

Halifax Police attitude disturbing

While watching one of the numerous cop shows the other night with some friends one of the bored members of our little group suggested we go out and beat up a cop. He was kidding, of course, but the response from another member of the bored television watchers hit rather close to home. His comment on the first suggestion was the since it was after dark we wouldn't be able to find a cop in Halifax.

Now we're not suggesting that the police in Halifax never do their job or even that they don't do their jobs well - it's pretty obvious to anyone with a car that they do an excellent job of distributing parking tickets - but it does seem that when something serious comes up they are rather slow to act.

Violent crimes in Halifax increased by 71% in 1974 and there is nothing to suggest that this trend hasn't been continued in 1975. In fact, since the statistics show an increase in crime everywhere over the past few years it is fairly safe to assume that the crime increase rate will have taken another jump in Halifax by the end of 1975.

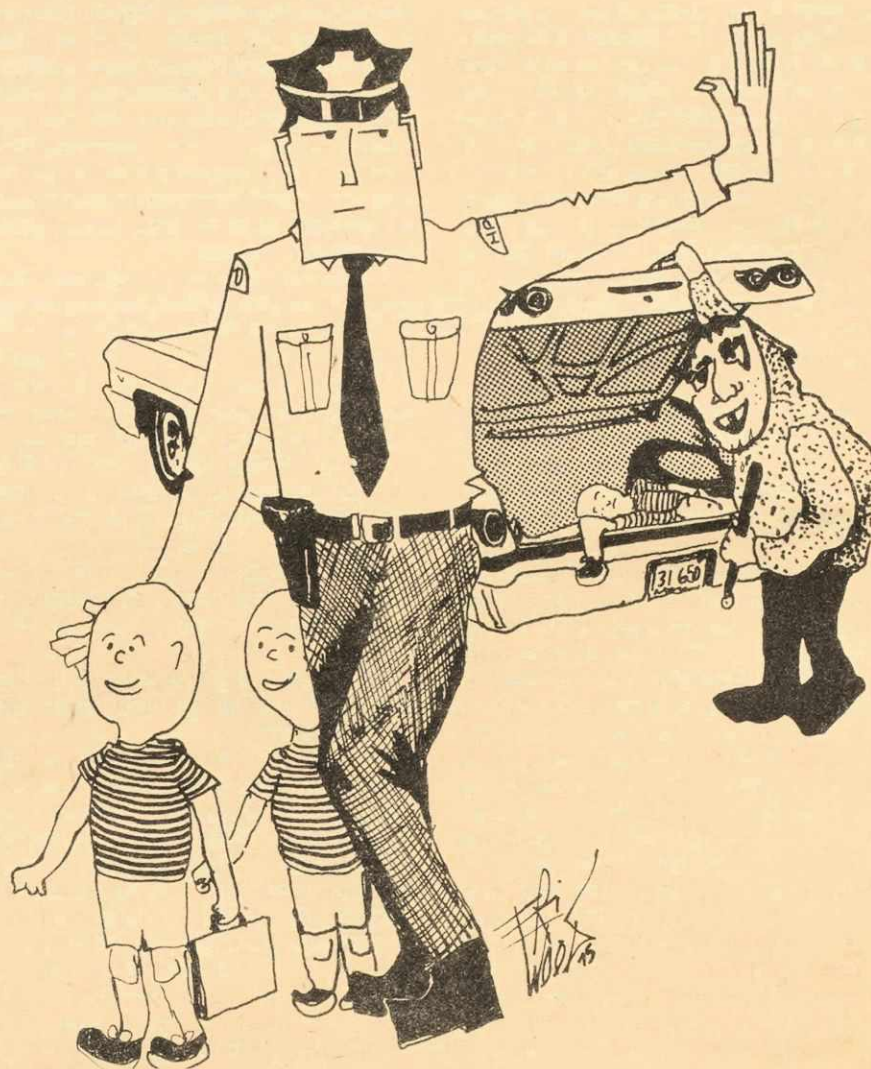
The point of all this is not that we think the police are to blame for the increase but we would like to know, firstly, what they are doing about, and secondly, why most people in Halifax are still unaware that their city is unsafe to live in. We have a few answers to the second part of the problem which do not reflect well on the Halifax Police Department. Actually our answers to the second part explain why we have no answers to the first part.

Last fall a Gazette reporter tried to research a story on several break-ins at the Warehouse, a fairly well-known clothing store catering to the youth of Halifax. The reporter in question spoke to the store manager and to the police. The store manager was most co-operative but couldn't give much information on what the police were doing since they hadn't given her that information. The police shuttled the reporter from one person to another and refused to provide any information at all. The final response from the police was that if we wanted to know anything about crime in Halifax we should wait until the annual report came out in January. When questioned as to why they wouldn't provide the media with any information about crime in this city the response was that they didn't want to worry Halifax citizens.

For several reasons this seems to be an unnecessarily paternalistic, and in some cases downright dangerous attitude. If the residents of Halifax are not made aware that their city is unsafe to walk in at night they will continue to walk the streets after dark and suffer the consequences. Unaware that their houses may be broken into in broad daylight citizens continue to leave doors unlocked. The list goes on and it is unnecessary to go into it all here but we think you'll see our point. Rape, muggings and robberies become more numerous every day but unless you are a victim or know a victim personally you'll never hear about these things and you'll probably never take precautions to prevent them from happening to you.

If you think the police have changed their attitude in the past year you can think again. This fall another Gazette staffer went off to research a story on crime and was given approximately the same treatment our reporter received last year. The police were courteous, pleasant and quite willing to chat as long as they weren't expected to give out any information.

We are not advocating that the police give out all the nitty gritty details of every rape or murder that occurs in the metro area. Turning the Chronically-Terrible's front page into a version of the National Enquirer will not serve any useful purpose and may alarm people unnecessarily. However, there does exist a middle ground between



scaring people to the point where they lock themselves in their houses with guns and allowing them to blissfully walk the streets after dark only to be attacked by the first mugger they run into.

Halifax is no longer the peaceful, safe city it once was. It has the same problems of any other fairly large Canadian city and it is the Police Department's duty to make sure the residents are aware of this. It's always nice to see the Halifax police riding their horses down quiet residential streets and stopping to chat with school children but this is no longer all they should be doing. If they can't protect us then they can at least provide us with the information we need to protect ourselves. We'd rather see fewer parking tickets and safer streets than more money for city hall to put in more crosswalks which will need more policemen to patrol them.

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