

CORE Panel Hits Addonizio On Review Board Decision

By FRED CICETTI

A panel of eight civil rights leaders at a meeting of the Newark-Essex chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) last night condemned Mayor Hugh J. Addonizio's decision to refer all complaints of police brutality to the FBI.

The mayor's decision followed a long battle between CORE and police organizations over a civilian police review board. The Newark Human Rights Commission, after lengthy hearings on the issue, brought in a tie vote, leaving the matter in the mayor's hands.

Robert Curvin, northeast regional chairman of CORE, called Addonizio's plan "a sham."

"Newark needs a meaningful plan that places responsibility on the mayor and the police director (Dominick A. Spina). This FBI setup is a shifting of responsibility."

Foresees Problems

Fred Barbaro, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union in New Jersey, said: "Mayor Addonizio now feels he is safe for the winter and the upcoming election. He was worried about racial tension during the summer, but he thinks he doesn't have to worry now. He is wrong. There will be problems until there is a civilian review board to investigate cases of police brutality."

Felix J. Isom, state director

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police department, he said he wanted to outlaw the use of derogatory labels by policemen," Kaditus said. "He would not tolerate words like 'nigger,' 'black-boy,' 'spick,' 'wop' and 'kike.' I wonder why it took him so long?" Kaditus said.

Lampoons Plan

Kaditus also lampooned Addonizio's plan to place community relations men in each of the city's five precincts.

"Oh yes, the mayor sees the value of a good public relations man," he said. "He's decided to go the Madison Avenue route. Nothing like building a good image to cover Newark's problems."

Fred Means, chairman of the local CORE chapter and host of the meeting at Mr. Tucker's church, outlined the "similarity between the Watts section of Los Angeles and the City of Newark."

"I was in Watts after the riots this summer," Means said, "and it reminded me of Newark. 103rd Street in Los Angeles is filled with stores owned by 'absent whites' who charge exorbitant prices for cheap materials. Clinton Street in Newark is the same."

Fears Trouble

"The police in Newark aren't as bad as LA police, but if a review board isn't established in Newark there may be trouble. I don't want to see fires in this city."

In a very brief statement, Kenyon C. Burke, associate executive director of the Urban League of Essex County, said Addonizio's plan "just doesn't make sense."

"If I were a policeman in Newark, I would welcome a review board," Burke said. "If your skirts are clean, why hide them?"

After listening to the panelists for 2½ hours, James I. Threatt, a Negro and a city employe as executive director of the Human Rights Commission, got up from his chair in the audience and offered a one-minute rebuttal. He was booed repeatedly.

Threatt Rebuttal

"I feel the mayor's plan is the best possible for the city," Threatt said. "Look at the review board in Philadelphia. It is ineffectual and is ignored by the NAACP there."

Barbaro stood up and argued with Threatt.

"The review board in Philadelphia was appointed by the last administration," Barbaro said, "and the present administration cut the board's budget leaving it to flounder. It's no wonder the NAACP doesn't give a damn about it."

Threatt continued to support Addonizio's move, but the meeting ended with Means rapping a gavel to stop the heckling from the some 100 persons who came to hear the discussion.

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Felix J. Isom, state director of the civil liberties department of Negro Elks and a retired Jersey City police sergeant, gave an impassioned appeal for a review board.

"I could have become a captain on Jersey City's police force, but I wouldn't keep my mouth shut," he said. "The brutality I saw made me sick. When Frank Hague was mayor, he once said: 'There is more law at the end of a nightstick than in all the law books in New Jersey.' This is what pervades the police department in Newark now—the policemen think they are judge and jury.

"When Addonizio says he will refer brutality complaints to the FBI, who does he think he is kidding? There is a close relationship between local police and the FBI. You don't think for a minute that FBI agents will turn tail against a Newark policeman? The complaints will be forwarded to the Justice Department and there will be no action taken.

Election Day Plea

"If Addonizio won't be budged and if he won't give this city the review board it needs, go out on election day and show Mr. Addonizio what you think of his plan."

Irvin Solondz, acting state chairman of the Americans for Democratic Action, also accused the FBI of lacking objectivity on police brutality complaints.

"The overwhelming majority of FBI agents in the South are from the South," he said. "They aren't what you would call impartial. Many citizens doubt the impartiality of the FBI in the North. When a victim of police brutality seeks recourse, the one thing he needs more than anything else is confidence in those hearing his appeal. Addonizio's plan has not done this — it has only saved him from making a real decision."

Rev. Homer Tucker, pastor of the Mount Zion Baptist Church, called the mayor's plan "an insult."

Minister's View

"The FBI is an investigative agency to be used where local people are incapable of handling their own problems," he said.

"The mayor's actions indicate there is no one in this city competent enough to review complaints against the police department. I'd call that an insult.

"It's silly sham and a wash-over job; we have many people capable of sitting on a review board. But we've got to stop talking and acting. We must use our votes against the mayor. The time has come for a change."

Carl Kaditus, a CORE attorney and a member of the Lawyers' Constitutional Defense Committee, drew some laughter in the series of serious monologues.

"As part of the mayor's plan to alleviate problems in the