

Police overuse of force

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of those shot by police in seven cities during the 70s were Black. James Fyfe revealed what seems to be a contradictory result. Studying police shootings occurring over a five-year period in New York, 1971-1975, Fyfe saw shootings that stemmed from incidents in which officers were assaulted. It seems that Blacks were involved in weapon assaults on officers.

Police as a general rule do not shoot college professors, physicians, infants or shopkeepers.

The Black group of citizens are in poverty and have the poorest form of political representation. They do not enjoy the same rights as the white population. If a Black citizen is gunned down by police, his constitutional rights are taken away. He is not guaranteed the right of due process if he is dead.

Community and Its Fear

Throughout this country Blacks have fear of police. They see police officers as crazy, gun-wielding cowboys, quick to shoot or attack citizens without due cause.

It is unfortunate, but the white community should be very alarmed about what happened to Mr. Stevenson in the city of Portland. This kind of police killing of Blacks has existed for over 200 years. Many of the major cities throughout the United States have done very little to curb the overuse of deadly force.

With the lack of education and economic disadvantages, there will continue to be a greater increasing number of Blacks caught up in the criminal justice system.

Over the years, law enforcement agencies have had a policy of covering up any use of deadly force involving their officers. Some are guilty of murder. These men will either be suspended for a period of time or asked to resign. On very few occasions have these men been brought up on criminal charges.

Humiliating Effects

The psychological effect of what

bad seeds do to police departments is devastating. These bad police officers give the Black community the impression that the average officer is racist. The professional officers that are trying to do a good job are blanketed with the same label.

Many times these good officers find themselves acting out that label since the citizens think they are bad anyway.

Pressure on the officer sometimes is overwhelming to bear the brunt of what some bad cops have done. The psychological embarrassment of wearing the badge brings on more stress when the community becomes fearful of the officer.

Most professional police officers seek the respect and admiration of the general public.

Who said "Justice will triumph?" Who said "Justice for all?" As police officers operate in a society that is unfair to a minority group because of skin color, they must acknowledge to themselves that there is institutionalized discrimination.

He will have to search within himself and throw away perceptions of stereotype ideals about Blacks that have dampened his subconscious for so many years. Learning to focus in on the actual criminal or the real potential suspect is the part of policing that needs to be addressed. Treating citizens with unfounded suspicion has no merit. The American police departments must overcome the unequal treatment of its citizens. With large segments of minority communities growing at alarming rates, so is the growth of frustration and tension. If behaviors do not change, this generation will experience a tribulation of violent confrontations. It will be up to that professional officer to separate himself from the racist attitude of the general society. His judgment in the field must reflect fairness and decency until the departments as a whole develop a professional structure throughout all of its agencies.



Healthwatch

by Steven Bailey, N.D. and Adam Ladd, N.D.

New childbirth ideas feature natural methods

"When millions of men have touched a newborn baby, we'll be in a new society."

—Michel Odent MD, July 24, 1985

I had the opportunity last week to attend an all-day workshop conducted by one of the world's most famous promoters of natural childbirth. Dr. Michel Odent, who heads the obstetrics departments of Pithiviers General Hospital in France, calls himself a "radical," yet has produced one of the finest birth records in modern society.

While he emphasizes a return to more "natural conditions," he adds that many current medical practices actually help cause the need for the invasive and traumatic management of birth common to most American and European hospitals. While he freely admits that Caesarian Sections have saved thousands of lives, he feels and his record shows that way too many "C" sections result from current practices.

Dr. Odent was brought to Portland by the Oregon Gentle Birth Project, a group of doctors and mid-

wives who plan to 1) lower infant mortality by 50 percent within the next two years, and 2) help bring healthier and happier babies into the world. The Gentle Birth Project admits that the first goal is huge, but feel that principles such as Dr. Odent as well as other pre-natal work can produce much better mortality statistics than currently found in American hospitals.

Bob Doughton, M.D., obstetrician from St. Vincent's Hospital, and one of the founding members of the Oregon Project, served as moderator for the workshop, and explained some of his views that are leading him to a more natural approach toward birth. While Dr. Doughton has been in charge of over 20,000 hospital births, he has only recently begun doing home deliveries, and manifests a philosophy quite dissimilar to his peers. His membership (with Dr. Odent and Dr. Freud, grandson of Sigmund) in the North American Society for peri-natal psychology has led him to such statements as the "baby is in control of the case" rather than the current belief that the doctor

should control the birth, which mirrors some of the principle text of Dr. Odent's workshop.

Dr. Odent began his practice in a small French hospital 23 years ago. As he was the only person in the town who could do "C" sections, he immediately became quite active in obstetrics. Over the years he has left the role of "control" and now seeks to "help the mothers" with the least disturbance of their privacy and thus the optimal natural environment. He is quick to point out that in nature animals will seek out a quite dark area to give birth, and that the high level of stimulation and activity found in hospitals will actually interfere with the natural production of hormones and prostaglandins that serve to promote a painless and healthy birth.

Pointing out that the current position of birth (laying on one's back) is a remnant of Louis the 14th, who demanded that the doctors place his wife in a position that gave him a full view of the delivery. While this position was not developed through scientific reasoning it has remained (thanks to Louie's ego) for 300 years.

Dr. Odent points out that not only do you lose the assistance of gravity but that this position results in the baby's weight being located directly over the mother's primary arteries which supply the blood for the uterus needed for labor. Therefore, he feels that this position is one of the most unnatural positions for birth. He allows each mother to choose the position(s) in which they feel most comfortable (which is usually a semi-squatting position).

There are many "radical" ideas in Dr. Odent's philosophy, which are brought out in his two books, *Birth Reborn* and *Entering the World*. Some of these ideas include the use of warm baths during stage one of labor, letting the mother maintain her privacy, avoidance of all unnecessary stimulation, no pain medications and weekly singing groups for the expectant mothers. These concepts will be covered next week, and will be followed by an article by Sarah Taylor, a local midwife from Northeast Portland. Until next week, may yours be a healthy and happy life.

Bicycle fatalities on the rise

Bicycle related fatalities nationwide increased by over seven percent during 1984, according to Thomas P. McGuigan, Bicycle Coordinator for Multnomah County. McGuigan cited statistics just released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In 1984 bicycle fatalities totalled 900, while 839 deaths were reported in 1983.

"Unfortunately," McGuigan stated, "the study did not speculate on the cause of the increase in bicycle related deaths. However, there are measures that can be taken by both motorists and bicyclists to reduce the chance of an accident." He offered these safety tips.

Bicyclists can increase their safety by:

—Being predictable. This includes obeying all traffic signs and signals. Under state law, cyclists must stop at stop signs and red lights. Bicyclists are also required to ride with the flow of traffic. Riding against traffic is a leading cause of accidents. Riding in a straight line is safer than weaving in and out between parked cars. In slow traffic, such as in downtown areas, cyclists are better off riding in the middle of the lane where they are more visible. Bicycle riders should also use hand signals when turning and they should not pass cars on the right.

—Being alert. When riding next to parked cars, watch out for opening doors and cars pulling out. It is wise to ride three feet away from parked cars. Keep both hands ready to brake. Riding "no-hands" shows you can balance a bicycle (something most people can do), but it doesn't demonstrate your common sense. Watch for road hazards such as railroad tracks, potholes, gravel and others. Scanning the road behind you and establishing eye contact with drivers will

add to a cyclist's safety.

—Being equipped. Wear a hard shell helmet! Many bicycle accidents involve head injuries that could have been avoided with a helmet. Make sure your bike is well equipped and in good repair. Front and rear lights are required at night. Be sure to lock your bike with a U-shaped high security lock.

Motorists can help make bicycling safer and more enjoyable by:

—Sharing the road. Bicyclists are considered vehicles under state law and they have the same rights to the road as other vehicles.

—Passing carefully. It is not always possible for bicyclists to ride next to the curb because of road hazards that motorists may not even be able to see. Wait until you can pass safely, allowing at least three feet between your car and the bike. If you can't pass right away, be patient.

—Turning carefully. Look for bikes when turning or changing lanes. Bicycles can travel surprisingly fast, so don't try to cut in front of them.

—Watching for bicycles. Before opening your car door or pulling out from the curb, look for a bicycle coming down the road.

—Respecting cyclists. It is often safer for a bicyclist to be in the middle of the lane, especially at intersections and in slow moving traffic, so don't yell at them or blow your horn — they have a right to be there.

"If motorists and bicyclists watch for each other, respect each other, and follow the rules of the road," stated Mr. McGuigan, "I am confident we can reverse the trend of increasing bicycle related accidents."

For more information on bicycling in Multnomah County, contact the Multnomah County Bikeways Program at 248-3998.

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