

POLICE REVIEW BOARD MOCK ELECTION:

A ROUGH DRAFT (Strictly Confidential)

Anyone who has been active in the Movement in this city for any length of time or anyone who has been a Negro here for any part of his life is well aware of the problems between the police department and the Negro community of Detroit.

A number of cases in the last year have dramatized police brutality and harrassment for those who weren't aware of the problem before. Beginning with the Cynthia Scott case and including the Kenneth Evans case, the Olympics demonstration case, the arrest at the NSM office on Mack Avenue on the East Side, the Barbara Jackson case, the Rembert-Tyson case and countless others -- hundreds of which have undoubtedly gone unnoticed by civil rights organizations -- a pattern of intimidation has become clear. Since the Cynthia Scott case, in which a Negro was shot in the back by a policeman, there have been two fatal shootings of Negroes and one shooting of a white youth. [There have been suspicious circumstances in all of these cases, but nothing has been done to discipline the officers involved and little investigation has been forthcoming.]

It has become clear that little will or can be done. The police commissioner professes to have an interest in solving the problem but tacitly admits that he cannot control his own department and that he is prevented from receiving information from his inferiors. The mayor as much as admits the same thing.

A number of organizations have attempted to put pressure for reform, internal and external, on the department. A group of ministers has met with the mayor. Almost all of the civil rights organizations have held meetings with police commissioner at one time or another. There have been demonstrations at the downtown police station and at the local precinct stations. All to no avail. Little change in police behavior has been evident, although there have been some changes in police "rules".

Part of the problem involves the police department's attitude toward Negroes and the Negro community. Many policemen are avowed racists. Apparently they see themselves as an occupation army in the ghetto, their sole function to enforce the law and preserve order (in contrast to their attitude in middle-class areas, where they apparently see their job as protecting the lives and property of residents.) In addition to their undisputed right to kill Negro citizens as they see fit -- a right which is always upheld by the prosecuting attorney -- the police are empowered by many city ordinances which by virtue of their vagueness can be applied discriminately to Negro citizens. Examples are: loitering ordinances, traffic laws, disorderly conduct, drunkenness, and a host of others. The authority and mood of the policeman in these cases is never questioned. It is up to the officer to determine whether or not an offense has been committed. Civilian witnesses are rarely, if ever, required by the courts to prove the guilt of any defendant. (The policeman, in effect, becomes both policeman and judge. In many cases, the police have taken it upon themselves to become executioners as well, administering beatings without fear of retribution.)

The police in Detroit have apparently the same attitude toward people, black and white, in the Civil Rights Movement as have their "brothers", the police in the South. Detroit Police feel threatened by the Movement as well as opposed to it, and they react in the only way they know how -- with intimidation and harrassment. This is particularly true in situations which are not in the public eye, as downtown demonstrations are. Eddie Jackson once got into an argument in the ACME office with a notorious pair of plain clothes detectives on the east side. One of the detectives is known as "Big Red." Over two months later Eddie Jackson was arrested by Big Red's partner for being drunk. He was not. Peter Werbe was held and detained for nearly one hour by 7th precinct patrolmen who accused him of orling a woman on the street.