

Why Citizens Advisory Board was organized

ED. NOTE: The following statement was released this week by members of the Citizens Police Advisory Committee giving reasons for its creation and telling what it hopes to accomplish. The statement was signed by the Rev. John W. P. Collier, chairman; the Rev. Horace P. Sharper, co-chairman; and the Rev. Earl L. Huff, James Treadwell and Marion Fladger.

In light of the fact that recently more than 18,000 petitions were signed by citizens of the city of Newark requesting the formation of an official Police Advisory Board and because no action has been taken on these petitions, the Citizens Police Advisory Committee has been formed.

The Committee realizes

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that without proper respect for the law any society would be thrown into absolute chaos. However, just as law must exist above a society, justice must exist above law and law enforcement. Otherwise, there is always the danger of creating government that is totalitarian in nature.

With a view toward a realistic appraisal of police-community relations, this committee is duty bound to approach the problem of police mistreatment of private citizens as an undeniable fact and a blot on the city of Newark.

Further, that the present methods of correcting such occurrences are totally inadequate and unrealistic.

Although this Committee has no official sanction, it will receive complaints and hold public hearings. It is not the intention of this Committee to harass, meddle with nor embarrass the Newark Police Department in any way.

This would accomplish nothing but to further inflame an aggravated situation. With fairness and objectivity as its keynote, the Committee search for the truth in cases of reported police mistreatment.

IN ORDER to accomplish this end, both the complainant and the police officer will be invited to the hearings and allowed to bring as many witnesses as needed.

Should the hearings prove the allegations to be unfounded, it shall be the position of this Committee to make this known and come to the defense of the police officer.

If the police officer is found to be guilty of mistreating a citizen, this committee will turn Newark inside out to see that justice is done and the police officer is properly punished.

It is our intention to keep this Committee in operation as long as the need persists. The Committee is hopeful that a more realistic approach to this problem will be taken by officialdom in the near future.

It is certain that this would have far reaching effects in bringing about an atmosphere of police-community relations that isn't hung heavy with hostility, fear and mistrust.