

## *Above the Law?* <sup>Ex 11/10/66</sup>

When is an investigation not an investigation? Why, when the police conduct it, of course. Some time ago the Metropolitan Police Department was forbidden by the District Commissioners to make any more arrests for investigation. Currently, therefore, when they believe a person to be guilty but lack sufficient evidence to take him before a Commissioner and charge him with a specific crime, they arrest him and take him to a police station where they interrogate him for a maximum period of three hours (exclusive of interruptions) in order to elicit from him admissions upon which to base their charge and establish the probable cause requisite to justify the arrest in the first place. Always obedient to civilian authority, however, they have entirely stopped calling this procedure an arrest for investigation.

But suppose that three hours of interrogation (exclusive of interruptions) should not be sufficient to produce the desired admissions. Why, there is a way around this difficulty, too, of course.

When is an interrogation not an interrogation? Answer: when it is conducted with the aid of a lie detector. If an arrested person requests, or agrees to take, a polygraph examination, the time so spent is not counted as part of the interrogation period.

For their ingenuity in semantics, the police deserve the highest praise. But a police department that arrogates to itself the authority belonging to courts to determine whether an arrest is justified and which engages in an obvious circumvention of court orders respecting the detention of arrested persons is a police department which is acting as though it were above the law. It is very unlikely to promote popular respect for the law in this way.