

third dimension

Marchers reflect discontent

By Liz Crumley

"Is your screen door bullet-proof?"
"Am I next or will it be you?"

These placards reflected the discontent of about 100 marchers, predominantly black, who walked to the state capitol Tuesday afternoon to protest officials' actions on the Sept. 24 shooting death of Arvid Sherdell Lewis.

Lewis was shot by Lancaster County Deputy Sheriff Rodney Loos when police attempted to serve a search warrant at Lewis's home, 2284 Potter St.

No criminal charges

Shortly before noon, County Atty. Ron Lahners announced he will not file criminal charges against Loos.

Little violence had occurred in connection with the march by late evening, according to Dean Leitner, Lincoln Police Dept. inspector.

A few incidents of assaults and property damage were reported, Leitner said, adding that the incidents generally were provoked by blacks against whites.

According to Police Chief George Hansen, during the Tuesday afternoon protest march three disturbances occurred in the downtown Lincoln area.

Hansen said marchers allegedly kicked over a shoe stand in front of a business at 11th and O Streets. One person reported damage to his car, and a girl was slapped on the head by a marcher's sign in front of the city treasurer's office, Hansen said.

Received report

The chief received a report about 3:45 p.m. that 250 people were assembled in protest around 22nd and Vine streets, he said. About 4:30, Hansen said, he was informed that the crowd numbered fewer than 100 people and was dispersing without trouble.

Letner said the police helicopter would be concentrating on possible trouble-areas Tuesday night.

Campus police were taking no extra precautionary measures, Lt. Robert Edmunds said, other than being "a little more alert than we normally would be."

There had been no problems on the university campus as of 10 p.m., Edmunds said.

He added, however, that he had contacted Sgt. Kenneth Nelson, who is in charge of Student Security Officers for housing units, to say that officers should be alert and report any problems they might have.

Chambers marches

Figuring prominently in the Tuesday march was Omaha Sen. Ernest Chambers, who headed the march along with Lewis's mother, Barbara Kelly.

Chambers stated before the march that because Lahner's decision, any Lincoln or Lancaster County law enforcement officer can kill a citizen anytime he wants to.

"Nobody can sincerely believe that Lahners did right," he said. "Somebody

put pressure on him—I don't know who it is or who they are.

"Lahners is not going to tell the whole truth—never. His own investigation proves bungling incompetency."

"Whatever happens in Lincoln, Lahners is totally responsible for," he said. "When you make peaceful evolution impossible, you make violent revolution possible."

No prediction

However, Chambers said he would not predict whether there would be any violence in Lincoln Tuesday night as a result of Lahner's decision.

The march, planned a week ago, was merely an opportunity to let people express their feelings, he said.

One marcher said he was disappointed about Lahner's decision.

"This protest more or less expressed my anger," Reginald Farr said.

Attempt to change

A black businessman, Ron Pigeo, said for him the march was an attempt to bring about some type of meaningful changes in the police, regulations and procedures of law enforcement agencies in Lincoln and Lancaster County.

"The point is this: there could have been some other way of handling the incidents involving Childers and Lewis," Pigeo said.

Elijah Childers was shot by a Lincoln policeman Feb. 1.

Pigeo said he thought there would be violence Tuesday night.

"There has not been social change without some type of militancy," he said.

Individual decision

Chambers, speaking on the State Capitol steps, said each individual should decide what must be done in response to Lahner's decision.

"Don't let them (city and county officials) think it's over, even if that dummy down there (Lahners) says it is. "You can push people only so far,"

Chambers said. Sometimes the only alternative is to fight or die—when you're going to die anyway."

Cries of "fight" then were heard throughout the crowd.

Chambers cited the Symbionese Liberation Army to illustrate his point.

"Whatever they decide to do, they do it," he shouted.

A few hours after the rally, at a meeting of about 100 people in a vacant lot at 22nd and Vine streets, Lewis's mother said she was "really unhappy" about developments in the case because she thinks not all of the information has been released.

"I don't necessarily blame him (Lahners) for not filing charges," Barbara Kelly said. "He's just one of the persons in the city government."

Kelly said she will release a statement to the press on her findings in her son's death.



Barbara Kelly, mother of Arvid Sherdell Lewis. Photo by Ted Kirk

Reports may be released

By Dana Green and Joyletta Woodruff

Lincoln Mayor Helen Boosais today may release Lincoln Police Dept. (LPD) files regarding the Arvid Sherdell Lewis shooting case, but Lancaster County Atty. Ron Lahners said he has not yet decided if he will release his file on the case.

Lahners reported Tuesday morning that he will not file criminal charges against County Deputy Rodney Loos, who shot Lewis.

Loos has not yet been returned to permanent active duty, and Sheriff Merle Karnopp said he is "not certain" when Loos will be reinstated.

Loos was temporarily reinstated Monday because of other Sheriff Dept. absences.

Lahners said he will not file charges because he believes Loos was acting in self defense and in the defense of other officers.

Released statement

Lahners released a statement Tuesday morning based on information he had received from the Nebraska State Patrol, LPD and his own investigation (see p.8).

County Commissioner Bruce Hamilton had criticized Lancaster County Sheriff Merle Karnopp for not returning to Lincoln from vacationing in Oregon when he should have to take charge of the Lewis case.

Karnopp said Tuesday, "I could've even hitchhiked back to Lincoln if I thought it was important that I be here."

"What the papers didn't print is that Hamilton didn't know the circumstances," he said. Karnopp, who returned to Lincoln Friday night, said he kept in constant contact with the Sheriff's Office and that he was told there was no need for his return.

Karnopp said Loos "was only brought in yesterday (Monday) because we were six people short. Today (Tuesday) he's sick,"

he said.

Karnopp 'sure'

In reference to Lahner's decision not to file charges against Loos, Karnopp said, "I'm sure the county attorney made a complete and intensive investigation on his own, as well as of other agencies."

"I have every respect for Mr. Lahner's judgment in his decision," Karnopp said. "I haven't seen the reports yet, and I've formed no conclusions yet on my own part."

The warrant for Lewis's arrest, attained by the LPD, was held by Lincoln police officers Stephen Miller, John Rallis and deputy sheriff Loos. They were at the door of Lewis's house when he was shot, according to newly appointed LPD Chief George Hansen.

Lahners said in his statement that Miller, who was standing on the east side of the door, said he saw the hand and forearm of Lewis. According to the statement, Loos said that at the time he shot Lewis, he saw a rifle, pointed out the front door, in Lewis's hand.

Gun position unresolved

"The investigation has been unable to resolve the position of the gun immediately prior to the shot," the statement read. According to Lahners, uniformed officer Rallis saw deputy sheriff Harry Stewart handle Lewis's gun after the shooting. Stewart reportedly told Lahners he does not remember handling the gun.

Lahners said that when he arrived at the Lewis residence about 15 minutes after the shooting, Lewis's gun was standing against the south wall about 19 inches west of the doorway.

There were no distinguishable fingerprints on Lewis's gun to determine who had actually handled it, he said.

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Photo by Ted Kirk

State Sen. Ernie Chambers (center) led a march to the state capitol Tuesday to protest the handling of the investigation of the death of Sherdell Lewis.