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SPECIAL REPORT

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON BLACK POWER

The 3rd National Conference on Black Power, scheduled to meet for four days in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania from 29 August to 1 September 1968, held its opening session Thursday night at the Church of the Advocate, which has a seating capacity of 1500-2000 people, and is headquarters for this conference. The first conference was held in Washington, D. C., in September 1966, and the second in Newark, N. J. in July 1967. The Newark conference, held in the aftermath of riots in that city and on the eve of the Detroit riots, attracted 1094 delegates from 126 cities in 26 states. At the end of the 2nd conference, a Continuations Committee was named to oversee implementation of resolutions passed and to set up the 3rd conference. Dr. Nathan WRIGHT of Newark, N. J. is chairman of the Committee. Ron KARENGA, leader of the Militant Los Angeles group, "US", is a Vice President. Other committee members are: Omar AHMED and Isaiah ROBINSON of N. Y.; Rev. Paul WASHINGTON and Rev. Lorenzo SHEPARD (Chairman of Council of Black Clergy); and Walter PALMER of Black People's Unity Movement.

According to C. Summer STONE, former aide to Adam C. POWELL and a Vice President of the Continuations Committee, "The 1st Conference defined black power for us. The 2nd discussed how it operates. The question now is how to implement it."

The theme of the Conference will be, "Black Self-Determination and Black Unity Through Direct Action." How to achieve black control of the nation's black communities appears to be the main issue. More than 70 scholarly papers are listed for discussion in workshops which will be conducted in some 7 or 8 locations in addition to the Headquarters. Dr. WRIGHT said the conference might discuss political endorsements and whether Negroes should be involved in revolution or reform or in the establishment of a 3rd or 4th political party.

Allegedly, over 700 persons from 96 cities had already registered for the parley by midday of the 29th. The conference, which is being held in Philadelphia at the invitation of the Philadelphia Council of Black Clergy, is the first to actually be held within a black community and anticipates participation by 1500 to 2000 Negroes. Representatives of some 600 organizations, including the most militant in the nation, are being brought together.

Early arrivals included California State Senator Mervyn DYMALLY, Playwright Leroi JONES, and the Rev. Jesse JACKSON of SCLC. Charlene MITCHELL, CPUSA's female Negro candidate for the U.S. Presidency, reportedly will take part in the conference on August 29 and 30, 1968.

It has been indicated that white persons will be excluded from participation and observance of the conference and white newsmen were barred from an opening day news conference - allegedly because white newspapers printed distorted stories of last year's Newark meeting and because they haven't hired enough Negroes.

Although there is some concern that civil disturbance or violence might erupt during this conference, it is not considered a grave threat. Most of the participants will be leaders of nonlocal organizations and they will not have large numbers of their adherents with them. The majority of the Philadelphia host committee is believed desirous of avoiding any confrontation between the Philadelphia Police Department and the various groups. The word went out that the hosts would provide the security. Reports had first indicated that security for the conference would be provided by the "Black Community Defense" (BCD), an East Orange, N. J., organization believed to have supplied the security for the 1967 Newark conference. The BCD is a black militant group of about 60 members organized somewhat in military format and reputedly trained in karate, weapons use, etc. Robert HARVEY, BCD leader, reportedly advised his members that they would not handle the job because financing was unsatisfactory. Latest word received indicates that HARVEY and about 50 members of his organization are in Philadelphia and probably are providing the conference's security and self-policing. Neither Rap BROWN nor Stokeley CARMICHAEL is expected to attend.

The Philadelphia Police Department has beefed up and gone on extended shifts; the Philadelphia State Police are on precautionary alert, and the Pennsylvania Army National Guard has been contacted but no units have been alerted.

Source: Government reports and news media

Reliability: Deemed Good