

Lack Of Manpower Curtailing Livonia Police Dept.?

EDITOR:

The members of the Livonia Police Officers' Association would like to praise Commissioner Donald Nicholson's stand in the recent police adequacy controversy. Although he is an appointee of the mayor -- Mr. Nicholson ignored political considerations and "held it like it was" -- he went as far as to resign, thus taking up your time with a lengthy, dry, "cry-baby" type of letter -- let us, instead, elaborate on the commissioner's statements (since we are not mayor appointees) and ask you, the taxpayers, some relevant questions about the existing police services.

[DO YOU CARE IF:]
1. On most days (7 a.m. to 3 p.m.) there are only five or six one-man section cars to handle the radio calls, traffic enforcement, and crime prevention in our 36-square-mile city. This figures out to approximately six square miles of coverage per section car, when the car is not busy on a report, an arrest, directing traffic, etc. Of course, each time a police unit calls out of service, the local coverage automatically decreases. An average arrest, for example, will tie a section car up in the station for around an hour -- longer if it's a one-man car, or a multiple arrest.

2. On most afternoons (3 p.m. to 11 p.m.) there are usually only six to eight section cars to handle the above duties. Most of these cars are one-man, and these are the hours of peak workload for the patrol bureau. The third platoon, or afternoon shift, will, especially during the summer months, handle anywhere from 40 to 60 radio runs -- and sometimes more. Crime calls are not closely allied with these calls, many of which are non-criminal in nature, but still requiring police attention.

3. On most midnights (11 p.m. to 7 a.m.) there are only four or five section cars (two-man) to patrol the subdivisions, check the many business places, and enforce traffic laws. If several officers happen to call in sick on the same night, then there is one less police car on the streets. This is the shift when the majority of our serious burglaries are committed.

4. A police officer is assaulted while working alone, and cannot get back to the radio in his police car for assistance.

5. You place a call to the police department and a radio call, and then wait for up to 45 minutes for the police car to arrive. This is because at few times are all, or even most of the section cars in service.

6. You make a complaint of a criminal nature, and due to the staggering workload in our detective bureau, you receive no more than a cursory follow-up phone call, and then never hear any more from them. Unless your report is strictly for insurance purposes, and you are not interested in the apprehension of the culprit and subsequent prosecution, we feel you deserve better than this.

As it is now, due to insufficient detective power (although the few we have are doing a tremendous job just investigating and prosecuting the more serious felony crimes), most misdemeanor and minor felony complaints, where there are no suspects, are being "slopped-off" -- not through laziness, but through sheer necessity.

Unfortunately, any additional detectives and plain-clothes patrolmen for the Youth Bureau, Intelligence Bureau, etc., must come from the existing manpower, i.e., the patrol bureau -- and the patrol bureau itself is presently undermanned. The Livonia police strength in ratio to population should be 220 men, according to national standards. Our present strength is 99 men.

Top wages do, as a general rule, procure top-notch people. This city is fortunate, indeed, that it has the high caliber of men it does for not-so-top wages. It is on determination, wages, that we have managed to "hang in there" as well as we have under the present conditions (which are getting worse as the city grows).

The philosophy that if you pay top wages to competent people,

READERS' FORUM

Letters must be limited to 300 words.

Letters must be signed, with the writer's address. Names will be withheld only at the writer's request and for good cause.

Please type or write plainly. The editor reserves the right to reject unsuitable letters.

you need less people to perform the tasks at hand is so much rubbish. The massive and every-growing volume of complaints threatens to eventually engulf us unless something is done -- and done soon. Expensive and up-to-date equipment we need, and need badly -- but all the equipment in the world is no good without sufficient manpower (well-trained, well-paid, and dedicated) to utilize it.

LIVONIA POLICE OFFICERS' ASSN.

Picture Captions Unfair, We Agree

EDITOR: I was embarrassed by your picture captions under the top picture on the front page of Aug. 13 issue of The Livonia Observer. The comments referring to the named modern day robbers, "Back Rogers," "it's a boy" etc., struck me as snide remarks devoid of creativity or humor and smacking of insult to the dignity and humanity of the individual.

No criticism is intended of Martha Mahan's article in which she reported with apparent impartiality the meeting attended by the same students referred to in the inebriated captions. Being more than twice the age of the pictured teenagers, I do not consider myself a member of the "New Generation" and have been more than once a critic of campus revolt and certain youth activities.

However, when I see such thoughtless examples of insensitive discriminatory use of language, I can conclude only that certain segments of the population have no regard for the feelings of youth.

It is particularly sad when you consider that these youth will make up the leadership of our community in the future and when we look for persons to defend our "freedom," it is to this group that we turn.

It is popular today to decry the "generation gap." Such ill-advised tactics suggested by these captions emphasize the fact.

Newspaper personnel claim to write what the people want to read. Perhaps we of the older generation should ask ourselves how we are so quick to criticize, make fun of, and over-react to the life styles of youth.

Is this not a fair question to a free society? LOUISE M. VARLEY Livonia

Helpful License Examiner Praised

EDITOR: So many times things are said about the unpleasant attitudes of grownups toward young kids and teenagers. Well, I observed a gentleman at the Drivers License Bureau on Five Mile Road whom I think is worth mentioning in your local paper. I admired him for being so pleasant, patient and "give up of it," for making the young people feel comfortable while taking their tests for temporary permits.

I met the gentleman early in the morning. We had to go back during the afternoon to get the permit and his attitude had not changed. He was as friendly and pleasant as in the early morning.

By that time he must have talked to at least 90 to 100

young boys and girls, as they were giving the test to about 11 or 12 people every hour. I understand we have about 1,500 teenagers this summer who are applying for temporary permits so the gentleman is doing a tremendous job. I personally saw a young boy who was absolutely shaking, he seemed very nervous. After exchanging a few words, the young man was very relaxed and had no problem doing his test.

As a mother of three children, I wish we had more people like that young man as he was a wonderful example that even a young person can be respected and you get much better results. MRS. GERHARD HEILMAN Livonia

Claims Mayor Brown Target Of Abuse

EDITOR: Much has been said by the numerous politicians seeking election and by various newsmen in their editorial comments; I would like to add some of my own thoughts regarding the coming election and some of the candidates.

I would like to point out that Thomas H. Brown, our mayor, has been the target of abuse buried at him by some members of the city council all of which is un-warranted. The mayor has been blamed for things for which the council is to blame. Naturally, it would be to the advantage of a candidate seeking the office of mayor if he could in any way discredit him.

The present mayor has done an exceptionally good job during his term in office, especially

with the difficulties he has had with certain members of the council.

It is my hope and belief that Thomas H. Brown, a good man and a great mayor, will be elected by a surprisingly great majority and that we will again see a familiar face on the city council, as well as other changes in council seats to assure a smooth running and more efficient administration.

Mayor Brown is one of the few truly dedicated men who have been elected by the people in this area.

I have resided in the township for 28 years and in the area of Westland for the past 12 years and I feel qualified to make a judgment of the local situation. I might add that after having lived for 60 years a person acquires a certain amount of wisdom (or "savvy") which involves an attentive ear for some very serious thinking and soul searching in the coming election.

W.H. (BILL) SWEET Westland

Agrees Much Work To Be Done

EDITOR: It was very thoughtful of you to send me a copy of your paper as I have found it most interesting.

Much work is yet to be done -- by the residents of Detroit as well as the suburbanites -- to eliminate the racial tensions. You and your staff are to be commended on the constructive work you are doing in this direction.

ED. CAREY, President City of Detroit Common Council

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