

1 A record is good except your last record in the  
 2 signa Q tenth grade you haven't done so well?  
 3 CHAMBERLAIN: THE WITNESS: Report cards haven't come out  
 4 yet, but I know it won't be anything like it was  
 5 before or like it can be because I am not really  
 6 applying myself.

7 CHAMBERLAIN: BISHOP TAYLOR: Any special reason?  
 8 A: THE WITNESS: Several. Football, the organ-  
 9 Q izations I named, school, and I try to squeeze a  
 10 A social life in there with girls somewhere.

11 Q Where? MR. DRISCOLL: I think you are a bright young  
 12 A man, and I think we all ought to thank you and do  
 13 Q thank you for coming here before us. I think you  
 14 A handled yourself very well. Plainfield December 15

15 1924. I grew up JUDGE WACHENFELD: It was very helpful also.  
 16 and still do. I went through the Plain (Witness excused.)

17 system, the Plainfield High School class of 1941 served  
 18 Whereupon, United States Army in World War Two in the Air Force

19 and following that went to CHARLES E. MILLER work which I  
 20 called as a witness, sworn, testified as follows: employed

21 at American Cyanamid in Bow EXAMINATION

22 later in By Mr. Fortunato: where I still work for the last  
 23 six Q years. Your address?

24 A 418 Darrow Avenue, Plainfield.  
 25 Q Your age? you are affiliated with?

1 A Forty-three. Chemical Engineer, the usual profes-  
2 sional occupation? BISHOP TAYLOR: Human Relations Com-  
3 mission. Chemical engineer.

4 Q What? BISHOP TAYLOR: What? THE WITNESS: Commission  
5 to Mr. A. It is THE WITNESS: Chemical engineer, under the

6 state statute by Mr. Fortunato: Mayor to appoint human relation  
7 commission where? improve and foster better relations among  
8 different Bell Telephone Laboratories.

9 Q Education. Has it been in existence in Plainfield?

10 A Bachelor of Science in Chemical engineering.

11 Q Where? Tell us generally who its members are?

12 A Newark College of Engineering. There are

13 ministers, Your birthplace? THE WITNESS: People who have been active  
14 in the City of Plainfield. I was born in Plainfield December 15,

15 1924. I grew up in Plainfield. I lived there all my life  
16 and still do. I went through the Plainfield public school

17 system, the Plainfield High School class of 1941; served

18 in the United States Army in World War Two in the Air Force

19 and following that went to finish my college work which I

20 had begun before going into the Air Force, and was employed

21 at American Cyanamid in Bound Brook for a time and then

22 later in Bell Laboratories where I still work for the last

23 sixteen years. Are affiliated with? THE WITNESS: Yes, I am

24 Q That background is very helpful to us. Can you  
25 give us what groups you are affiliated with?

1 A The American Chemical Society, the usual profes-  
2 sional societies, the NAACP, Plainfield Human Relations Com-  
3 mission. The staff people, and I don't know what their

4 position. Q What is the Plainfield Human Relations Commission?

5 to me. A It is a group appointed by the Mayor under the  
6 state statutes that allows Mayors to appoint human relation  
7 commissions to improve and foster better relations among  
8 different groups in the community. disorder situation in

9 Newer. Q and How long has it been in existence in Plainfield?

10 A Since about 1963, I believe. ground who either

11 are Q Can you tell us generally who its members are?

12 people. A It is a relative cross section. There are  
13 ministers, rabbis, a few local people who have been active  
14 in the Civil Rights movement, and a few other people whom I  
15 would characterize as being appointed as sort of a political  
16 reward for service or opportunity for service, by the Mayor.  
17 We have a staff, an acting director at the present time.

18 Normally we have a director and an assistant director and a  
19 secretary. Our director left to join the ADL in Atlanta in  
20 September. Mr. Sullivan is now the acting director, for-  
21 merly the assistant director. We meet once a month. to do

22 that. Q Did that finish the groups? What other groups are  
23 there that you are affiliated with? of my head. we have

24 had A That is about it. Nothing else that is really  
25 relevant. Local organizations. quite frankly.

1 Q How many commissions or people from commissions  
2 have talked to you about the Plainfield disorder?

3 well, A After The staff people, and I don't know what their  
4 position is on the staff of the McClellan Committee talked  
5 to me. The President's Commission on Civil Disorders, I  
6 visited them in August and we had some discussion of  
7 Plainfield at that time in conjunction with people from  
8 Newark. We sort of discussed the disorder situation in  
9 Newark and Plainfield generally.

10 Q Are there other people coming around who either  
11 are writing books or making other studies and speaking to  
12 people like yourself in Plainfield?

13 A A few, yes. A few people who are simply inter-  
14 ested. There are people who are perhaps sociology majors  
15 in colleges and universities who are trying to do thesis work  
16 on the civil rights movement, race relations, things of  
17 this type. Some of them have come by for background infor-  
18 mation.

19 Q What about this present Governor's Commission, the  
20 what is the feeling toward that as you see it? If you  
21 would prefer to go off the record, we would be happy to do  
22 that.

23 A I am speaking off the top of my head. We have  
24 had a number of investigators from various groups. I never  
25 talked to anyone from this group, quite frankly.

1 The feeling in Plainfield as I get it, and this is not  
2 necessarily my personal feeling, but the feeling is that  
3 well, after all, we know our situation and our problems and  
4 we live with them and we are so close to them that it seems  
5 incredible to us that people like you do not understand and  
6 know our problems. After all, this is historical. It has  
7 been in existence for a hundred years or more since the  
8 end of slavery, and the Negro is really in a pretty awful  
9 situation. The fact that this is so unknown and is so little  
10 understood does seem to be incredible.

11 It also seems not necessarily incredible, but it seems  
12 unlikely that a group of people who are by their position,  
13 background, education, experience, so removed from this  
14 problem that they should attempt to talk to a more or less  
15 random selection of people from the community and gain an  
16 insight to the Negro's problem, suggest meaningful and  
17 workable solutions to the Negro's problem and have it be  
18 believed by similar people who are in state and local gov-  
19 ernment who haven't had this opportunity to learn about the  
20 Negro the way you have, who will then put it into effect and  
21 have some ultimate, worthwhile result which will change our  
22 situation. you and a substantial number of others in  
23 Plain It seems to be -- and I don't like to use the phrase,  
24 but it sort of fits -- sort of an exercise in futility; that  
25 it is all very great, all the people on such commissions are

1 distinguished, knowledgeable, accomplished people of opti-  
2 stature in the state and in the community who have impecable  
3 records in every way but who just may not be the people to  
4 effectively deal with this kind of problem.

5 This is not to say that there is anything inherently  
6 or personally wrong with the members of such commissions  
7 and not to say either that people of another type might do  
8 a better job. It is just that the problem seems to be  
9 bigger than the attacks that are being made on it through a  
10 commission such as this.

11 That is sort of a synthesis of my opinions and of the  
12 opinions of people with whom I have talked.

13 Q The latter part, you say this is also a general  
14 attitude of the people in Plainfield that you come in contact  
15 with, the same feeling that you have about the exercise in  
16 futility?

17 A It can be an exercise in futility, and I don't  
18 know about this to say that this commission is approaching  
19 it in quite that futile type of way, but it can be an  
20 exercise in futility for this type of group.

21 Q Whether or not it is, I am not trying to ask  
22 that. Do you and a substantial number of others in  
23 Plainfield feel that it will be an exercise in futility?

24 A Let's say we are not overly optimistic. We are  
25 not very optimistic about the outcome of this.

1           poll MR. GIBBONS: When you say you are not opti-  
2           mistic, that, I suppose, implies that you will be  
3           disappointed with whatever the commission can  
4           accomplish. What would you like to see come out  
5           of this or any other group looking into the situ-  
6           ation that would not be disappointing?

7           come THE WITNESS: I think the things that this  
8           commission would do that would not be dis-  
9           appointing to myself and to people like myself  
10          are perhaps beyond the powers of this commission.  
11          As I understand it, this commission can recommend  
12          programs to the Governor and to the legislature  
13          for action to remedy the defects that ultimately  
14          cause civil disorders, and I envision -- and I  
15          will get to your answer in a second -- this com-  
16          mission making a report to the Governor saying  
17          perhaps having something for everyone, something  
18          that will mollify, to some extent, the police;  
19          saying yes, there were criminal elements, there  
20          was dope, outside agitation, and the police in  
21          the main acted fairly well. They should have  
22          newer guns, more people.

23          and You are smiling.  
24          order MR. GIBBONS: Go ahead.

25          for THE WITNESS: Newer guns and more people and

1 police salaries should be raised and there should  
2 be more respect for law and order by the popu-  
3 lation generally and a more concentrated attack  
4 should be made on slum environments and education  
5 should be upgraded, this kind of thing. Perhaps  
6 even to suggest a legislative program which will  
7 come to naught in the long run. ~~pected, educated~~  
8 ~~member~~ This is why in part I said earlier it was an  
9 exercise in futility -- all very well done, all  
10 expertly appraised perhaps, but still unresponsive  
11 somewhat to the attitudes, pressures, to the  
12 situation in which we find ourselves. ~~at your~~

13 ~~think~~ MR. GIBBONS: Suppose you could assume that  
14 that this commission was different insofar as its  
15 response to pressures -- ~~slums are not bad?~~

16 THE WITNESS: It might be completely dif-  
17 ferent. I agree. I don't agree necessarily; I  
18 accept this assumption that it could be different.

19 ~~feel~~ MR. GIBBONS: What would you expect out of it?

20 THE WITNESS: I would still expect a recom-  
21 mendation perhaps saying that the police did not  
22 act well or perhaps saying that respect for law  
23 and order or a diminution of respect for law and  
24 order is a reaction, or a diminution of respect  
25 for the public by police and the authorities in



1 general, and that there is some fault in this  
2 structure and that this would be an unpopular  
3 thing to say. It would also be an unpopular thing  
4 to say that slums inherently are not bad. After  
5 all, there are people who were born in slums,  
6 Negro people of course, who went to colleges and  
7 who have become law-abiding, respected, educated  
8 members of the community, so, therefore, slums  
9 are not bad. This would also be very unpopular to  
10 a large segment of the population. I can see you  
11 might in fact do this sort of thing.

12 that MR. DRISCOLL: Does that represent your  
13 thinking?

14 THE WITNESS: What?

15 MR. DRISCOLL: That slums are not bad?

16 THE WITNESS: No. I am saying your commission  
17 might make such a statement knowing it might be  
18 unpopular with people such as myself who do not  
19 feel that is a very good thing to say.

20 MR. DRISCOLL: I heard your statement, but I  
21 am asking you a question.

22 THE WITNESS: That is not my feeling.

23 MR. DRISCOLL: What is your feeling if I may  
24 ask?

25 THE WITNESS: My feeling is the slum

1 environment, the Black ghetto environment is  
2 destructive not only to the people in it, but to  
3 the community in a number of ways, and that the  
4 total community can only suffer from the presence  
5 of a Black ghetto because the presence of a Black  
6 ghetto gives rise to many other ills which are  
7 results of the presence of the Black ghetto. The  
8 Black ghetto itself is the result of the attitude  
9 of the majority of this society which forces a  
10 Black ghetto as a means of co-existence of Negroes  
11 and whites. I think the society is racist enough  
12 that the presence of a Black ghetto is something  
13 the society can take as a mechanism of co-  
14 existence between Negroes and whites.

15 BISHOP TAYLOR: Mr. Gibbons.

16 MR. GIBBONS: I am interested in exploring  
17 with you a little bit. Do you see a distinction  
18 between a Black ghetto and a slum? You seem to  
19 be using the terms somewhat interchangeably.

20 THE WITNESS: There is a distinction between  
21 a Black ghetto and a slum, and we can explore  
22 that to some extent if you would like.

23 MR. GIBBONS: Yes. I am interested in the  
24 fact that we seem to be replacing slums occupied  
25 by black people with ghettos occupied by black

1 people. the position of a representative of the  
2 slums THE WITNESS: They are different, I agree.  
3 A Black ghetto may or may not be a slum, and a  
4 slum may or may not be a Black ghetto, of course,  
5 for purposes of definition. Black ghettos are  
6 more often than not slums, but there are Black  
7 ghettos which are not slums.

8 MR. GIBBONS: Do you feel that something  
9 positive should be done to eliminate all ghettos  
10 rather than just attacking the problem of slums?

11 THE WITNESS: I think the slums are certainly  
12 a more pressing and immediate problem, but I  
13 think the existence of Black ghettos, though they  
14 not be slums, is still pressing, perhaps not as  
15 immediate, but certainly pressing.

16 MR. GIBBONS: In terms of attitude and of the  
17 environment which black children grow up in,  
18 isn't it perhaps more pressing to eliminate  
19 ghettos since you made the point yourself that  
20 plenty of good people have grown up in a slum --

21 THE WITNESS: I didn't say plenty; I said  
22 some.

23 They are very visible and we hear an awful  
24 lot about those few who rise out of the slums.  
25 They unfortunately seem to occupy in some people's

1 minds the position of a representative of the  
2 slums and, therefore, the slums are not bad, that  
3 type of thinking which I oppose, of course. I  
4 agree with you that ghettos should be eliminated,  
5 and I don't want to put a rank order of priority  
6 on slums, Black ghetto slums and Black ghettos  
7 particularly, though I just did. I said one is  
8 a little more pressing than the other. They are  
9 both pressing.

10 MR. GIBBONS: You don't want to put an order  
11 of priority on them, but for someone framing a  
12 legislative program, orders of priority are  
13 placed all the time. The federal government  
14 places top priority on the amount of money they  
15 are going to spend for defense and then other  
16 things are scaled down. One fairly high domestic  
17 priority that we have had right along has been  
18 replacing slum buildings in the cities with  
19 public housing. In view of the emotional climate  
20 that resulted in last summer's situation might it  
21 not be worthwhile thinking of reordering priority  
22 to put more money into programs which also  
23 disperse black people into suburban environments?

24 THE WITNESS: May I go back and say I did in  
25 fact put a priority on this type of thing.

1 Ghettoes should be eliminated, ghetto slums should  
2 be eliminated, (a), and (b) ghettoes which are  
3 not slums should be eliminated. If I lived in a  
4 Black ghetto-slum such as perhaps some areas of  
5 Newark or Plainfield or New York or any number of  
6 cities, I would certainly say yes, it should be  
7 eliminated and I want to get out of here. I  
8 happen to live in a Black ghetto in Plainfield  
9 which is not a slum, and I would still like to  
10 see that eliminated as a ghetto.

11 To get to your solution or the solution you  
12 mentioned which has taken place in many cities in  
13 which people come along for urban renewal in  
14 various forms and tear down a block of buildings  
15 which are slum buildings and then put a nice  
16 shiny apartment house there and the same type of  
17 people who lived in the block now live there,  
18 maybe more of them, maybe a little less of them  
19 but, in any case, the essential ethnic distrib-  
20 ution or racial character of the city is not  
21 really changed.

22 MR. GIBBONS: And the essential skills  
23 makeup of the group of people.

24 THE WITNESS: Is still the same. So now they  
25 still live in a ghetto, but it is no longer a slum.

1 the very The fundamental problems arise from the fact of  
 2 is manifested its being a ghetto, not fundamentally because it  
 3 are most is a slum.

4 JUDGE WACHENFELD: I think our counsel should  
 5 be given an opportunity to bring out the points  
 6 which he has taken a long time to prepare, which  
 7 he has had very little opportunity to do. Time  
 8 is running out.

9 By Mr. Fortunato:

10 Q May we take you to the riot situation? What  
 11 caused the riot?

12 MR. DRISCOLL: In your opinion.

13 THE WITNESS: I don't think there was any  
 14 single cause of the riots, of course. The factors  
 15 we have just been talking about in terms of  
 16 ghetto-type existence, the attitude of the  
 17 majority of the societies towards the people in  
 18 the ghetto, the majority attitude towards people  
 19 who are even not in the ghetto in Plainfield is  
 20 not good, and this finally culminated in civil  
 21 disorder.

22 By Mr. Fortunato:

23 Q What is the attitude of the whites toward the  
 24 Negro?  
 25 A It seems to me to be one of hatred, distrust, all

1 the very bad words that describe outright prejudice. This  
 2 is manifested most often by the people in the society who  
 3 are most in contact with the public, the people in govern-  
 4 ment at least who are most in contact with the public.  
 5 This is, of course, the police force who are sort of the  
 6 front line of city government in their contacts with the  
 7 population.

8 Q Is this the entire police force or are there some  
 9 exceptions?

10 A I would say there are some exceptions. Of course,  
 11 they are not monolithic and exactly the same. Some are  
 12 good, some are bad.

13 Q In your view is the overwhelming majority of them  
 14 bad in the sense of not effectively communicating?

15 A Well, if we were to draw a line and say all above  
 16 this line are okay, those very close to the line are not  
 17 very okay, and those just below the line are not very bad,  
 18 I would say the majority would fall below the line, not  
 19 making all of them very bad or all of the others very good,  
 20 but I put a distribution to it.

21 Q Was there a triggering incident in Plainfield  
 22 that sparked the riot?

23 A Actually there were several triggering incidents  
 24 which did not occur immediately prior to the riot. They  
 25 were not the proximate reasons.

1 They were. When did they occur and what were those?

2 parents. There was an incident in June, and I am not sure  
3 of the date, the last week in June I believe, in which a  
4 party occurred on East Front Street and there was something  
5 like 40 or 50 teen-agers at the party. Apparently there  
6 were no party crashers. When the party broke up they sort  
7 of left as a group and congregated, and some boy pushed  
8 another boy in the man's hedges, one of the neighbors next  
9 door or a couple of houses down the street. The neighbor  
10 went out and argued with the boys and ended up going back  
11 in his house and calling the police. The police arrived.  
12 I think three policemen arrived in response to this call and  
13 proceeded to more or less observe the situation without  
14 taking any active part in dispersing these children or  
15 ordering them to move or anything of that nature. They just  
16 stood there and watched them. I understand it, they finally

17 arrived. A short while later, fifteen minutes later or something  
18 like that, a large number of police reinforcements arrived  
19 at which point they then sailed into the group swinging  
20 nightsticks, cursing, sending the kids running. One of the  
21 children -- I suppose it was one of the children -- threw  
22 a rock and the rock broke the back window of a police car  
23 which was parked on the street. The police then began  
24 arresting some of the teen-agers. They arrested six  
25 according to a later statement made at police headquarters.



1 They were all finally released in the custody of their  
2 parents or whoever came to get them.

3 The police insisted they did not beat any children.  
4 Some of the children on the scene cursed the police. One  
5 boy pulled his jacket open and said, "Go ahead and shoot  
6 me. I know that is what you want to do." This is at the  
7 height of the disturbance. I didn't arrive on the scene at  
8 the high point of the disturbance but shortly after it was  
9 over, I saw a police car driving down East Front Street  
10 herding a group of maybe twenty-five or thirty boys and  
11 girls -- not herding; they were walking along the sidewalk.  
12 The police car was along the side of the street at a  
13 walking pace, and the group was followed by the policeman  
14 on foot. The group was very defiant, very loud. They were  
15 singing and shouting and this kind of thing, perhaps  
16 keeping their courage up. As I understand it, they finally  
17 arrived home, and there was no further disturbance.

18 I knew about this because I was called by a resident  
19 in the area about eleven o'clock, eleven-thirty o'clock  
20 that night, and they said, "You are in the Human Relations  
21 Commission. There seems to be the beginning of a riot out  
22 here on East Front Street." This is the point I got in my  
23 car and drove up there. We talked to the Police Board  
24 about this, the Executive Committee of the Human Relations  
25 Commission, and made a number of suggestions and comments

1 to the chief of police and the head of the Uniform Division  
2 and strongly suggested that they perhaps use better police  
3 procedures in dealing with teen-agers.

4 As far as we could tell this was totally useless. It  
5 didn't do anything. They insisted that the police acted  
6 perfectly; they had done just what they should have done.  
7 There have been the allegations and the witnesses' stories.  
8 In fact, one of the witnesses who was most angry about the  
9 police activity was the man who called them in the first  
10 place.

11 MR. DRISCOLL: Was he a Negro?

12 THE WITNESS: Yes, he was. He felt that as  
13 bad as the situation was, this boy had knocked  
14 another boy into his hedge, it still was nothing  
15 compared to the kind of thing he had almost pre-  
16 cipitated by bringing police to the scene.

17 Police also responded from the neighboring  
18 community of Scotch Plains and Watchung. The party  
19 was very close to the city line, two or three  
20 houses away from the city line. As I understand  
21 it from some of the youths involved, some of the  
22 beatings were administered by Scotch Plains  
23 policemen. The person we talked to in police  
24 headquarters who was a captain, I believe, in  
25 charge of headquarters at the time said that they

1 The (A) had not called the Scotch Plains police, but they  
2 have had a generally answered alarms that were that close to  
3 doubt if in the edge of the city when they wanted to contain  
4 an (Q) any disturbance in Plainfield.

5 Plainfield riot. There was another incident on the fifth of  
6 or (b) of July in which a woman was beaten by a policeman

7 with a pair of handcuffs. I think this would be  
8 the 15th. By Mr. Fortunato: a store broken into, a grocery

9 store Q and Mrs. Brown? see this myself but I heard it from  
10 many, A many Mrs. Brown. The policeman says he didn't do it,

11 according to the Police Board and a member of the Police  
12 Board, Mr. Stephens I think exemplifies the attitude of  
13 most of the Police Board when he said, "Whenever we have an  
14 incident involving a Negro and a policeman, I believe the  
15 policeman," regardless of the testimony, the allegations.

16 man W Q so Did you see any photographs of Mrs. Brown?

17 pected A was I did not. I heard they were circulated, but I  
18 didn't see any. I don't know the lady. these witnesses

19 while Q he Have you talked to anyone who has seen or says he  
20 has seen the photographs?

21 A Sure No. I have merely heard that photographs were  
22 circulated, but I have not seen any myself or talked to  
23 anyone who has seen them. aimed they had seen it. maybe

24 four Q fi Any other triggering incidents? How about the  
25 Newark riot? Did that play a factor? lly the same story.

1 The Alice That would be hard for me to assess. It would  
2 have had a psychological effect which I can't evaluate. I  
3 doubt if it played a significant part, if any.

4 on Sunday Was there anything that could be done to stop the  
5 Plainfield riot from happening (a) before it got started,  
6 or (b) after it got started a little way, if you follow me?

7 A Well, on Saturday night -- I think this would be  
8 the 15th of July -- there was a store broken into, a grocery  
9 store, and I did not see this myself but I heard it from  
10 many, many people on the following morning. A store was  
11 broken into and some things taken out of it, the store on  
12 the corner of Plainfield Avenue and Fourth Street. At the  
13 time of the breaking, windows breaking, police did not  
14 arrive. Apparently they arrived some time later, a half  
15 hour after the initial break, and immediately arrested a  
16 man who said he was simply looking for his son whom he sus-  
17 pected was out there perhaps involved in this. In arresting  
18 him two policemen held him, according to these witnesses,  
19 while the other whacked him in the head with the butt of a  
20 shotgun. I feel that Plainfield, and this may sound

21 On Sunday morning I heard this incident recited a  
22 number of times, at least eight or ten times. Some of the  
23 people whom I talked to claimed they had seen it. Maybe  
24 four or five said they had seen it. Others did not say they  
25 had seen it, but they told me essentially the same story.

1 The police deny that the man was mistreated in any way, and  
2 he was charged with breaking and entering. This was the  
3 reason for which he was arrested. This to me seemed to be  
4 on Sunday morning the most proximate cause at that time,  
5 though I am sure these other events had something to do  
6 with it.

7 Q of Again because you have been asked to testify in  
8 so many places and I do have a lot of transcripts of what  
9 you have said, I would like to ask you questions such as  
10 this: Do you like living in Plainfield?

11 A Yes.

12 Q And that's why you stay?

13 A No.

14 Q Why do you stay?

15 A I think I would like living somewhere else perhaps  
16 as much, maybe more. I sort of feel, well, responsibility  
17 is not a good word, but I sort of feel that I should stay  
18 there for at least some time.

19 Q Why?

20 A I feel that Plainfield, and this may sound  
21 immodest, needs Negroes who will work for the betterment of  
22 the community, and I have put some time and effort into this  
23 and I intend to continue.

24 Q What are you doing for the betterment of the com-  
25 munity and how effective has it been?

1 I think it has been fairly effective, the work I  
2 have done, which is going back the last seven years or so.  
3 I do feel some responsibility for the desegregation of the  
4 Plainfield school system which in part brought to the  
5 surface some of the hostility that we see in the community  
6 now, also in part caused some of the change in the racial  
7 makeup of the city. I think on balance it has been a very  
8 good thing in that we did have most of the Negro children  
9 attending Negro schools in Plainfield prior to 1963, and I  
10 think that has been something to which I have made a con-  
11 tribution.  
12 I think there are other contributions to be made in the  
13 area of education. I think there are contributions to be  
14 made in the area of police-community relations, of  
15 government-community relations. We have a community that is  
16 now approximately thirty-five per cent Negro. Sixty-seven  
17 per cent of the school children are Negroes in the public  
18 schools. It is quite probable, at least as I and others  
19 whom I work with project the population, that we will have  
20 a community that may be half Negro in the near future.

21 Q Do you expect to convince the white majority  
22 power structure we spoke of before that they should go about  
23 this problem in a better way, or do you expect that you,  
24 let's say, and I don't mean you personally, will come into  
25 power in Plainfield politically?

1 they And I certainly hope that the Negro segment of the  
2 community gets a larger share of the government in the com-  
3 munity. I foresee some sort of disaster if we don't. If  
4 we have a community which is half or more Negro with a very  
5 small proportion of the political and governmental power in  
6 the community, then unrest and repression and that kind of  
7 thing can only increase. As this increases, then reaction  
8 is going to increase. the situation worse.

9 Q My recollection is in the beginning you testified  
10 that you have to get at the people who are actually making  
11 the decisions such as a commission like this can recommend,  
12 is that right? riots. This is another story really. But

13 A That's right. We have to do the groundwork.

14 Q And probably in terms of Plainfield you don't  
15 expect that you will be able to influence the present  
16 decision makers there into putting in plans that you feel  
17 will be beneficial, and again I am not using that personally.

18 A I think it is very unlikely primarily because we  
19 had a traumatic experience this summer. Id now since this riot

20 Q What was that? infield police cars carry at least

21 A This riot. men. They are all armed with rifles.

22 Q I am talking about a traumatic experience which I  
23 thought you were talking about, in terms of things you had  
24 asked the decision makers to do which they didn't do.

25 A That wasn't traumatic; that was expected, the fact

1 they didn't do it. Had they done it, it would have been  
2 traumatic. But the fact that they had an armed insurrection,  
3 an insurrection which lost them a policeman, an insurrection  
4 which has polarized the community even more, which has  
5 adversely affected business and real estate in the city,  
6 which can only continue to adversely affect the city and yet  
7 the only solutions that they can propose are solutions which  
8 are guaranteed to make the situation worse.

9 MR. DRISCOLL: For example?

10 THE WITNESS: The anti-loitering ordinance  
11 which they said they didn't pass under threat of  
12 more riots. This is another story really. But  
13 the general attitude of the city council, the  
14 general attitude of the Mayor, the attitude of the  
15 police chief. The Mayor and the police chief feel  
16 the best way to deal with riots is simply to amass  
17 more force, more sophisticated force, and show  
18 this force at every possible opportunity. I refer  
19 to the fact that in Plainfield now since this riot  
20 all of the Plainfield police cars carry at least  
21 two patrolmen. They are all armed with rifles. I  
22 saw across the street from my mother's house an  
23 arrest apparently, and I don't know the reason for  
24 the arrest but apparently there was a domestic  
25 quarrel. The man was arrested by some policeman.



1 A car drove up, an unmarked police car, that  
2 carried a couple of detectives. They got out,  
3 went into the house. The third detective remained  
4 in the car. My brother drove up. We were going  
5 to visit my mother and he couldn't park his car  
6 because this police car was parked right across  
7 the end of the driveway. He asked the guy to  
8 move the police car, and the man did, at which  
9 point he parked his car in the driveway and came  
10 into the house and said, "What is going on outside?"  
11 I went outside. We turned on the porch light and  
12 he says, "A couple of policemen went in the house  
13 across the street." The detective in the car  
14 seemed to be a rather short, slight fellow with  
15 blond hair and he saw us standing on the porch,  
16 got out of his car which was parked in front of  
17 the next house now with a carbine or a rifle in  
18 his hand. It had a clip on it. I saw it was  
19 some kind of automatic rifle, and he stood there  
20 holding it facing us on the porch as though he  
21 expected us to interfere with him or as though  
22 he were guarding the other people, wherever they  
23 were, in this house from us. I had gone out  
24 there out of curiosity. There were some  
25 near There was also another incident which

1 actually appalled me, in which a man was driving  
2 down West Third Street in a relatively old car  
3 and the left front wheel came off the car as he  
4 was driving along. It went rolling down the road  
5 and bounced up through a yard and hit the porch  
6 of the house across the street from my sister-in-  
7 law. I was there at that time because I picked  
8 her daughter up from the day camp. Somehow the  
9 police were called and a patrol car arrived.  
10 There were three policemen in the patrol car.  
11 They parked the car, their car, very close to this  
12 car which had lost the wheel, which was canted  
13 over in the gutter, and the poor guy is wondering,  
14 "Oh, my gosh! Look at my wheel." All of them  
15 were carrying rifles. Another car came up and  
16 screeched to a halt. The three men there first  
17 stood over the car with their rifles while the  
18 other three ran to the house where the wheel had  
19 hit the porch. One of them ran right into the  
20 hallway of the house, kicked the door and ran in  
21 with his rifle. The other two were out on the  
22 porch talking to the lady who lived in the house.  
23 I know the lady. She is a widow, lives alone, a  
24 relatively old house. The poor woman was damned  
25 near hysterics, about ready to pass out.

1 The guy inside finally came back out  
2 carrying his rifle. This is police force with a  
3 vengeance. This is the kind of police force that  
4 certainly can cause an inoffensive, quiet, law-  
5 abiding citizen to become incensed at the police.  
6 In fact, I was incensed at the police, and it  
7 wasn't my house and my mother or a relative of  
8 mine or anything. I didn't know the guy in the  
9 car, but I was incensed to see that type of  
10 activity.

11 I saw another incident on Grand Avenue in  
12 which a person had dropped dead in the house,  
13 apparently of a heart attack. When the rescue  
14 squad in Plainfield was called, one calls police  
15 headquarters. It is the same number. The police  
16 answered the call along with the ambulance. The  
17 police went to that house with rifles. I don't  
18 know how many. I was going to work at the time.  
19 I stopped. I saw the police car, and I said,  
20 "What in the world is going on?" A fellow  
21 standing in the street said, "Somebody died in  
22 almost there and the police answered." There they were,  
23 lounging on the porch with their rifles. If that  
24 is the answer of city government to civil disorder,  
25 then that answer is guaranteed, absolutely

1 guaranteed to make, instead two per cent of the  
2 strongly. Negro population angry enough to engage in civil  
3 disorder, to make it nearer twenty per cent.  
4 So this is why I say it is imperative that  
5 as the Negroes in the community increase in number,  
6 the voice that Negroes have in the city affairs  
7 has to proportionately increase or else we will  
8 have a small minority of whites attempting to  
9 overt and control the majority of Negroes by force, and that  
10 is disaster.

11 Q By Mr. Fortunato: *do you observe?*

12 Q What about the search in Plainfield, is this part  
13 of the same thing?

14 A This is part of the same thing. If this com-  
15 mission can say anything to the Governor and the legis-  
16 lature, I hope that those of you who are lawyers, and I am  
17 sure you know more about this than I do -- but the general  
18 feeling in Plainfield now is that the Governor suspended the  
19 federal constitution in order to have this search. This  
20 search was another action that to me seemed guaranteed to  
21 insure we would have a resumption of hostilities, and it  
22 almost is. In fact, I almost became hostile when a state  
23 trooper hit me in the back with a rifle butt for simply  
24 going into the house as a registered observer, one of the  
25 people who were supposed to do that. I would have killed

1 him if I had a weapon with which to do it. I felt that key  
2 strongly. the apartments and nothing in the way of unneces-  
3 essary I watched them tear up a man's house; I watched a  
4 Guardsman hit a mirror on the wall, and for my pains I was  
5 knocked down the stairs with a rifle butt. I find it very,  
6 very hard to be calm about this. In fact, had I now been  
7 in any sort of official capacity, had I simply been one of  
8 the people there, a resident, I think I would have become  
9 overt and hostile. I wouldn't have seen any other way to do  
10 it.

11 Q How many houses did you observe?  
12 A I don't know. I was in at least eight or ten  
13 houses.  
14 Q Can you give us generally what happened when the  
15 search took place, how many police or National Guardsmen or  
16 state troopers went in?  
17 A The houses I went in, the search team seemed to be  
18 composed of both troopers and Guardsmen. They were  
19 generally I would say anywhere from six to ten in each  
20 house. Apparently they had been told according to a Captain  
21 Donohue of the National Guard, who is also a member of the  
22 state police I understand -- I had a chat with him before  
23 the thing started. The men had all been well briefed.  
24 These were his words, that they were not to wantonly destroy  
25 any property; they were to await the superintendent. They

1 were going to West End Gardens. The superintendent had keys  
2 to all of the apartments and nothing in the way of unnec-  
3 essary damage was to be done. I went into an apartment by myself  
4 with Well, I did not join a particular search team as they  
5 went in the area. Instead I put a white armband on and  
6 proceeded to sort of look at the whole scene generally and  
7 not tie myself to any one group. I didn't go into the first  
8 houses that the troopers went into but instead went farther  
9 down toward Plainfield Avenue following some of the more  
10 forward teams. As I walked down Fourth Street a group of maybe six  
11 men went up the walkway to one of those apartments and the  
12 trooper who was leading the group took his rifle and tapped  
13 on the door lightly, tap, tap, tap. Another fellow down on  
14 the walk said, "There is probably nobody home there." The  
15 trooper says, "Oh, hell!" He leaned back and he kicked the  
16 door with his foot and, wham! He gave the door a kick.  
17 Well, apparently it was a pretty good lock. It wouldn't  
18 give. He then says, "Oh, hell! Get out of the way." The  
19 guy behind him on the stairs -- we were a step back --  
20 lifted up his rifle and pushed it through the window of the  
21 door, unlocked it, and went in. As he went in he kicked an  
22 overstuffed chair which was fairly close to the door, and he  
23 sent it sort of over on its side. The Guardsman behind him  
24 is the one who hit the mirror with his rifle as they left.  
25

1 two- I didn't go in there. For one thing those Guardsmen  
2 had bayonets on their rifles, and I was mistrustful enough  
3 of them at the time not to get into an apartment by myself  
4 with them in that they seemed to be anxious to create an  
5 incident. In the house when those troopers and Guardsmen  
6 went In one apartment as a Guardsman -- they had turned  
7 over the mattress of the bed and there were wooden slats  
8 which hold the spring up. As the Guardsman and his buddy  
9 turned the mattress, the first Guardsman stepped in between  
10 the side rails of the bed and with his foot began to break  
11 the slats in the bed. The second Guardsman turned to me  
12 and says, "Do you like what you see, Friend?" I says,  
13 "Carry on, fellows; I am just watching." nothing untoward  
14 would I turned around and walked out. As I got in the hall  
15 a state trooper who was carrying an M-1 rifle with a  
16 bandolier of ammunition, a webbed bandolier around his  
17 chest with extra clips stuck on the webbing of the bandolier,  
18 says, "What the hell are you doing up here?" I said, "I am  
19 an observer of this search." He says, "Hell, anybody can  
20 put a white armband on." I said, "I am just leaving."  
21 camer At this point as I turned around he let me have a butt  
22 stroke, as they call it, of the M-1, and I proceeded  
23 downstairs more rapidly than I intended to. He had no  
24 weapo Then I went outside. I could hear crashing upstairs as  
25 I was on the first floor of the apartment. This is a

1 two-story apartment. This was to me the general character  
2 of that search. While this was going on, of course, we --  
3 by "we" I mean the Human Relations Commission, the people  
4 interested in the area, had strictly warned every resident  
5 not to be in the house when those troopers and Guardsmen  
6 went in the house, under no circumstances, even if a person  
7 were sick or an invalid, to get out. It was our feeling,  
8 and I still feel this, that they wanted someone to rise up  
9 in anger and attack them. Had they done this, there would  
10 have been wholesale bloodshed.

11 We, and by "we" I am speaking of a fairly large number  
12 of people, were voluntarily in the area trying to keep the  
13 people calm, trying to reassure them that nothing untoward  
14 would really happen; that if the troopers and Guardsmen  
15 did come to their house, they were to go outdoors and stay  
16 outdoors as long as they were there, and under no circum-  
17 stances offer violence, verbal or physical, to the troopers.

18 On Third Street a man named Dwight Cooke and I  
19 physically overpowered a teen-ager, and I have a picture  
20 of this -- I took some colored pictures that day with my  
21 camera. This young fellow ran at a truckload of Guardsmen  
22 calling them a few vile names, and this kind of thing, and  
23 tried to climb the tailgate to attack them. He had no  
24 weapons, at least not that I could see. He looked like  
25 fifteen or sixteen years old. He was screaming and crying



1 and banging on the back of the truck. A trooper sitting on  
2 the very end of the bench was looking down at him with a  
3 very gleeful smile as if to say, "Oh, boy, just come up here."  
4 This is objective. He was carrying what looked like a  
5 submachine gun. Cooke and I ran into the street and caught  
6 the boy and Cooke punched him in the face and said, "If you  
7 want to fight somebody, fight me."

8 We wrestled the boy back against the fence. He didn't  
9 really calm down but gave up the idea of waging a private  
10 war against the Guardsmen and the troopers.

11 MR. LOFTON: This incident you mentioned  
12 about yourself being knocked down the stairs, did  
13 you report this incident to anyone?

14 THE WITNESS: No. There are a couple of  
15 other incidents I didn't report either.

16 MR. LOFTON: Can you tell us why not?

17 THE WITNESS: One, I thought it would do  
18 absolutely no good. Those people in there, and I  
19 haven't had enough contact with policemen at  
20 various times now to be absolutely certain that  
21 had I gone to anyone in authority and said a  
22 trooper hit me without reason, it would have been,  
23 if not incredible, at least officially incredible.  
24 A trooper doesn't hit a person for no reason.

25 This is obviously not so in the minds of anybody

1 who is a superior officer in the State Police,  
2 probably obvious to you around this table. A  
3 trooper doesn't hit a citizen for nothing.

4 MR. LOFTON: You indicated that you were in  
5 these homes as an observer. Was this a plan  
6 worked out by the municipal officials such as  
7 yourself as being a member of the Human Relations  
8 Commission with the state officials that were  
9 there?

10 THE WITNESS: With the state officials there.

11 MR. LOFTON: For example, the National Guard  
12 contingent and the State Police?

13 THE WITNESS: Yes. Colonel Kelly was present  
14 and he was one -- I think Colonel Kelly was in  
15 charge of the police operations in the city at the  
16 time. Colonel Kelly agreed that this would be a  
17 good thing. Dr. Yivisaker of the Community  
18 Affairs Department was also involved in this.

19 MR. LOFTON: Do you mean the agreement for  
20 the observer team?

21 THE WITNESS: Yes. I think there were twelve  
22 or fifteen designated to go along.

23 MR. DRISCOLL: Were you aware of the fact  
24 that there was apparently an agreement that if  
25 there were a truce for a period of time that

1 certain rifles that had allegedly been stolen  
2 would be returned? say, "We will deliver rifles to  
3 you," THE WITNESS: I was aware of a truce which  
4 was not quite in those terms. ally there. but we  
5 did pMR. DRISCOLL: I stand corrected. is good  
6 faith THE WITNESS: This is a general feeling.  
7 The truce, as I understand it, and the only  
8 people involved in arriving at this decision were  
9 Attorney General Sills, I think Commissioner  
10 Ylvisaker and Mayor Hetfield and Colonel Kelly,  
11 along with Linwood Cathcart and an unidentified  
12 young man in Plainfield. As I understand it, the  
13 truce involved an attempt to find stolen rifles  
14 in Plainfield. YLO I personally wonder about the  
15 stolen rifles in Plainfield. For one thing, I  
16 acted in concert with other people as strenuously  
17 as I could to find the rifles, to find anybody  
18 who had a rifle of that type, and we couldn't find  
19 any, none at all. is, the disturbances we are  
20 calm I understand that the police say they found  
21 a case, an empty case of two in which those rifles  
22 were supposed to have been packed in the West End.  
23 I don't even know if those rifles were in  
24 Plainfield or if all of those were. This would  
25 have been an impossible task or an impossible thos

1 promise for anybody to make. Certainly Linwood  
2 Cathcart couldn't say, "We will deliver rifles to  
3 you," if he himself didn't have them or didn't  
4 have knowledge they were actually there. But he  
5 did promise an attempt which was made in good  
6 faith, and no rifles were forthcoming.  
7 Also, as I understand it, the Attorney  
8 General promised we would search -- by "we" the  
9 state government, every house and building in the  
10 West End within that perimeter area, house by  
11 house. This did not in fact happen, but this was  
12 the plan of what would happen if the rifles were  
13 not turned up.  
14 BISHOP TAYLOR: It is now twelve-thirty. Did  
15 you have another question, Governor?  
16 MR. DRISCOLL: No, I don't think I do.  
17 MR. LOFTON: I have one other question. You  
18 indicated that the incident that preceded the  
19 hostilities, Charlie, the disturbances we are  
20 talking about where the kid was pushed through  
21 the hedges and then it was indicated you went down  
22 and talked with the Mayor and the police director  
23 and made certain recommendations about handling  
24 teen-age groups, crowds, different than how they  
25 did it that night, would you let us know what those

1 recommendations were that you say were not im-  
2 plemented? been made to the Police Department?

3 THE WITNESS: Over the years, over the last  
4 three or four years recommendations have been made  
5 to the Police Department and the Mayor and the  
6 Police Board to improve police-community relations  
7 generally. The Plainfield Human Relations Com-  
8 mission was instrumental in having the Plainfield  
9 Police Department take a course in community  
10 relations sponsored by the NCCJ, Mr. Devaney, whose  
11 office is here in Newark, which structured the  
12 course and actually gave it, visiting professors  
13 and this kind of thing. Guidelines for the  
14 handling of teen-agers were proposed, or minors  
15 rather, were proposed and passed by the Human  
16 Relations Commission and transmitted to the Police  
17 Board. The city corporation counsel about a year  
18 ago, last October-November also drew up guidelines  
19 for the handling of juveniles by the Police  
20 Department. To my knowledge I know of no acknow-  
21 ledgment of new guidelines or changes in  
22 procedures instituted by the Plainfield Police  
23 Department.

24 over MR. LOFTON: Are you saying that there is a  
25 written document that is had by the Plainfield

1 Human Relations Commission of the recommendations  
2 that have been made to the Police Department?

3 THE WITNESS: Oh, yes.

4 MR. LOFTON: Could we get a copy of those?

5 MR. FORTUNATO: If Mr. Miller would make that  
6 available to us.

7 THE WITNESS: I would. I don't have it here.  
8 However, on the nineteenth of September of this  
9 year the Human Relations Commission, in the form  
10 of a special committee for police-community  
11 relations, met with the Police Board to arrive at  
12 new procedures for handling complaints against  
13 policemen. This has also been a bone of con-  
14 tention over a matter of years.

15 MR. LOFTON: You mentioned a police board.  
16 Am I to understand there is a Police Review Board  
17 in Plainfield?

18 THE WITNESS: No. There is a Police Board  
19 composed of membership from the common council,  
20 the Mayor and chief of police who are charged with  
21 disciplinary matters in the Police Department,  
22 salary recommendations and equipment purchases.  
23 It is a regular council committee but they have  
24 overall charge of the Police Department. Complaints  
25 against policemen are generally cited, lack of

1 complaints, as evidence that the Police Department  
2 is doing a good job. However, to make a complaint  
3 against a policeman is a complicated procedure  
4 which has to be undertaken by the complainant  
5 beginning with the desk sergeant in the Plainfield  
6 Police Department, and from my own personal obser-  
7 vation of these people that is not a good place to  
8 go. We suggested that the Human Relations Com-  
9 mission become a receiving agency for complaints  
10 against the police, and our committee drew up a  
11 complaint form which has not yet been accepted by  
12 the Police Department. The chief said this is a  
13 much too complicated form. He told our director  
14 that it is too complicated and to work on it again.  
15 The Commission as of now has reasserted its belief  
16 in the efficiency and legality of that type of  
17 complaint form which would be generally used by  
18 the Police Department and the Human Relations Com-  
19 mission.

20 MR. FORTUNATO: Perhaps we can mark that into  
21 evidence.

22 (EXHIBIT NO. C-44 WAS RECEIVED IN EVIDENCE.)

23 THE WITNESS: Any other documentation you  
24 desire I can furnish.

25 MR. FORTUNATO: We can get that. If there is

1 any other information, I am sure you will give it  
2 to us.

3 THE WITNESS: We have all the minutes on  
4 I, JOSEPH E. DRISCOLL, Notary Public, State of New Jersey,  
and Notary Public for the County of Essex, State of New Jersey,  
hereby certify (Discussion off the record.)  
of my stenographic notes of the proceedings of the  
BISHOP TAYLOR: Governor.

5 MR. LOFTON: Off the record.

6 (Discussion off the record.)

7 BISHOP TAYLOR: Governor.

8 MR. DRISCOLL: I just want to clarify one  
9 point in my own mind. What per cent of the  
10 November 20, 1960 citizens of Plainfield are Negroes?

11 THE WITNESS: It is our guess that there are  
12 approximately thirty-five per cent, on the order  
13 of a third of the city.

14 MR. DRISCOLL: Of that thirty-five per cent,  
15 what per cent would be persons under eighteen years  
16 of age?

17 THE WITNESS: Certainly a majority based on  
18 the figures of the 1960 census which showed that  
19 Negro parents on the whole were something like nine  
20 years younger than white parents as an average  
21 figure, and they tended to have more and younger  
22 children. So extrapolating from that I would say  
23 we probably have quite a few young people in  
24 Plainfield.

25 BISHOP TAYLOR: Thank you very much for coming



to us today.

- - -

C E R T I F I C A T E

I, JOSEPH F. READING, a Certified Shorthand Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of New Jersey, do hereby certify that the foregoing is an accurate transcript of my stenographic notes to the best of my ability.

Joseph F. Reading

November 20, 1967

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25