

Post 9/7/68

Chicago, N.Y. Police Offer Variety of 'Don'ts'

By
**William
Raspberry**



WASHINGTON'S policemen have been accused of a good many abuses, including brutality. And they are no doubt guilty of many of them, again including brutality.

But they look positively good in light of the cross brutality recently displayed by officers in Chicago and New York.

Even those people who have dismissed as exaggeration or outright lies earlier reports of police brutality

are beginning to take a new look following events in those two cities.

Angry Washingtonians argue with their police officials about such things as "good judgment" and "necessary force." But such nice questions were forgotten in New York and Chicago, as policemen attacked — there is no other word for it — unarmed citizens with whom they disagreed politically.

AT ONE LEVEL, it may be stretching a point to link the Chicago and New York episodes. The nighty skirmishes during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago had at least some provocation.

There were hippies, yipsies and other assorted demonstrators, some of whom had openly announced their intention to defy police or-

ders and even to overturn the political system.

Chicago's policemen, in the face of such threats, had to do something. What they have been criticized for is for doing the wrong thing, and too much of it.

In New York, there was no occasion for the off-duty officers to do anything at all. Gathered at a Brooklyn courthouse, apparently to observe the trial of some members of the militant Black Panthers group on charges of assaulting an officer, they spotted other members of the Panthers and proceeded to beat them.

Thus, even if it were possible to dismiss the Chicago events as abysmally poor judgment, the New York incident has to remain blatant, unabashed brutality.

Common to both episodes,

however, is the fact that the policemen were confused as to their proper role.

IN CHICAGO, police were confronted with a raging bunch of unshaven, unwashed radicals whose ideas and appearance were totally repugnant to them—perhaps also to the majority of Americans.

And when the officers were given orders to enforce bans against marches and demonstrations, they had their opportunity to do something about it.

Night after night, they found themselves reacting not just to specific law violations, which was their sworn duty, but to distasteful ideologies, which are not a policeman's proper concern.

They became not police-

men but head-cracking superpatriots, not enforcers of the law but defenders of a system.

The New Yorkers, while apparently bent on avenging fellow officers whom some Black Panthers had been accused of assaulting, may also have seen themselves as defending society against the threat of black militancy.

SOMEHOW the point has to be gotten across that there are some things a policeman simply cannot do and has no business attempting.

He can enforce the law, but he must not delude himself into thinking that he is the law. He can defend the society against lawlessness, but he cannot defend it against ideas, however repugnant.