

# PORTLAND OBSERVER

Volume XVII, Number 23

April 15, 1987

25¢

## Davis-Clark Episode Common Between Police Chiefs and Mayors

by Jerry Garner

The dispute between former Portland Police Chief James T. Davis and Mayor Bud Clark, which resulted in Davis' firing, is common among police chiefs and the nation's mayors. There are three main reasons for such incidents—the police resistance to reforms, the politicization of policing, and the structure of some city governments.

It's not surprising that Davis was upset with Clark over the Mayor's refusal to increase the police budget so the Bureau could hire 30 additional officers. Clark rejected Davis' claim that the Bureau needed the new officers and state that if the Bureau improved its managerial procedures, it could free 25 police personnel for patrol duties and could also do a better job of crime fighting if it improved its scheduling and telephone procedures.

Davis, as expected, took exception to the criticism, for he, like most police superiors, resents any form of criticism directed at his department. Such criticism, when valid, leads to reforms. Historically the police have shown great disdain towards reforms. The Portland Police Bureau's resistance is well documented. When former city commissioner Charles Jordan was in charge of the Bureau, he tried to implement, with limited success, reform within the Bureau.

Jordan also tried to improve the worsening relations between the Police Bureau and African Americans, and to make individual officers accountable for their behavior. Sadly, the majority of the rank-and-file officers and some upper-level managers didn't embrace Jordan's philosophy.

When Jordan fired two white officers after they dumped dead opossums in front of a Black-owned restaurant, the police union responded to the firings by staging a mass protest rally. An arbitrator later reinstated the two officers. The rank-and-file of the Bureau also fought the creation of the Police Internal Investigation Audit Committee (PIIAC).

The PIIAC was approved by voters in 1982. Its charge is to monitor the internal investigation process of civilian complaints against individual officers and the Bureau. "Jordan supported the formation of the PIIAC.

Mayor Clark's problems with the Bureau were predictable from the start of his administration. Former Chief Ron Still knew that Clark would implement some reforms in the Bureau and retired before Clark took office. When Clark named former Chief Penny Harrington as his chief, he immediately received the rap of many in the Bureau—the police union and upper-level commanders didn't respect Harrington's leadership, resented her dialogue with Black community leaders, and were openly critical of past action she initiated against police officers violating citizens' rights.

Clark and Harrington alienated the rank-and-file further when Harrington fired the two officers involved in the 'Don't Choke 'Em, Smoke 'Em' T-shirt incident. She ordered Portland Police Association president Stan Peters back to work after it was revealed that he was receiving a salary from the city without performing work.

Secondly, during the last decade or so, policing has been used as a power mechanism by the police. The police are aware of the public pre-occupation regarding crime in their communities. They use the public's fear of crime as a political tool for leverage with city officials during budget and labor negotiations, and disciplinary proceedings. The police are well aware that politicians don't like to be portrayed as being soft on crime. Indeed, one cannot find a politician who is seeking public office who doesn't have a strong anti-crime agenda in their platform.

The rapid politicization of the police seems to rest on three main factors:

- A simplistic and apocalyptic ideology: The police generally hold a narrow and unsophisticated outlook. The majority of them explain the world in terms of human intertentionality. That is, individuals act solely out of evil motives, not because of social, political, or psychological factors. Civilian auditing panels, protesters, and civil rights organizations, to the police, are run by evil individuals. This view held by many police officers, greatly shapes the performance and behavior of the police in dealing with crime.



Mayor Bud Clark and former Chief Davis during happier times.

Photo by Richard J. Brown

politicians, and minority groups. It is not simply that they dislike political dissenters and African Americans, they believe such persons are bent on destroying the American way of life.

- Organization: The politicization of policing has been built due to pre-existing organizational frame work through which their ambitions could be readily expressed—the police subculture. Police politicization became a reality because they simply have been able to adapt old organizations to new goals and tactics.

- Experience: The police have learned about their potential political power through a series of successful battles that have given them tremendous bargaining power in dealing with city officials, through their successful labor agreements that favor them, and which has weakened management control over individual officers and police bureaus. During these campaigns the police gained considerable political savvy and made contact with many potential political allies.

Finally, conflicts between police chiefs and mayors occur due to the structure of some cities' form of government. Portland, like many other cities, gives the Mayor the control of the Police Bureau. Critics of this form of government argue that police can exploit the political climate under such a structure, and that a commission form of government is weak because

it consolidates both the legislative and executive functions of government as the official responsibilities of the same individuals.

Davis refused to obey Mayor Clark's order to cease harassing the City Auditor Office for copies of the audit working papers that disputed his claim for additional officers. Davis perhaps felt that Clark didn't want to appoint another police chief less than a year after he forced former chief Harrington to resign, and took the Mayor to the limit, which resulted in his firing.

In an attempt to prevent the police from manipulating the political climate during time of crisis, some cities have removed the police chief, and in some cases police bureau, from the direct supervision of the mayor. Instead, they've given the responsibility of supervising police departments to the director of public safety or to a city manager.

Given the fact that the police are now a powerful political force, the kind of dispute the city has just witnessed between Mayor Clark and former Chief Davis will probably occur again, not only in Portland, but across the nation. The Portland Police Department, like most departments, is self-conscious, organized, right-winged politically, and searching for far-reaching political power. They're rejecting their traditional role as the enforcers of established political and social policies. They now seek the power to determine these policies. This is a dangerous phenomenon and should not go unnoticed.

## Anti-Apartheid Activist Speaks At King Facility

by Jerry Garner

Laurie Nathan, age 27, an anti-apartheid activist from South Africa and co-founder of the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), addressed a community meeting last Tuesday at the King Neighborhood Facility, 4815 N.E. 7th. Nathan was in Portland as part of a six-week tour of the United States sponsored by the War Registers League. During his appearance at King, Nathan informed those who gathered at the meeting about the progress of the ECC movement in South Africa.

The ECC is an organization which attempts to mobilize young white males to resist being drafted into the South African Defense Force (SADF). In South Africa, whites must register for the draft at 16 and can be drafted for a two-year tour of duty. In addition, each year, until they have served another two years, they are required to return to service in 30- to 90-day military camps.

Nathan said as the violence in South Africa escalates, more and more whites are refusing to serve in the SADF. He said last year some 7,500 whites refused induction for military services. "Some avoid the draft by moving around the country without notifying the government of their new addresses. Others leave the country entirely," Nathan said. Furthermore, he said some 600 SADF soldiers have attempted suicide in protest of the government's mandatory military policy.

Nathan said ECC members are harassed regularly by the repressive security forces in South Africa. He recalls incidences in which members of his organization homes and vehicles were bombed and members were detained. In an effort to weaken the effectiveness of the ECC, Nathan said the government has passed a law making it a crime for anyone to speak against the SADF. Under the law, if a person is found guilty, he or she could be sentenced to 10 years in prison and fined 20,000 South African rands.

Nathan has been underground and hiding since last June's state of emergency. He is in danger of being detained immediately upon returning to South Africa after this tour. However, this doesn't appear to bother Nathan. He has publicly state that he will refuse to serve in the South African Defense Force. "This would involve taking up arms against fellow country people who are struggling against an evil system. I will never fight or serve in the SADF. I am only willing to serve my country in a real constructive way, outside of any current governmental structure, in a way that addresses the needs of the majority of South Africa's people."

He said since the government imposed the state of emergency, more than 25,000 South Africans have been detained. Of this amount, some 10,000 are children under the age of 18. He said many of the children are tortured while in detention by security forces.

Nathan calls for American people to continue their protest against apartheid in South Africa. He praised 11 Reed College students who occupied an office to protest the College's investments in South Africa. Nathan stated that such actions make a difference in dismantling the apartheid regime. "South Africans who are fighting against the system of apartheid are aware of your efforts here and greatly appreciate it."

The ECC leader also voiced his concerns regarding the degree of racism he has experienced during his visit to the United States. Nathan told those at the meeting that the U.S. could do more to dismantle apartheid in his country if they do more to eliminate racism in America.

Nathan is currently working on a book about the history of opposition to conscription in South Africa. He is employed by Catholic International Relations.



Activists representing many Portland organizations listened as Laurie Nathan spoke of the growing white resistance to military service in South Africa. Photo by Richard J. Brown