

As for snipers, police responded to as many as nine calls for snipers in one afternoon but found that the jittery public was mistaking firecrackers and backfire for gunfire. Only one man was arrested as a sniper and it turned out he was firing at random in some woods instead of shooting at a chosen target.

One set of rumors is not being denied by police. Instead, they want to pin down whatever facts exist behind the rumors.

These are the rumors that businessmen are being told they must contribute to the Poor People's Campaign or some other cause or their buildings will be burned down.

Others, according to rumor, have been told to close today in observance of the late Malcolm X's birthday and some businessmen victims of the rioting have been warned that if they open for business again, they'll be burned out.

Plenty of rumors are reaching police but they're not getting the complaints from victims of the alleged extortion.

Wilson said that where the merchants have complained, police usually have been able to make arrests but their hands are tied when they don't know who is being victimized.

Since businessmen may be afraid to report these threats and extortion demands through the usual channels, precinct commanders are going to the businessmen in their precincts and telling them that police will accept their complaints as confidential and they won't have to go to court. The precinct commanders themselves will take the complaints.

Police also are trying to cope with another riot aftermath—juvenile gangs preying on merchants.

To curb the juvenile marauders, police have been ordered to step up enforcement of antiloitering laws and truancy regulations.

["Letters to the Editor" Washington Evening Star, May 21, 1968]

LET PUNISHMENT FIT THE CRIME

SIR: To prevent more civil disturbance, offending individuals must learn to substitute constructive acts for destructive acts. How? If their rearing has omitted training to respect the persons and property of others, public agencies must provide that training.

Since the offenders deal in physical acts, the initial training, to be understood, must involve tangible things, and it should relate directly to the nature of the offense. Let's start with having the offenders work (under the supervision of law-enforcement officers, if necessary) to clean up the areas they've damaged. Then teach them the skills to rehabilitate these areas. Eventually they might be taught to assist their neighbors whose businesses and homes have been destroyed or damaged. When these individuals who have upset us can show callouses of constructive work, we can welcome them as fellow citizens of the District. They can earn our forgiveness.

FLORENCE SIFFERD.

SIR: Citizenship is not just a question of rights; it is also civil responsibility. Let's pass out shovels to those who are so ready to leave others homeless and jobless and let them clean up the mess they made.

Mrs. GEORGIA COUNCIL.

SIR: Jail sentences are certainly in order for the militant leaders and more serious rioters but for the thousands of otherwise good citizens I have other ideas.

Anyone who participated in any way with the mob violence against our established government should be punished in a constructive manner. If each of those individuals is sentenced to three or four hours a day at hard labor cleaning up the mess they have created, it would accomplish two purposes. First, it would save many hard-earned dollars and, second, it would make those people who participate in the reconstruction less apt to tear down the product of their own hard labor.

LIEUTENANT COLONEL, USAF.

NO RIOT AT WAKEFIELD

SIR: On Friday, April 5, some of the radio broadcasting stations reported rioting in many of the area high and junior high schools, including Wakefield. An