

# State drops charges against Bowie students

Charges against 227 Bowie State College students arrested during a sit-in at the State House April 4, 1968, were dropped this week by State's Attorney Julian B. Stevens, Jr.

However, Stevens said on Friday that Kenneth R. Brown, Middle Atlantic youth director of the NAACP, will still stand trial since Brown is not a student at Bowie State College.

In explaining his reasons for dropping the charges, Stevens said that after evaluating the facts surrounding the arrests, "we feel it is quite appropriate for probation without verdict."

He added that because of the large number of police officers and defendants "now scattered about the state" it would not be

economically feasible to bring the students to trial.

The legal mechanics involved in dropping charges against the students will begin Monday. Stevens said the cases are scattered between Peoples Court and Anne Arundel County Circuit Court.

Along with the formal order to drop the charges, Stevens said he would include a formal statement listing reasons for dismissing the charges.

"The students were protesting what they called inequities at Bowie State," Stevens said.

"The governor (former Gov. Spiro T. Agnew) would not listen to them, so they protested with a sit-in at the State House," he added.

Stevens said that because Brown is not a student, "the state doesn't feel he had any grounds for protesting. Therefore, charges against him will not be dropped," he said.

Stevens pointed to the state's investment in the educators of State College, noting that a conviction could make the future graduates ineligible for teaching roles or other forms of state employment.

"The state has an investment and we'd be jeopardizing this by prosecuting," Stevens said.

He added that "not one student" acted in such a way to cause a judge not to be sympathetic.

Stevens said earlier this week he was "seriously contemplating" dropping the charges, explaining that he consulted with Gov. Marvin Mandel and that Mandel had no objections to dismissing the charge against the students.

"I consulted with the governor because the administration originated the prosecution," Stevens said.

The students, who were protesting conditions at the college, were arrested on the orders of former Governor Agnew and charged with violating the state's trespass law.

The sit-in capped a week-long class boycott and resulted in the school being closed for 11 days.

When he learned that Gov. Mandel was not opposed to

dropping the trespass charges, Dr. Samuel L. Myers, president of Bowie State, said he was "pleased."

"This will be a significant factor in reassuring students of the true justness and greatness of our society and I am thrilled to see the state realize this," Myers added.

## Dropping of charges is endorsed

Dr. Samuel L. Myers, president of Bowie State College, issued a statement applauding Gov. Mandel's decision to allow the dropping of trespass charges issued against Bowie students following a sit-in at the state capital last year.

At the time of the arrest, April 4th 1968, the students were protesting conditions at Bowie State College.

"I am pleased to know that State Prosecutor Julius B. Stevens and Governor Mandel are in favor of dropping the charges against the Bowie students. This will be a significant factor in reassuring students of the true justness and greatness of our society and I am thrilled to see the state realize this."

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