

# Editor

## ACLU on Confessions

In his recent letter attacking the ACLU position on police interrogation, the spokesman for the International Association of Chiefs of Police provides significant insights into the police view of obtaining confessions.

How does the IACP characterize the practice of confining the accused in the back room of a station house, isolating him from all outside support, and subjecting him to "psychological persuasion" to incriminate himself? Just "salesmanship," says the IACP. As a professor of Contract Law, and the author of a book on Contracts, I can assure the Chiefs of Police that a contract induced by their kind of "salesmanship" would be denied enforcement in every court in the United States.

The IACP concedes that "some suspects who are questioned by the police turn out to be innocent." The fact is that many people who confess to the police turn out to be innocent. Certainly, not every police officer will coerce a confession, but the back-room interrogation is precisely the context that encourages—and conceals — coercion by those policemen who are so inclined.

Moreover, nowhere in their letter do the Chiefs of Police give even passing mention to the constitutional rights at issue. These include the right to counsel, the privilege against self-incrimination, and equal protection of the laws.

The motto of the unscrupulous salesman in the commercial world is, "Let the buyer beware!" Of the IACP's brand of salesmanship, let the citizen beware. The cost of their pottage is our American birthright.

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