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September 15, 1965

MAYOR HUGH J. ADDONIZIO'S STATEMENT ON A
POLICE REVIEW BOARD FOR NEWARK

One of the most controversial questions in major cities across the United States today is whether or not Civilian Review Boards should be established to investigate charges of alleged police brutality and police misconduct.

The Newark Human Rights Commission, acting on my orders, conducted extensive hearings on the issue, but after lengthy consideration of the testimony, was unable to agree on a conclusion.

The Commission reported that the twelve members present and voting on the specific issue of whether or not to recommend the creation of a Civilian Review Board, were irreconcilably divided 6 to 6. This division reflects an equally sharp division of opinion not only through the City, but throughout the nation.

The proponents of a Review Board argue that such a board would make impartial findings on charges of police brutality and misconduct and, thus, make recommendations to appropriate authorities which the public could support without question.

The opponents of a Police Review Board argue that present procedures are sufficient for processing any complaint and that a Review Board would seriously undermine effective police work.

I have concluded that in their drives to achieve opposite results, both sides have lost track of the real issues and made a Review Board far more important as a symbol than as a fact.

It is my conviction that the demand for a Review Board stems from the frustrations of minority groups who find themselves the object of an intolerant and abusive attitude displayed by a small number of misguided policemen. At the root of these frustrations lie even deeper concerns -- concerns for securing adequate housing, decent education, equal economic opportunity and a citizenship indistinguishable from that of any other American.

Notwithstanding these very real concerns, I must at this time address myself first to the issue of police brutality.

No charge of brutality must be allowed to remain unresolved. The truth or falseness of the charge must be ascertained. If the charge proves true, then the perpetrators of the act must be punished. On the other hand, if the charge is found to be baseless, this must also be clearly revealed to the public, so that selfishly motivated groups who continuously exploit segments of the public for their own personal gain will be exposed in clear perspective.

At the same time, as Mayor of this City, it is my duty to insure high morale and effective administration in the Police Department to enable our Police Officers to intensively and diligently perform their vitally important job, protecting the lives and property of all our citizens.

Protection of the public by the police is an essential ingredient of government by law. To provide the maximum degree of safety and security in our homes and in our streets, is a responsibility I cannot and will not shirk.

I do not believe that the establishment of a Review Board is the answer to the problem of ascertaining the truth or falseness of specific charges of police brutality; nor do I believe that the establishment of a Review Board will improve relations between the Police and members of minority groups.

However, it is vital to establish once and for all, in the minds of the public, that charges of alleged police brutality will be thoroughly investigated and the appropriate legal or punitive action be taken if the charges are found to be substantiated.

I do not believe that it is the prerogative of the Police Department to be the only agency to conduct an investigation of charges of police brutality involving members of its own department.

Nor do I feel that it is the function of the Newark Human Rights Commission -- or any other advisory body -- to make the ultimate finding and determination on the merits of any charge of alleged police brutality.

Therefore, from this day forward, any charge of alleged police brutality that comes to my attention from any individual citizen, organization, or group, will be referred immediately to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. The United States Department of Justice, under Federal law, has the authority and responsibility to prosecute any police officer who is guilty of acts of police brutality which deprive individuals of their constitutional rights to due process of law.

We have conferred with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the United States Attorney's office and I have been assured that the Federal Bureau of Investigation will make an immediate and complete investigation of all circumstances involved in any charge of alleged police brutality. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's findings will be forwarded to the Department of Justice in Washington. If the charges are found to be substantiated by the Department of Justice, the matter will be immediately forwarded to the United States Attorney for criminal prosecution under law. The U.S. Attorney has pledged his full cooperation.

This plan transfers the control and investigation of complaints of police brutality out of the hands of both the police and the public and into the hands of an agency that all can support -- the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Furthermore, since any act of police brutality would by its own nature constitute a criminal assault in violation of the laws of the State of New Jersey, a copy of any charge of police brutality will be sent directly to the Prosecutor's office. The Prosecutor has pledged his full cooperation in investigating the truth and falseness of any such charge.

Utilization of these procedures will guarantee to any citizen who charges police brutality a thorough, impartial and speedy investigation under the instrumentality of law and due process, which is the basic and fundamental concept of our democratic system of government.

But this is not enough. There is an underlying issue and it must be met squarely and without fear.

The underlying issue is not simply to resolve charges of police brutality. The fundamental issue is how to give all of us enough faith in the law to trust and obey it.

If we are to resolve whatever differences may exist between members of minority groups and some members of the Police Department, we must develop a comprehensive program that will tangibly improve their relationship with each other, living together as Americans in a democratic community.

Therefore, in addition to the procedures I have already discussed, I propose the following program:

RULES OF CONDUCT

It is essential that all members of the Police Department in their daily routine of duty, continually manifest this City's practice of not tolerating one attitude toward a white citizen and a different attitude toward a Negro citizen or other member of a minority group. Therefore, I have ordered that the Director of Police, forthwith, promulgate specific rules and regulations of conduct that will be mandatory on the part of all members of the Police Department. These Departmental Rules must set forth standards of conduct which will make it a violation of Departmental Rules to abuse any citizen because of the color of his skin, his economic status or his national origin. I want to outlaw once and for all the utilization by a small group of misguided individuals, the use of the derogatory labeling of people by words such as "nigger", "black boy", "spick", "wop", "kike". Such words are not only inflammatory and incendiary provocations of community tension, but are immoral and an affront to the dignity of man.

ASSAULTS ON POLICE

I have made it clear that I will not tolerate any form of police brutality by members of our Police Department; likewise, I will not tolerate any act of assault upon a Police officer. The duty of a Police Officer is fraught with peril and hazard. His life is constantly endangered in the course of his duty. In our jobs, our careers are on the line; in the Police Officer's job, his life is on the line. Therefore, I have instructed the Director of Police that any assault against a Police Officer in the course of his duty must be prosecuted expeditiously and to this end, I have ordered the Law Department to assign an Assistant Corporation Counsel to work with the Police Department in these specific cases.

An assault upon a Police Officer is, in essence, an act of anarchy which threatens our entire system of government and the preservation of law and order. These cases must be tried quickly and the full weight of the City must be used to urge that those found guilty be severely punished to the fullest extent permitted by law.

ASSIGNMENT OF POLICE PERSONNEL TO COMMUNITY RELATIONS ACTIVITIES

It is imperative that we establish a full time program for improving police community relations, especially at the neighborhood level. Therefore, I am ordering the Director of Police to immediately effect the following program:

(A) A superior officer shall be assigned from each Police Precinct, with the specific duty of handling all problems of community relations.

This individual will work on a full time basis in this capacity and will direct and organize program activities for Precinct Councils. These Councils will include and involve representatives of the local neighborhood in the total program.

(B) A full time person, with expertise in the field of community relations, shall be assigned at Central Police Headquarters to coordinate the Precinct Community Relations Activities.

CITIZEN OBSERVER PROGRAM

Since knowledge of daily police work is essential for an intelligent understanding and appreciation of the duties performed by policemen, it is important that representative citizens of our community join in a program of on-the-spot observation. To this end, I am ordering the Director of the Human Rights Commission to coordinate and expand the activities of the present civilian observer teams. Furthermore, I am ordering the Director of the Human Rights Commission, together with the Director of Police, to extend an open invitation to representatives from religious institutions, parent-teacher associations, civil rights organizations, business groups, and all other interested civic groups, to participate in this citizen observer program.

To accompany a radio patrol car on an evening tour of duty, as I have often done, gives the individual a vital insight into the situations which constantly confront the police in their normal routine of duty and exposure to acts which imperil policemen's very lives.

HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINING INSTITUTE

Involvement jointly by the police and citizen in an intensive human relations training program is essential.

Therefore, I have ordered that application be made by the Director of Human Rights Commission, working in cooperation with Rutgers University and the Police Department, under the Economic Opportunity Act to fund the establishment of a Human Relations Institute.

This Institute will provide training for all members of the Police Department, together with selected community leaders, directed by professional experts in this field. It will be mandatory for all members of the Police Department to participate in this course as part of their normal duty routine and, in addition, this training program will become an essential part of training now conducted at the Police Academy for new members of the Police force.

INCENTIVE TO POLICE FOR PROFESSIONAL IMPROVEMENT

In order to provide incentives for police officers to improve their education and advance their professional status, I will recommend to the City Council a revised police pay scale. The pay scale shall be similar in concept to those established by Boards of Education for teachers, in providing for increments predicated upon completion of specified educational courses.

Vice-President Malcolm Talbott of Rutgers University has agreed to work with us to develop this program to help policemen help themselves.

In addition to incentives for each college credit received, I will ask the City Council to approve at least ten full year scholarships, to be awarded annually to deserving police officers.

Furthermore, to encourage a continuing process of education and improvement, I shall ask the Council to approve a policy of tuition refunds for police officers who do not receive scholarships, but who are desirous of taking advantage of this program.

This plan, in effect, will be a G.I. Bill for policemen.

IMPROVED LEGAL SERVICES FOR THE INDIGENT

In order to protect the rights of all people, regardless of economic status, we must insure that all citizens be apprised of their legal rights and receive competent legal assistance in the pursuit of these rights. I have been cooperating and supporting efforts to establish a program for providing comprehensive legal aid under the Economic Opportunities Act.

This plan will establish approximately nine neighborhood legal centers to provide a broad range of legal services to those who are unable to pay for these services.

I am confident that this program will fill a tremendous vacuum in our system of justice, a vacuum created when individuals are not made knowledgeable of their rights because of their financial inadequacy.

In conclusion, we must remember the responsibility of the police of our City is an extremely heavy burden. The daily duty of a police officer requires compassion, concern, patience, understanding and, sometimes, the wisdom of a Solomon. The police officer must protect our homes, guard our streets and care for the injured. He secures our business establishments and, in the final analysis, we depend upon the police officer for the protection of our very lives and the lives and welfare of our families.

Our aim is to achieve vigorous, intensive and aggressive law enforcement, with equal protection of the law for all law abiding citizens.

In the program I have proposed, there are no symbolic gains or moral victories.

There is, I believe, fundamental change in the interest of the public good and common ground on which all citizens can stand with honor and hope.

Working cooperatively, with a common purpose, we cannot help but succeed in building a better life in the City of Newark.