

POLITICAL POWER OF POLICE DECRIED

**Violence Panel Study Says
Militancy Seems Beyond
'Reasonable Bounds'**

By JOHN HERBERS

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WASHINGTON, June 10—

A study group of the National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence said today that the police had emerged as "a self-conscious, independent political power," which in many cities and states "rivals even duly elected officials in influence."

"This poses serious problems," the group said, "for police, just as courts, are expected to be neutral and non-political—even the appearance of partiality impairs public confidence in the legal system. Thus, difficult though it may be to articulate standards for police conduct, the present police militancy seems to have exceeded reasonable bounds."

'Police Violence'

J. Edgar Hoover, director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, was blamed by the group for having helped spread the view among the police ranks that any kind of mass protest is due to a conspiracy promulgated by agitators, often Communists, "who misdirect otherwise contented people."

The group said this view was behind much of the politicization of the police as well as widespread use of "police violence" against demonstrators.

The report of the task force on demonstrations, protests and

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group violence was released by the commission without comment or evaluation. The group was directed by Jerome H. Skolnick, a member of the Center for the Study of Law and Society at the University of California at Berkeley. The 262-page report was based on material collected from many sources and field research conducted for less than five months.

In its central conclusion, the group warned against the control of organized protests purely with sophisticated police techniques.

'Garrison Cities'

"A democratic society cannot depend upon force as its recurrent answer to long-standing and legitimate grievances," the report said. "This nation cannot have it both ways: either it will carry through a firm commitment to massive and widespread political and social reform, or it will develop into a society of garrison cities where order is enforced without due process of law and without the consent of the governed."

The authors viewed the police situation with particular alarm.

"We find that the policeman in America is overworked, undertrained, underpaid and undereducated," the report said.

"His difficulties are compounded by a view expounded at all law enforcement levels—from the director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to the patrolman on the beat. This view gives little consideration to the effects of such social factors as poverty and discrimination and virtually ignores the possibility of legitimate social discontent."

Mr. Hoover, the report said, testified before the commission on Sept. 18, 1968, that "Communists are in the forefront of civil rights, antiwar and student demonstrations, many of which ultimately become disorderly and erupt into violence."

'Organizer' Cited

He cited as an example Bettina Aptheker Kurzweil, a mem-

ber of the Communist National Committee, who was a "leading organizer" of the free speech demonstrations at Berkeley in the fall of 1964.

But an investigating committee appointed by the regents of the University of California found "no evidence that the free speech movement was organized by the Communist party, the progressive labor movement or any other outside group."

"Mr. Hoover's statement is significant not only because he is our nation's highest and most renowned law enforcement official," the report said, "but also because his views are reflected and disseminated throughout the nation—by publicity in the news media and by F.B.I. seminars, briefings, and training for local policemen."

As a result, the report said, the police frequently do not distinguish "dissent" from "subversion."

"Police view students, the antiwar protestors and blacks as a danger to our political system, and racial prejudice pervades the police attitudes and actions," the report said. "No government institution appears so deficient in its under-

standing of the constructive role of dissent in a constitutional democracy as the police."

A spokesman for the F.B.I. declined comment on the remarks about Mr. Hoover.

The report said the police had become "increasingly frustrated, alienated and angry" and that they were protesting and challenging civilian authority.

"It should not be surprising that police response to mass protest has resulted in steady escalation of conflict, hostility and violence," the study group said. "The police violence during the Democratic National Convention in Chicago was not

a unique phenomenon — we have found numerous instances where violence has been initiated or exacerbated by police actions and attitudes."

The report said there had been a tremendous growth in organized police lobbying. In one unidentified West Coast city where the group conducted interviews, one policeman said the "practice has been to put 'pressure' on city council members directly through phone calls, luncheons and the like." Several examples of alleged police defiance of civilian authority were cited.