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CIVIL RIGHTS COMMISSION

MEMORANDUM

DATE April 9, 1968

TO: Governor George Romney

FROM: Michigan Civil Rights Commission

SUBJECT: RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE POLICE-COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN MICHIGAN

That police departments and other parts of the criminal justice system are in need of drastic, general overhaul for reasons of harmony, efficiency and justice, has been well documented by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. Governor Romney established a Michigan Commission to coordinate efforts with the national body and to begin the process of implementation in Michigan. A Governor's state-wide conference on these issues was held in Cobo Hall in Detroit on March 14, 1968.

This report is addressed to specific problems in law enforcement that have a direct bearing on civil rights, and have the potential, if not remedied, to increase the likelihood of civil disorder.

This report has two major parts: First, the issue is stated and documentation provided; second, recommendations for action are listed.

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Attachments

THE NEGRO COMMUNITY BELIEVES THAT POLICE DEPARTMENTS ACT IN A RACIALLY DISCRIMINATORY MANNER TOWARDS BLACK CITIZENS:

1. Nonwhites, particularly Negroes, are significantly more negative than whites in evaluating police effectiveness in law enforcement. In describing whether police give protection to citizens, nonwhites give a rating of "very good" only half as often as whites, and give a "not so good" rating twice as often. THESE DIFFERENCES ARE NOT MERELY A FUNCTION OF GREATER POVERTY AMONG NONWHITES: THEY EXIST AT ALL INCOME LEVELS AND FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN.

(President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice: The Police. p. 146)

2. Negro citizens in Detroit believe that discrimination and brutality by Detroit police officers were the most significant factors leading to the 1967 disorder.

(Report of the Detroit Urban League and the Detroit Free Press, 1967)

3. Over 75 percent of Negro citizens in Detroit believe that Detroit police practice racial discrimination.

(Findings of Dr. Eliot Luby and Associates, Lafayette Clinic, Detroit, following 1967 Detroit disorder.)

4. A 1965 Gallup poll showed that only 7 percent of white males but 35 percent of Negro males believed that there was police brutality in their area.....

(President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice: The Police. p. 146)

5. A poll in Detroit in 1965 found that 58 percent of Negroes did not believe that law enforcement was fair, and an earlier poll in 1951 found that 42 percent of Negroes believe it was "not good" or "definitely bad."

(Detroit News, February 3, 1965, p. 1 - as quoted in The Police, p. 146)

6. A 1967 study of youth attitudes in Grand Rapids and Muskegon Junior High Schools showed that 35 percent of black youths and only 8 percent of white youths felt that "police are always picking on Negroes."

(Donald H. Bouma, Ph.D., Williams and Schade: "Youth Attitudes Toward Police", Western Michigan University, August 1967, preliminary findings, p. 1)