

CITIZENS COMMITTEE FOR EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

V. RICHARD S. EMRICH
CHAIRMAN

1132 WASHINGTON BOULEVARD
ROOM 200 A
DETROIT, MICHIGAN 48226
TELEPHONE 962-8611, AREA CODE 313

ROBERT L. POTTS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MATTHEW G. ASH
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

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FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
Call the Office of
The Citizens Committee for Equal
Opportunity
832-2055
Robert L. Potts, Executive Director

file

The issue of the proposed Crime Control Ordinance is one charged with great emotion throughout our community. To bring reason to bear on this issue we simply ask: is this ordinance constitutional, and would its effects be helpful or harmful?

There is absolutely no question that our police now have, and always have had, the right and the duty to stop, question and search any person when they have reasonable cause to believe that that person may have committed a crime. No additional legislation to create these powers is necessary and cannot in any way help combat crime.

The real essence of the controversy over the "stop and frisk" legislation is that of the substitution of police "suspicion" for "reasonable cause" as a standard for arrest or search. The constitutionality of such legislation is currently being challenged in this term of the United States Supreme Court. Further, and perhaps most important, the "stop and frisk" practice has historically been used primarily against Negro citizens and has been in Detroit a cause of conflict between the police and the Negro community. The last thing that Detroit needs at this time is something that will add fuel to the fire of a justified sense of abuse, discrimination and frustration.

The Citizens Committee for Equal Opportunity has been in long standing agreement with our Police Department that:

"Citizen cooperation with, and the support of, police officers who do their work with fairness and firmness is an essential ingredient of law and order in the community." (The Citizens Committee 1965 Report to the People of Detroit on Law Enforcement.)

We must recognize, especially in this time of unrest, that citizen cooperation and support will only be forthcoming in an atmosphere of mutual trust and confidence that all citizens are being fairly protected and that their rights, personal security and dignity are not being violated. We state emphatically that such cooperation and support will not be fostered by passing legislation which can only destroy trust and lead to violations of individual rights, security and dignity. In fact, further

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license given to the police to do so can only lead to increased tension between the people of our community.

The Citizens Committee for Equal Opportunity concludes, therefore, that an Ordinance that is both unjustifiable and harmful should not, in fact, cannot be passed. The Citizens Committee for Equal Opportunity urges that the Common Council defeat this proposed Ordinance.