuesday, February 11th, and throughout the following week, the

⁷⁵ Gary Rettgen, "Blacks' Stike Call Disrupts U. Classes," *Capital Times*, February 8, 1969, NewspaperArchive.

⁷⁶ WSJ 2/9/69

⁷⁷ Levin, *Cold War University*, 169.

New Left demonstrators would begin to block access to university buildings and prevent students from getting to their classes. Once again, police officers were deployed to restore order to the campus, but unlike Dow, the protesters elected to leave when the officers approached.⁷⁸ The protesters would implement hit-and-run strikes, obstructing buildings until police officers arrived and then moving to another building on campus to avoid violent confrontations with the officers. These tactics were incredibly effective, and they resulted in the New Left activists blocking multiple buildings on campus for three hours, proving to University administrators and city officials alike that the current available police force is not prepared to deal with the current demonstrations.⁷⁹

This realization led the deployment of the Wisconsin National Guard. On February 13th, the National Guardsmen combined with both the campus and municipal police forces to shut down the protests on campus and allow the continuation of normal university operations. However, like the 1968 University report predicted, the presence of the National Guardsmen and officers in riot gear served to escalate the situation with the protesters. The strikers took to the streets, blocking University avenue until they were forcibly removed by police officers and guardsmen. Police resorted to using their nightsticks against some protesters, and tear gas was fired once again to disperse the demonstrators in the streets.⁸⁰

These protests once again demonstrated the cyclical relationship between the New Left and police authorities in Madison. The New Left activists came out in droves to aid in the

⁷⁸ Matt Pommer, "Hit-Run Blockades Are Begun at UW," *Madison Capital Times*, February 12, 1969, NewspaperArchive.

⁷⁹ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 359.

⁸⁰ Matt Pommer, "Troops, Cops Use Tear Gas to Rout U. Avenue Blockers," *Madison Capital Times*, February 13, 1969, NewspaperArchive; Rodger Gribble, "UW Strikers Clash With Troops, Police," *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 14, 1969, NewspaperArchive.

struggle of the Black Student Strike, but the police also demonstrated their increased militarization. While less overtly violent towards protesters, they still had some physical confrontations and they also called in the use of the Wisconsin National Guard to aid them in maintaining order on the University of Wisconsin campus. Ultimately, the strike was somewhat successful, as the faculty of the University of Wisconsin accepted plans to create the Department of Afro-American Studies, a program that would offer Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Science degrees in the new Afro-American Studies Major.⁸¹ The protest also had a significant impact on the New Left, especially regarding their radicalism. The Black Student Strike of 1969 resulted in the development of “affinity groups” from the Students for a Democratic Society. These groups were comprised mostly of New Left radicals who were unafraid of direct confrontation with police officers, and they held the intention of weeding out those who would seek to sow discord within the New Left. One such organization was the Mother Jones Revolutionary League, a splinter group from the SDS who’s goal was to root out the plainclothes police officers who had begun to wind their way into New Left organizations.⁸²

By this point, the expenditures by the MPD had increased by \$1.2 million since 1965, compared to an increase of only \$600,000 between 1960 and 1965. There would be another marked increase from 1969 to 1970 of over \$750,000.⁸³ A study done in 1971 also concluded that the MPD had altered their methods for police training as well, citing that the department had clearly adopted the modern militarized training and administrative model, typical of police departments nationwide.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 363.

⁸² Levin, *Cold War University*, 170; Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 358.

⁸³ Clara Penniman and Paula A. White, *Madison: An Administrative History of Wisconsin’s Capital City 1929-1979* (Madison, WI: The Robert M. LaFollette Institute of Public Affairs, 1999), 152.

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 149.

The effects of the increased police militarization and the radicalization of New Left activists as a result was better demonstrated during two later events: The Mifflin Street Block Party in May of 1969, and the bombing of Sterling Hall in August of 1970. On May 3rd, a community gathering, and protest of the Vietnam War occurred on the 500 block of Mifflin Street. The scene of food, music, and dancing was interrupted after a noise complaint resulted in the arrival of police officers. When initial attempts to maintain order failed, officers returned with riot gear, and MPD officer and inspector Herman Thomas tells his men that they are “going down there to crack some skulls”.⁸⁵ Soon there are more than thirty MPD officers on the scene, and when attempts to appeal to the mayor and chief of police fail, Herman Thomas gives the order to disperse the partygoers by any means necessary.⁸⁶ The result is a violent scene where police and protesters once again prove their mutual escalation. Demonstrators and radical splinter groups began to hurl bricks and bottles at the charging police officers, who in turn launched tear gas and battered the protesters with their nightsticks. The confrontation continued into the night, with clouds of tear gas flooding the area.⁸⁷ This pandemonium continued through the weekend, spreading from the initial site on Mifflin Street into the surrounding area, including State Street and Langdon Street. Students continued to fight back against the police, not only by throwing projectiles, but also by firebombing state and city offices.⁸⁸

The radicalism of the New Left reached an all time high 1969, but it would once again be surpassed just over a year after the Mifflin riot. With the continued escalation of the war in Vietnam compounded with the police violence and lack of university accountability in previous years, 1970 would show the furthest extent of radicalism on the part of the New Left. Sterling

⁸⁵ Levitan, *Madison in the Sixties*, 364.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 365.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 366; Levin, *Cold War University*, 179.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, 368.

Hall housed the Army Mathematics Research Center (ARMC), a joint research facility between the University of Wisconsin and the United States Army. The ARMC had been the focus of some controversy during the previous decade due to its connection to the United States Military and the potential it had for conducting classified research, but the University denied these claims. However, on August 24th, 1970, a group of four radicals made a call to the UWPD informing them of the coming bombing. The explosion occurred at 3:54 in the morning, causing devastating damage to the building, but it ironically did very little damage to the ARMC. The bomb did, however, kill Robert Fassnacht, a physics doctoral candidate.⁸⁹

V. Conclusion: Insights and Further Questions

The bombing is the clearest example of New Left radicalism. While this type of anarchism and violence was detested by almost all members of the New Left in Madison, it still shows that the situation in Madison had escalated to a point where some believed that devastating violence was the only solution to the growing issues during the Vietnam War. It forced a re-evaluation of the entire New Left movement, but it did not halt the movement entirely. Protests continued in the early years of the 1970s, with particularly tumultuous Summers in 1971 and 1972 in which police and protesters clashed again, resulting in more tear gas, more arrests, and more bitter feelings between New Left Activists and police officers.

Following the signing of the Paris Peace Accords and the removal of troops from Vietnam in 1973, police interactions with protesters occurred far less frequently. The rest of the 1970s did not exhibit the same volatility and violence of the previous six years. However, as long

⁸⁹ Levin, *Cold War University*, 174-176.

as conflict exists in the world, so will protesting. The New Left activists of the 1960s and 70s showed that they were willing to directly engage with a police force that they viewed as oppressive in order to protest injustices both in Madison and abroad. The police authorities in Madison responded accordingly.

While other scholars cited different factors relating to the development of the New Left in Madison during this period, including closer ties between the University and the United States Government, they have failed to mention how the cyclical relationship between policing and protesting influenced the development of the two groups. The increasingly volatile actions of New Left activists resulted in the police departments of Madison altering the way they engaged with protesters, adopting a militarized and violent response that would match the volatility of the protesters at the time. The further militarization of police was also compounded by the implementation of the National Guard to quell the disruption both on and off the UW-Madison Campus.

The process of writing this thesis has provided valuable insights into the origins of the police-protest dynamic in Madison. Madison was not the first place where tear gas was used to disperse protesters, and it would not be the last, but for some it may have seemed like an unlikely place to see such violent interactions given its progressive reputation. The protests of the 1960s and 70s set the precedent by which all protests have occurred since. In 1980, the police had violent clashes with students during a five-week TAA (Teaching Assistant Association, explained previously in the thesis) strike. 1985 saw police use mace on ninety New Left activists protesting CIA recruitments on campus. The late 1980s came with continued protests against

racism and fights for women's reproductive rights.⁹⁰ Violent interactions between police and protesters were not inevitable, as not every protest was broken up by tear gas and officers in riot gear, but this leads to more questions.

Contrasting two contemporary examples shows a stark contrast between very similar protests. Tony Robinson, a black man, was shot and killed by a police officer in Madison on March 6th, 2015. The killing of an unarmed black man sparked citywide protests supporting the Black Lives Matter movement, and calling for the officer who killed Robinson, Matt Kenny, to be fired and prosecuted. These protests, while drawing thousands of supporters from around Madison with many being students, did not erupt into violent police confrontations. The photographs and news articles from the days and weeks following the killing of Robinson saw a community united in their grief and anger, but not a violent police force looking to subdue them. Compare that protest to the actions of both police and protesters in the Summer of 2020. The protests that followed the killing of George Floyd resembled the protests of the 1960s and 70s far more than the protests in 2015.

The differences between the two could have stemmed from a multitude of factors: perhaps the COVID-19 pandemic had caused a buildup of aggression and these protests became an outlet, or maybe the rhetoric of President Donald Trump during the previous three years had created a more confrontational atmosphere in the city. Whatever the case may be, it is important that these questions also be explored, because though the origins of policing and protesting in Madison provided some insights into their contemporary relationship, there are still a multitude

⁹⁰ "1980-1989," University of Wisconsin Campus History Projects, accessed April 27, 2021, <https://www.library.wisc.edu/archives/exhibits/campus-history-projects/protests-social-action-at-uw-madison-during-the-20th-century/1980-1989/>.

of questions to be answered regarding how police authorities interact with the communities they serve.

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