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POLICING
IN A MULTIRACIAL
SOCIETY

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The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is an educational agency and an advocate and intermediary for the visible minorities. It works toward encouraging better race relations, increased understanding and awareness among our multicultural, multiracial population through programmes of education directed at both the private and public sectors of the community. It is also focusing its efforts on the institutions of our society including educational systems, employment, government, media, legislation, police, social service agencies and human services, in order to reduce patterns of discrimination and inequality of opportunity which may exist within these institutions.

The work of the organization is carried out through working committees such as: Education Institutions; Legislation; Media; Law Enforcement.

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Police-Minority Relations

CANADIAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS have found it difficult to respond easily and quickly to the changing multiracial community they are meant to serve. Few institutions — and the police are no exception, have been able to escape the criticism of slow response to change.

The community poses problems for the police, but what about the problems the police pose for the community? Racial minorities have been complaining of a constant pattern of police harassment and police insensitivity to their life-styles and needs. Is there a justified tradition of distrust on the part of minorities towards the police? Is this antagonism exacerbated by the perception of the police as the enforcement arm of the white establishment?

The relationship between the police and visible minorities will always, it seems, be a sensitive matter of concern. In many ways, the relations between the police and the visible minority communities can be seen as the flash-point, the means to gauge the general temper of race relations in Canada.

While incidents between the police and a visible minority community can have an inflammatory effect upon relations generally, it is important to recognize that such incidents can be symptoms of much larger and more serious institutional and societal problems. It is important that such occurrences light up the social context in which these conflicts occur rather than darken and deflect from them.

This issue of *Currents* is devoted to the topic of police-minority relations in the hope that it will be possible to overcome the sense of inevitability about the tensions and conflicts that will arise between police and minorities.

Sometimes our expectations of the police are far too high. The police are certainly not agents of social change. It is thus important to realistically assess how much one can expect the police themselves to improve the situation. This issue is an acknowledgement of the important initiatives that have been undertaken by the police themselves as well as those undertaken by government, and members of visible minorities and community agencies. However, while the level of activity devoted to improving police — minority relations has increased, more attention needs to be given to assessing which activities are productive and which are not. Without the development of rigorous qualitative criteria, quantitative improvements can be a delusion.

TIM REES

Policing in a Multiracial Canada

Daniel G. Hill

The relationship between the police and the community is one of infinite complexity, and has been since the emergence of the modern police force in the early nineteenth century.

Sir Robert Peel, generally acknowledged to be the founder of the modern force, was well aware of the thin dividing line between a force of protectors and a force of tyrants. His conception of the "police as the public and the public as the police" required more than a mere liaison between the community and their appointed protectors. Nothing less than true integration into the framework of the existing community could prevent a version of arbitrary rule being exercised by the police.

The "Peelers", as they were known, often faced resistance from the community who viewed their presence as a threat to traditional British freedoms. Confrontations between privately maintained police forces and the "Peelers" were not uncommon. In an effort to retain individual liberty, public police powers were often curtailed and the reciprocal checks and balances of internal and judicial control were minimal.

Today in Canada, life without an effective public police force seems inconceivable. Generally communities welcome the existence of a body which will protect and defend the peace and good order of their society.

The Nature of Policing

Perhaps at this point we should pause to consider how the nature of policing has changed. It is estimated that 80% of calls for police services are for non-crime related activities. Police are frequently the only front line service dealing with the effects of family upheaval, racial discord, youth unemployment and general states of isolation and alienation. Naturally the emphasis of police

activities must be pro-active and preventive to meet this demand. The creation by many Canadian police forces of ethnic squads has been an invaluable addition to the preventive model. The ethnic squads have been particularly successful at lessening racial tensions and narrowing the cultural gap between the police and community members. In spite of the many valid criticisms which arise in our multi-racial communities, we must not forget the substantial achievements in policing that have already been made.

The comments of Dr. Karl Menniger in *The Crime of Punishment* must be kept in mind when considering any new model of policing:

"The police officer is expected to do a superman's job. He is expected to be more brave, more upright, more self-controlled, more resistant to bribery and other temptations, more courteous, more discriminating, more shrewd, more unruffled by humiliation and frustration than all other citizens. He has to make rapid decisions many times a day in difficult situations. The average policeman renders far more judgments of guilty and not guilty than does the average judge. He has to call upon extraordinary resources of tact, experience, knowledge, and training to deal correctly at the needed moment with threatening or suspicious behaviour."

Although new models of policing call for a community service orientation, the police officer's job remains a dangerous one. The recent murders of a number of constables in Ontario are grim reminders of the extreme hazards our police face. Few of us are ever asked to risk our lives in the service of the community, but for a policeman this goes with the job. Our public consciousness will always

be outraged at such brutal acts of violence.

Yet, while we may no longer argue with the concept of public policing, our multiracial communities still frequently question the exercise of police power. As police powers have increased over time, the corresponding levels of public accountability seem sadly lacking.

Lord Scarman, reporting on the Brixton disorders in London, echoes many of the criticisms voiced in our own society:

Another variant is that the Metropolitan police have not yet fully solved the problem of maintaining the rule of law in a multi-racial society. Those who express this view do not quarrel with the principle that there is one laid down by Parliament which must apply to all citizens: But they do ask whether the police have learned to enforce the law in areas with high ethnic minority populations, with the same degree of discretion with which they are wont to enforce it in other parts of the country.

All too often, police are perceived by our visible and ethnic minorities as aloof from those they serve, vested with far reaching and oppressive powers against which the ordinary citizen has no redress. Sir Robert Peel's ideal of the police as the public and the public as the police seems at best a vain hope to communities of visible and ethnic minorities who have little or no opportunity to see themselves either physically or culturally represented on the force.

On the one side are the police, proclaiming their commitment to non-discriminatory, humane law enforcement, contending that their motives are often misconstrued and their efforts unappreciated. Indeed, policing is a difficult task and it should be noted that the police have had their own sensibilities assaulted, without justification, on numerous occasions.

Yet, on the other hand are the racial and cultural minority groups, consistently alleging insensitive and even discriminatory treatment by an overwhelming white-dominated police force.

Where the truth lies in this argument is not the primary question. Searching for documented facts in this potentially volatile relationship ignores both the reality and urgency

of the situation. Perceptions of police racism, harassment and insensitivity are fact to some, and lies or exaggerations to others. What is certain, is that perceptions and accusations of discrimination crystallize into very real hatred and bitterness which is a threat to good policing and public security.

One vivid illustration of the gulf of misunderstanding between the police and the many black communities lies in the diverse reaction to the National Film Board production titled "Home Feeling". This movie, as you are probably aware, claims to depict day-to-day life for West Indian residents of the Jane-Finch corridor in Toronto. The content suggests that the potential for racial violence in the area could mirror that of Dade County, Florida, or even Brixton and openly states that the police are both a target and a cause for the tension. Some residents of Jane-Finch have applauded the film as "the truth, where the voices of the people are heard" while the police claim that the film fails to show "any of the positive things going on". This stark contrast in perceptions of the problem only serves to demonstrate the polarization of visible and ethnic communities from the police.

It is imperative to remember that prejudice can operate in a variety of subtle and even inadvertent forms which are keenly felt by minorities. The police are in a unique position to gauge the mood of the community. They must take the lead in recognizing the disparate perceptions of discrimination that exist.

In the early Spring of 1983, for example, a senior police officer, speaking at a Canadian Human Rights Conference, responded to complaints that visible minorities were seriously under-represented on the force. He argued that a substantial proportion of parking control officers, the so-called Green Hornets, were non-whites. To him, that fact demonstrated that the police force was racially representative of the community and minority group complaints were unjustifiable carping. Yet to minority representatives, the police official's response was proof that non-whites faced racial obstacles if they aspired to employment in the police force proper.

Effective solutions to the problem will only arise from concerted efforts to attack prejudice in its institutional origins.

Canadian Racism

Historically, Canadians have suffered from a brand of discrimination which is institutionalized rather than overt. A biased and selective reading of our history has allowed a kind of "polite" racism to flourish. The dominant elements of Canadian society have persistently played down the scope of the problem by viewing acts of racism as single, isolated occurrences - collectively refusing to acknowledge and correct the pervasive nature of discriminatory behaviour. The notion that the average Canadian is free from prejudice has been systematically fostered by many of our public and private institutions, while the grim reality of history would suggest otherwise.

Although slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1833, legally sanctioned segregation in the Canadian school system persisted until 1965, when its last remnants were finally abolished in Ontario. Equality was illusory for members of visible minority communities, although the myth of freedom for all was effectively embedded in the Canadian consciousness.

In the chronicles of each community, racism is a recurrent theme. As our history has shown, the majority society in Canada has been known to enslave, oppress, exploit and exterminate racial minorities. For example, they enslaved Blacks and Indians in Lower and Upper Canada. They oppressed and exploited the Chinese railroad workers, they interned for no valid reason Canadian Japanese during World War II; and White settlers exterminated the Beothuk Indians in Newfoundland. Almost always, there was a police presence, whether in red tunic, blue coat or military gear.

Clearly, much of the hostility that police now encounter in their dealings with minority communities flows from grievances in the creation of which police had little or no part. The police, like the public at large, have inherited a tradition of discriminatory behaviour that is far from admirable.

The hostility flows, initially, from the failure of other institutions - governmental, religious, education, business, labour, the family - to function as they should. We can-

not blame the police for all this!

Indeed, the conflicts and criminality that police encounter are in large part symptoms of broader problems such as poverty, chronic unemployment, educational frustrations or racism. As the Chairman of the Merseyside Police Committee described it in 1981 after racial conflict in Liverpool, England: "For too long, instead of action on our part... we have relied on police to 'keep the lid on the dustbin'."

Police - Minority Relations

There is no denying that here in Canada, too, police are called upon to 'keep the lid on'. However, police are not by any means free of responsibility for the tensions that exist between them and minority communities. And even though it may be acknowledged that a broad coalition will have to come together to resolve serious community problems of racism, police themselves should not, in the meantime, simply accept their sometimes tense relationship with these communities as an unchangeable status quo. Police can minimize tensions by evolving an operational understanding of their origins and of strategies currently available for coping with them.

While we cannot deny that police officers are a product of their society like anyone else, their privileges must inevitably set them apart. Lord Scarman in his report on the Brixton disorders has summarized this attitude:

The police cannot rest on the argument that since they are a cross-section of society some officers are bound to be racially prejudiced. . .

They recognize that in this respect, as in others, the standards we apply to the police must be higher than the norms of behaviour prevalent in society as a whole.

The daily irritant and gripe about police is sometimes just as important, in the long run, as a major happening such as a shooting. The common sources of minority community enmity toward police consist of a broad range of usually unpublicized encounters between minority community members and police officers. In minority communities these com-

paratively minor conflicts often are seen as parts of a pattern of racially biased police treatment. They become woven into the fabric of communal grievance, each incident serving to reinforce mistrust of the police.

In addition, officers sometimes misinterpret a minority group member's non-verbal responses to their inquiries. For example, some Asians and West Indians do not look authority figures in the eye during questioning. An officer may read that as a sign of rudeness or even guilt and react accordingly, but it more likely is a sign of deference. Similarly, the shaking of the head, the clicking of the tongue or other such responses may imply disagreement in the eyes of an officer familiar only with North American culture. However, in many societies these behaviour patterns signify quite the contrary.

Clearly, police officers cannot be expected to have a refined understanding of all cultural traditions. But they are expected at least to be sensitive to such factors. Minority persons usually do not know or appreciate that an affront they have experienced was unintended. They are left with a sense of grievance that is aggravated by the belief that White people would not suffer similar indignities in similar circumstances.

Some police have been sensitive to these charges and have responded by becoming willing and active participants in numerous co-operative ventures with the community. Probably the most visible of these initiatives is the establishment of police-community relations committees.

These committees have taught us some valuable lessons. They have highlighted the diverse perceptions of each side and attempted to develop some constructive solutions to the problem. Through programs of public education, the committees have tried to inform the public about the law and the role of the police in its enforcement. In addition, the community has often had the opportunity to become actively involved in police work by accompanying officers in street patrols and advising on policing strategy. Orientation sessions with officers at various levels of the police department have been

held to educate them about the role and function of the committee and race relations issues.

While these attempts are admittedly in their infancy, they have laid the groundwork for open, honest dialogue and the joint resolution of conflicts.

In recent years there has been a growing public demand for some kind of independent review of police activities. The public at large and especially our racial and cultural minorities have called for greater civilian involvement in resolving complaints against police officers. Inevitably there will be complaints from citizens about police actions or treatment. I would venture to say that, even with a perfectly balanced racial and ethnic force, complaints will arise. Obviously some complaints will be justified and others will not. But what would be most beneficial is an impartial and fair complaint procedure where citizens will feel free to voice their grievances.

The experience of Sidney Linden, the Public Complaints Commissioner in Metropolitan Toronto suggests that a complaints mechanism which involves and utilizes the police in the investigatory procedure is one option. The purpose of this pilot project, which has recently been made permanent, was to include "civilian oversight and monitoring in every stage of the complaint resolution process, culminating in public hearings before civilian panels empowered to discipline officers".

At the end of the three-year trial period, Mr. Linden explained that he felt the Commission had had two beneficial effects: "It prevented problems by making police more careful in their actions and people were more willing to come forward with their complaints to another citizen."

Internationally, in countries such as Australia and Finland, the Ombudsman has jurisdiction to investigate complaints against the Police. All of these systems depend on extended police involvement and co-operation.

Minority Representation

Let us now turn to the inevitable question — why have police forces had so few mem-

bers of visible minorities in their ranks? And what can be done to redress these imbalances? Historically, of course, visible minority population in Canada were small and had even smaller pools of suitable adults from which police could recruit. More recently, as police-community relations became more tense, members of visible minorities were discouraged from seeking to become police officers for fear of being labelled turncoats by their peers.

Meanwhile, those who did try to compete for positions as police officers found themselves facing tests and criteria that heavily favoured white, middle-class, Canadian-born and educated applicants. Outdated and unnecessary height and weight requirements, for example, militated against Asians who generally were slighter and shorter than other groups. I am pleased to add that a number of police forces have discontinued height and weight requirements. Psychological tests were culturally skewed against immigrants as well as many Native persons and Canadian-born Blacks. Even the advertising of careers in police work was carried in media that did not reach large segments of the visible minority audience.

By the late 1970's, police officials had come to recognize that many of their recruitment criteria and practices were inherently discriminatory, though sometimes unintentionally so. Accordingly, some forces undertook special efforts to attract visible minorities to police work. Career opportunities, for example, were advertised in the ethnic media. Many aspects of assessment tests and criteria for acceptance were adjusted. Non-white police officers were given a higher public profile.

But despite all these efforts, minority group representation is still disproportionately low, especially in the upper ranks. In order to make police forces more visibly reflect the society they serve, non-white recruitment efforts must be stepped up and made more penetrating. Recruitment drives should involve a broad representation of community leaders through whose good offices the message can penetrate more deeply into all manner of community organizations. The

message should consistently be carried in the community's own media; not just its newspapers or broadcasts, but in church bulletins, organizational newsletters, handbills, posters.

Recruitment and applicant-processing centres should be set up within the community itself. Officers patrolling neighbourhoods, particularly minority group officers, should make it a topic of conversation in barber-shops, corner stores and anywhere else people gather to chat or gossip. And the promotion of police work as a career should be carried on continuously in minority communities.

Furthermore, top police officials should vigorously stamp out racial heckling and harassment within their police force. Recruits should also feel confident that promotion up through the ranks is a genuine possibility.

Finally, there is a critical need for more and better race relations training of police. Police colleges should incorporate intensive race relations training programs in their curricula and in their staff development programs - one lecture or one seminar is simply not enough.

The great barriers of misunderstanding which have developed over the centuries will not fall easily. It will take a terrific effort of will on the part of our legislators, police and community members. But today I sense a new spirit of hope and concern in Canada. For the first time, the police and racial and cultural minorities are partners in the fight against bigotry and prejudice. Our concerted and determined efforts will surely yield results. Let us now roll up our sleeves and get to work.

Dr. Daniel G. Hill is Ombudsman for the Province of Ontario.

This article is drawn from the opening address given to the National Symposium on Policing in Multiracial Urban Communities, Vancouver, October 15, 1984.

Police – Minority Relations

Robert F. Lunney

In addressing police-minority relations, we usually begin by providing an opportunity for the venting of frustrations and grievances. From there we proceed to define problems and lastly to work out the outlines of a problem-solving strategy.

Problems in human relations are based upon misunderstandings, misperceptions, lack of adequate communication and the whole gamut of human deficiencies including downright contrary attitudes. Real problem-solving may well result from this kind of effort, but they often leave me with the feeling that we are correcting symptoms; that we are always dealing with downstream issues. This is somewhat akin to dealing with pollution in a river with the installation of a water treatment plant, when the better solution may be to seek out the causes of the problem upstream, and eradicate its source.

When it comes to long-term results in building a better society, the real hope lies in concentrating a good portion of our efforts in upstream solutions - treating the causes of the problem and creating conditions which are largely problem-free.

Wellness

In the context of multicultural and multiracial issues in our society, we may well be able to find solutions in the concept of *wellness*. In terms of medical health, *wellness* is a defect-free state established through identification and promotion of those things which promote and maintain a state of well-being. Good nutrition, exercise, abstinence from debilitating habits are factors contributing to a state of individual *wellness*. Why

should it not be possible to create similar positive conditions for a community of people as applied to their quality of life? If our objective is to obtain multicultural and multiracial harmony, let us concentrate then on inducing a state of confidence, mutual respect, understanding and empathy - the elements of societal *wellness*.

Newly arrived immigrant groups understandably lack confidence and this deficiency, if not redressed, results in frustration. Frustration due to an inability to experience a sense of belonging, personal worth or self-confidence can be the underlying cause of personal and family problems, neighbourhood friction and if collectively experienced disturbances or other acts against the larger community.

Nurturing

The *wellness* concept guides us to emphasize the positive and to build on strength. The beginning of a community *wellness* program has its roots in a key activity which the police are ideally placed to carry out - the process of *nurturing*. *Nurturing* is the act of bringing up, fostering, providing nourishment. In a community determined to establish the *wellness* concept, the police serve as one of the key agents of orientation to welcome the newcomer, to educate in adapting to new customs and laws and to promote those confidence-building experiences so necessary for the emergence of a healthy confident community.

Why do the police possess this pivotal role? It is because, as we have learned, a good number of the more recent arrivals to Canada

come from countries where the police are the most prominent arm of the authoritative government. Many come to Canada harboring a deep fear of the police. Their early experience with Canadian police disperses this fear to an extent, but they still regard the police as an institution having more authority and influence than is perceived by the established Canadian. The police officer is heeded and his advice is likely to be taken very seriously. This is an influence which can be used in the cause of good, to promote and sustain a positive direction consistent with the mainstream of Canadian social aspirations.

The process of *nurturing* the emerging community is accomplished on two levels -one, a personal and the other a collective basis. On a personal level, the police chief, senior officer, ranking police officer or police agent can contribute by offering a spirit of brotherhood; shared experience; and the simple bond of understanding and respectful reception; a proper hearing of their problem and evidence of some reasonable action. A successful contact with a police officer containing these elements, even if it involves some enforcement action, can be a *nurturing* experience for a newcomer. Still better are the contacts with police officers at social occasions, community conferences and intercultural events. The simple act of offering recognition familiarity and friendship is a *nurturing* process.

Edmonton

On a community basis, let me give you an example of a *nurturing* experience in my own city. In 1983, the City of Edmonton staged the World University Games. Prince Charles and Princess Diana were coming as guests. The Republic of Vietnam was sending a team of athletes and weeks before the event the Police Department learned of the plans of some of our resident Vietnamese to stage a demonstration on the opening day, coincidental with the Royal Visit. The stage was set for a confrontation between the anti-communist community and the security forces devoted to crowd management and security of the Royal Party. Adverse feelings in the local community towards the govern-

ment of Vietnam were known to be very strong since our community consisted almost entirely of refugees who had suffered grievously at the hands of this government. The possibility of violence was raised by more radical elements. At this point the Police Department approached the emerging leadership of the Vietnamese community with an offer of assistance. We offered advice on the conduct of a peaceful parade and demonstration, an escort for traffic safety and a reserved location for the demonstration. The leadership accepted and plans were laid with the community working directly with the police commander assigned to them. On opening day, some 2,500 persons paraded and held their demonstration outside the stadium in view of passing spectators and the media. It was peaceful in all respects and satisfied the needs of the Vietnamese community for recognition of their protest. The community enjoyed a sense of achievement and the leadership had gained status and recognition, both within their own group and in the larger community. It was a confidence building experience and since it was the first public step of the new community, a remarkable achievement. The prospects for people of Vietnamese origin in Edmonton were significantly advanced.

In Edmonton, we employ community service officers as outreach agents to the multicultural and multiracial groups. They are a part of our *nurturing* effort. As one example of their activities, we learned from street experience that many new immigrants were ill-informed of their responsibilities as vehicle operators to produce documentation (driver's licence, registration, proof of insurance) to a police officer at the scene of a collision. Our community service officer determined there was a deficiency in the curriculum of the driving schools catering to the immigrant group. When this was brought to their attention the error was corrected, eliminating a point of friction between the police, the larger community and the newcomers. I would classify this as a *nurturing* activity.

These are only two examples but they illustrate the value of a *nurturing* attitude

towards obtaining a state of community *wellness*. No doubt many other police departments are promoting similar activities and the leadership of multicultural groups might agree regarding the desirability of working out positive strategies at a very basic level.

In order for police to foster these proactive and preventive activities they must first have the confidence and support of their police commissions and funding bodies. What we are talking about is a full service style of policing as an expansion of the traditional, basic law enforcement oriented organization. There must be a mind set modification and a commitment by the community to invest in the preventive peace-keeping capacity of their police. On the part of police, there must

be a philosophic recognition of the desirability of shifting attention and resources to upstream solutions.

I do admit that despite our best intentions there may still be breakdowns in communication and the intrusion of human frailties. Determination upon a *wellness* philosophy does not eliminate entirely the occasional need for band-aids and medication. But the *wellness*-bound community will develop that positive mind set that defeats malignant social ills and keeps us firmly on the path of a healthy society.

Robert F. Lunney is Chief, Edmonton Police Department and President, Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police.

The New Police Complaints System: Serving and Protecting the Police

Mark Wainberg

Bill 68, the Metropolitan Police Force Complaints Project Act, 1981, was introduced by the Ontario government in May 1981. With one minor exception, it was identical to earlier legislation (Bill 47) which had been defeated by the opposition parties in June, 1980. Bill 47 was considered to be so flawed that it was not worthy to be referred to a committee of the legislature for further study. The most serious

flaws were that the police would still be investigating themselves, and that they could prevent any meaningful independent investigation until 30 days after the complaint was made.

After the March, 1981 election, the new Conservative majority government was finally in a position to push its police complaints bill through the legislature. Representatives of

