

Review Board Out

Addonizio Backs Area Council Plan

By DOUGLAS ELDRIDGE

Mayor Hugh J Addonizio is "unalterably opposed" to the establishment of any police review board in Newark.

At the same time in his formal announcement the mayor said that councils of neighborhood leaders are being formed to advise the captains of the city's five police precincts.

The mayor's announcements, which had been expected for some time, were made at a press conference attended also by Police Director Dominick A. Spina and Corporation Counsel Norman Schiff.

The mayor's statement marked an almost complete victory for Spina and other police officers, who had vigorously fought establishment of a review board. It was Spina himself who originally proposed the neighborhood councils.

No Action on Proposal

Addonizio made no specific concessions to Assemblyman George C. Richardson, Essex, and the other Negro and civil rights leaders who have urged formation of a panel of private citizens to look into any complaints of police mistreatment of citizens.

But the mayor did say the new councils of 25 to 50 citizens in each precinct are being formed not only to improve relations between the police and the public, but "specifically to handle problems of this nature."

Spina said the councils, whose members have been recruited during the last month by the five precinct commanders, will begin their work this week. The councils will meet every month, he said. Plans for the groups had been announced last month by Spina.

The mayor did not propose the establishment of a special subcommittee on police matters by

the Newark Human Rights Commission, a move that had been suggested by Schiff as a possible compromise in the controversy.

Right to Act

But the mayor and Schiff did reiterate their belief that the commission has the right to "look into" any complaints of police mistreatment, and to submit its findings to the mayor. And they pointed out that Addonizio had agreed with a delegation of clergymen and civic leaders on Tuesday that the commission should be strengthened.

In the review board conflict, the mayor has been under considerable pressure from leaders of two groups that contributed appreciably to his landslide election victory last May—the police and the Negro community.

Addonizio said in a prepared statement he had concluded after

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Police Review Board Out

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a thorough study that a police review board "would serve no useful purpose and could conceivably be a detriment to efficient law enforcement."

The mayor said he had found no evidence of any brutality by the police during his administration. And he said "There are ample remedies available to any citizen who feels that he or she may be a victim of police brutality."

Will Not Tolerate Brutality

Addonizio said he had made a "diligent inquiry" into both sides of the issue "with a conviction that police brutality will not be tolerated in the City of Newark and with a further conviction that no program will be enacted which would impair the effective law enforcement that each citizen of the city demands, and upon which I unequivocally insist."

In recent weeks, the mayor said, "allegations have been made that a serious condition of police brutality exists in the City of Newark. I have listened attentively to many groups that have urged the establishment of a police review board." Addonizio said he could find no basis for the allegations.

Any citizen who feels that he has been mistreated by the police, Addonizio went on, can seek redress from the courts, the prosecutor's office, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the attorney general's office or the Human Rights Commission.

"In addition," he said, "if any citizen brings to me specific facts of an incident which constitutes an act of brutality on the part of police officers of this city I will personally investigate the matter and take any appropriate action necessary."

leaders, and was recommended later by the Human Rights Commission. But the issue remained dormant until Richardson launched his campaign on Feb. 22.

Nineteen organizations—most of them Negro, and only a few of major influence — sponsored the initial meeting. Later the review board proposal was endorsed by the National Association for Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union.

On the other hand, a solid phalanx of police officials and

organizations opposed the proposal. They were supported by groups of veterans and teachers.

Take No Stand

Many officials—including all the members of the City Council—and many organizations have taken no stand on the issue.

Richardson, who is also secretary of the city's Insurance Fund Commission, and other Negro leaders have vowed they would carry on the fight if their demands were refused by the mayor.

Addonizio's rejection of a re-

Cross Section

The mayor observed that the Human Rights Commission "represents a cross section of the people of our city." He added, "I am certain that they will cooperate fully in any matter of police brutality which may be brought to their attention."

Although the mayor referred several times in his statement and during a question period to the Human Rights Commission, no representative of the agency was at the press conference. It was learned that Daniel S. Anthony, the commissioner's executive director, had not been invited to attend. He has advocated a separate police advisory board.

In reply to a question, the mayor said he had reached no decision on the commission's request for the addition of a "police-community relations officer" to its staff. In its 1962 annual report, the commission asked for the new staff member "toward the end of reducing prejudice and discrimination against policemen as well as against minority group members."

Meanwhile, it was announced that Addonizio will attend the commission's meeting on April 16 at 8 p.m. It will be the mayor's first meeting with the commission, and with its Clergy Advisory Council, which has also been invited to the meeting.

Welcomes Volunteers

The new precinct councils, Spina said, will represent all major ethnic and religious groups in each area, and will include business, labor and civic leaders. The mayor said he has suggested possible members for the councils, and Spina said he would welcome "any interested citizen" who volunteers for them.

Spina said he hopes the councils will give both the police and the public a better understanding of each other's problems. The director said he had discovered during his Wednesday night open-house sessions that many people have little knowledge of police difficulties.

Because of the shift in emphasis from foot to radio patrols, Spina said, the police have "gained mobility but lost the personal contact." He added that "nowadays the policeman is just a faceless figure in uniform."

Spina also announced his intention of ordering the precinct commanders to go out into their neighborhoods more often to attend meetings, meet people and check on complaints. Addonizio commented that "we believe they sit behind their desks too much."

Spina Pleased

After the conference, Spina said he had been pleased with the mayor's statement. "I think it vindicates my position," he commented. But he said he feared that the review board dispute had increased tensions among different groups in the community.

The establishment of a police review board had first been urged upon Addonizio last July—his first month in office—by several Negro