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Photo: Lynn Phipps

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THE FLATLANDS

"TELL IT LIKE IT IS AND DO WHAT IS NEEDED"

Volume 1 Number 7

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Richmond's WALL OF HATE

By Betty Cauldwell

EDITOR'S NOTE: Mrs. Cauldwell has been a resident of Richmond since 1960. She works as a waitress. She has been following closely the activities of BART and the Richmond City Council.

Richmond is a town uneasy in its sleep, a town where the black man seeks employment and the white man seeks protection from the black man. A town whose mournful mayor weeps that there are racial barriers in Richmond, then acts to build a physical wall between the races. A town whose political machine mouths a philosophy of human justice yet is eager to fence the Negro neighborhoods out of downtown Richmond. A town whose police department pretends to a lack of prejudice, yet on Friday and Saturday nights, when white high school students "drag the main" up and down MacDonald Avenue Negro students who dare to join the party are told to get off MacDonald Avenue and stay off.

The Richmond Wall was not conceived by accident nor is it the best of all possible rapid transit systems. In 1962 the citizens of Richmond voted for a progressive, elevated rapid transit system that was to run along Hoffman Boulevard.

Small white pressure groups, seeing their chance to effect an even greater segregation in Richmond, went to work on the city officials and the councilmen they felt they had placed in office. The details of the Richmond Wall were plotted over bigot cocktails, re-



Santa Fe tracks, Ohio Avenue

Photo: Close

vised and polished at secret meetings long before they were heard on the floor of the city council.

In 1964 the Richmond City Council, without informing the homeowners on Ohio Avenue, used their imperial vote to change the location and type of rapid transit system. They then went to BART and asked that the train

be run on ground level tracks in Richmond. BART refused. The city authorities went back to BART a second time. Without lowering the monies to be paid to BART, the Richmond officials offered to move the Richmond station from Sixth Street to Sixteenth thereby shortening the line ten blocks and saving BART this

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Photos: Howard Harawitz

Curtis Baker Addresses the Civil Rights Commission

Police Brutality

Statements on Police Community Relations to the California Advisory Commission of the U. S. Civil Rights Commission

Mr. Curtis Baker opened the hearings on police community relations with a call for a civilian police review board to meet the need for communication "between human beings and barbarians." As an example of injustice, Mr. Baker cited his own case of August 6, 1965:

A city councilman put Mr. Baker in jail for supposedly threatening him and calling him a "bald headed liar."

Mr. Baker told the Civil Rights Commission that "The police heads refuse to take a stand... to take responsibility into their own hands." Oakland must stop hiring Klu Klux Klansmen and Mississippi hillbillies to do their killing. We want some action in Oakland for the people who are in need and threatened."

He cited a case from last year when a vice squad raided a base-

ment on 7th Street. A pregnant woman was in a room where there was gambling. She admitted it. Yet, instead of human treatment, she was hit by the policeman.

Mr. Baker pointed out that incidents like this are "what are going to explode this city." No one wants to take responsibility for doing this. Mr. Baker said there are a few policemen who aren't "cops," who do serve the people, such as Officer Thomsson.

But most harass, maltreat, and show lack of respect for the people of Oakland whom they are supposed to serve. For instance, they address Negro men as "boy" and Negro women as "gal."

Mr. Baker pointed out that when city officials do not have to give an account of their work something is wrong — "People

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POLICE BRUTALITY REVIEW

Continued from Page 1

not worried about their work don't have to worry about opening the book and turning the pages." "We (Negroes in Oakland) are living in a cage."

Mr. Baker cited the fact that the city council has done nothing for five years for minorities and now Oakland has an ex-councilman for its mayor. The council voted unanimously to keep out Saul Alinsky, yet they would not approve a civilian review board.

The board that exists is run by the police. He asked the question, "If you knew your brother, one of your own, had done something wrong, would you expose him?"

The city council says use what you have — "We don't have anything."

Mr. Robert Treuhaft, an Oakland attorney, was the second speaker to address the commission on police community relations:

"There exists in Oakland today a serious crisis of confidence in public authority," he said.

"The chief of police from 1949 to 1955 was Lester J. Divine. While he was chief we received an average of one referral a month of cases involving police beatings, rolling of drunks, and other misconduct. Abuses during Divine's administration were so widespread that an assembly committee held a three-day hearing in Oakland on police brutality.

QUIET DEPUTY

"Divine was succeeded by Wyam Vernon, a quiet deputy about whom very little was known. The quality of Vernon's short tenure is remarkably instructive because it shows how honest and fearless administration from the top can transform the character of a police department.

"Vernon was succeeded in 1959 by Chief Toothman. The Toothman approach to police-citizen relations was quite different. He supported a get-tough policy, backed the police down the line and rejected all criticism as unfounded.

"His idea of improving the public image was to invite ministers to ride around with police in patrol cars, to show how difficult was their task and how well they

did it. This gives about as true a picture as inviting ministers to inspect prison conditions on Sundays from two to five. During Toothman's tenure (1959-1966) the old abuses crept back and community relations have deteriorated accordingly.

"Where do we stand now? The Luther Smith case serves as an instructive illustration. . .

"Our public officials continue to be blind to the problems that threaten to shake this community," Mr. Treuhaft concluded. "They are as intransigent now as when Mayor Houlihan arrogantly reminded minority group leaders that he was responsible not to them but to the so-called majority."

and only two who speak Spanish. No effort has been made to hire any more.

AMERICAN BROTHEL

Following Mr. Rodriguez John George, chairman of the board of directors of the police affairs committee addressed the commission.

"Oakland is an American brothel," he said, "because in this city Negroes see every day the prostitution of the fundamental principals of American democracy.

"The attitude of the city of Oakland toward the needs, demands, and legitimate aspiration of the Negro people is one of hostility. This hostility is ex-



Tapia and Rodriguez

Photo: Howard Harawitz

The third speaker, Armando Rodriguez, opened his testimony in Spanish to demonstrate how Mexican-Americans feel when they come into contact with police who do not speak Spanish and are not able to defend themselves even verbally. He called for:

1. Better understanding for those who do not speak English.
2. Opportunities for people who are not necessarily destitute to qualify for a Public Defender.
3. Exposure of ticket quotas set up by city police and highway patrolmen and issued as directives from the departments. Police are told to park their cars in areas of high concentration of Mexican-Americans and Negroes to fill their quotas.

Mr. Rodriguez then cited that there are 617 police in Oakland

pressed through a harsh and overbearing police department. The Oakland police department is being used to keep Negroes in their place. The place that Negroes are in now in this city is intolerable and unbearable. Therefore, one thing that all Negroes in the city agree on is that the status quo cannot continue. Since the Oakland police are being used as front line troops to hold down this revolution, they and the Negro community are on a collision course.

"The city of Oakland surrounded by cosmopolitan San Francisco and the university city of Berkeley, suffers from an inferiority complex. Oakland tries to compensate for this inferiority by the show of a tough face, with a pug nose. This pugnacious-

ness is exemplified by Mr. William F. Knowland, publisher of the Oakland Tribune. Mr. J. Frank Coakley, district attorney of Alameda county, Mr. Frank Madigan, sheriff of Alameda county, former police chief of the city of Oakland, John Houlihan, former mayor of the city of Oakland, the present police chief of the city of Oakland, Robert Preston, and a member of the Oakland board of education Alan Lindsay.

"This city subscribes to the philosophy of: 'Let them hate, so long as they fear.'"

INTERNAL AFFAIRS

"The Oakland Internal Affairs section has been cited by the Harvard Law Review for denying the complainant a hearing. The aggrieved person must submit his complaint in writing; he may not testify personally before this section; nor may he offer witnesses; nor is he told of the section's findings, but only of the final determination on his case.

"The procedures of the Oakland police department Internal Affairs section allows the police to take a criminal deposition of the victim of police brutality. Under these procedures while the Oakland police department is allowed to take the criminal deposition of the victim of police brutality, the victim is not allowed to take the statement of the police officer involved. This is one-sided and unfair. No good can come of it and no good has come of it.

OEDC PROPOSAL

The proposal of the Oakland Police Affairs committee, which has been approved by the Oakland Economic Development Council, calls for a thirty-member hearing panel which would split into four panels to sit at regularly scheduled times at the city's four poverty program neighborhood centers. Each panel would have representatives of business, labor, churches and the professions; in addition each panel would provide a slot for a neighborhood representative and for a member of the Oakland police department. The requested annual funding of \$23,000 would go primarily to hire three full-time staffers — a trained investigator and two assistants — who would work with the panel in recording and investigating complaints. But instead of recommending discipline for offending policemen, the Oakland reviewing system would help the com-

plainant seek redress for his grievance and would follow each complaint through to its resolution. Depending upon the case, redress could mean file a civil suit, take the case to a local or federal court or to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, or filing the complaint with the police department. These are the channels that the Oakland police department say exist for the processing of civilian complaints, therefore the reviewing system proposed by the Oakland Police Affairs Committee recognizes these existing channels and will assist complainants in the full utilization of these channels.

"Oakland is a tinderbox that could explode any moment," Mr. George concluded. "It would be far cheaper to install a safety valve than to endure the losses of a full-fledged riot in the Oakland flats."



Photo: Howard Harawitz
Preston and Gaine

Police Chief Robert Preston was the final speaker at the hearings. Chief Preston cited the community relations program in which all Oakland police take part which aims at creating two-way communication between the community and the department. He said it is a policy of the police department to work with groups in target areas. He said there are now 40 vacancies in the department and called for minority members to apply—the department will take any qualified person.

Preston admitted there are some misconducts, but cited the low number of sustained complaints. Regarding the "intelligence section" he said it only deals with organized crime.

Chief Preston said the police department is opposed to a civilian review board. He said the police are familiar with police affairs, therefore they should look into all complaints concerning them. Otherwise, their authority would be lost. As a member of the Civil Rights Commission pointed out to Chief Preston however that any case of misconduct such as that of a doctor's malpractice (which Chief Preston had used to support his argument) is ultimately tried before a jury—of civilians.



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By Willard Chastain

THE OFFICIAL VIEW

Cited By R. Treuhaft

The following comments on the situation of police community relations were all made in public addresses during National Police Week, (May 15-21).

District Attorney Coakley:

"There is nothing wrong with the Oakland police department. The Communist conspiracy has created disrespect for law and constituted authority."

Mayor Reading:

"I am convinced we have one of the best police forces in the nation."

Police Captain Palmer Stinson:

"Nearly all critics of police are from the radical left." "Charges of police brutality and demands for a civilian police review board are," he

said, "part of a conspiracy against law and order," the work of "opportunistic radicals" and "identified subversives."

This expert on the civil rights movement also noted that "the tragedy of the civil rights situation today is the reaction of legitimate leaders of the movement who seem to feel that they must follow the "excessive militancy" of extremists to keep their positions of leadership."

And finally, Police Sgt. Sam Mullins, president of the Oakland Police Department Welfare Association, expressing complete satisfaction with existing channels for handling citizens complaints, informed the mayor and the city council that Oakland police officers would not cooperate with "any type of review unit" not already in existence.