

# Canadian police brutality

## RCMP use "American tactics"

The Los Angeles police killed more than 300 people in a year, last June's *Economist* reported. The problem of police violence may not as yet be perceived as serious in Canada as in the United States. But RCMP statistics from *The Report of the Commission of inquiry relating to public complaints, internal discipline and grievance procedure with the RCMP* reveals a total of 41 founded cases involving use of excessive force and close to 60 founded complaints involving both police harassment and violation of statutory rights in one year between 1973 and 1974. Further, more than half a dozen of the police brutality cases within the last couple of years pending investigation involved municipal and provincial as well as the RCMP forces.

Brutality and the use of fatal force are often committed in the context of self-defense. But occasional unjustified force after arrest, unprovoked attack and excessive force in subduing those under arrest are equally common.

• In September 1978, Andrew Evans was shot to death by a Metro Toronto policeman in a tavern. According to witnesses, the shooting was unnecessary.

• At about the same time, a Halton Region policeman was fined \$350 for assaulting a suspect in a police cell.

• On the same day a woman testified before a Quebec coroner court that she saw police beating a detainee shortly before he was found hanged.

• In September 1979, Albert Johnson was shot in his house by the Metro Toronto police. According to the seven year old witness, the police ordered the deceased to kneel down and shot him while trying to arrest him.

• November 1979. A native Indian was killed by three point blank shots fired by a Quebec provincial police constable. The band chief insisted that the officer be charged with murder.

• A few days later, John Chief Moon was grabbed and punched by three RCMP officers before the police found out they got the wrong person.

• In June 1980, a B.C. court sentenced an RCMP officer to 30 days in jail for assaulting a hitchhiker.

• A Richmond RCMP officer was charged with assault causing bodily harm in a provincial court, September, 1980. The witness suffered severe internal bleeding after the accused allegedly pulled the chair out from under him twice during an interrogation.

But what is police brutality? Despite the fact that it has become a public issue in recent years, we have little access to any well-researched and documented literature of this concern. Holding a suspect and beating him with a nightstick would no doubt be brutality. How about arm-twisting in the process of securing arrest? Or threats with potential violence and gun? Or are instances, such as a person being stripped and rectally searched, brutality?

David Bayley and Harold Mendelsohn, the authors of *Minorities and the Police Confrontation in America* once said, "If brutality is synonymous with mistreatment of any kind, then verbal abuse, ridicule, malicious humor, denigrating epithets, and elaborate condescension would all qualify." The same authors show that the respondents surveyed in one study defined the phrase as activities ranging from police unfriendliness to physical force.

United States federal legislation outlines a relatively broad definition of the phrase "police brutality." Under the federal statutes, Title 18, police brutality is committed when "police officers conspire to injure, oppress, threaten, or intimidate a citizen in the enjoyment of any right or privilege secured by the Constitution or the Federal or State statutes" or "any person who, under the color of law, rule, or custom, subjects to a U.S. inhabitant the deprivation of any right or privilege secured by constitution or the law, because of his being an alien or of his color or race."

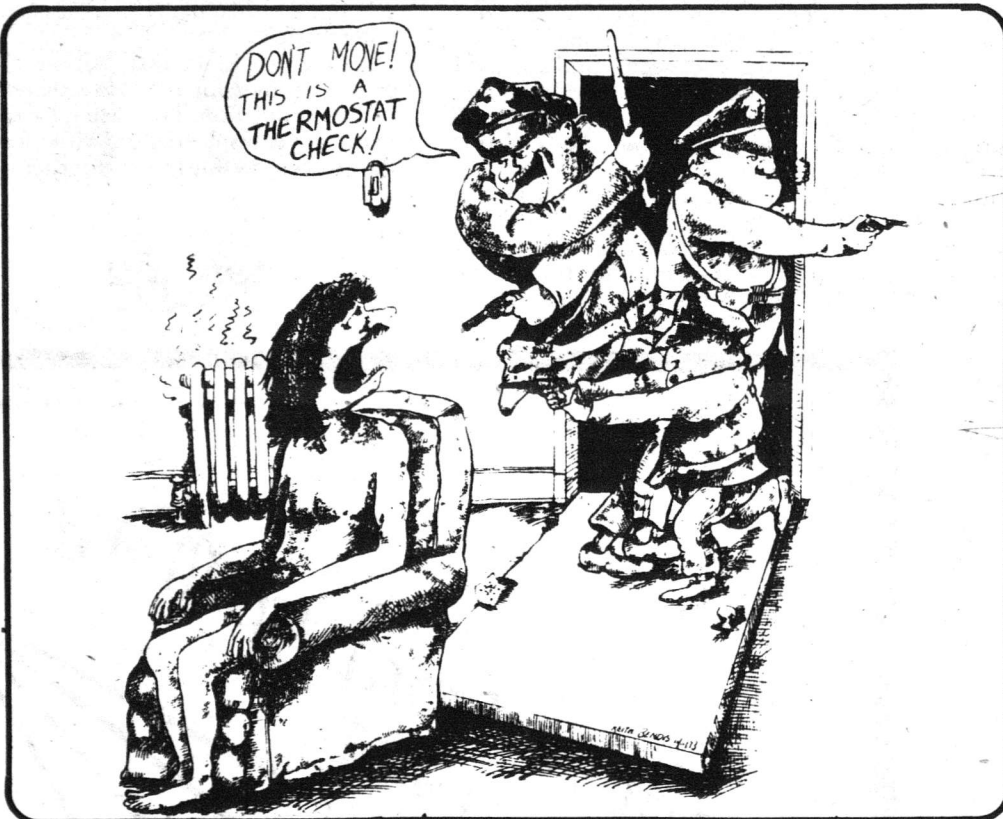
In a fragmented community, minority groups are more sensitive to police activities. Police records prove a more consistent contact with police than middle class members of the community. In fact, of all the more publicized incidents in both the United States and Canada, most involve primarily members of minority groups. Allegations of police wrong-doings complained by a member of a minority group are yet less likely to be believed by authorities, according to some criminologists.

Perhaps there are more reasons than effective solutions to all these problems. One widely accepted reason for this problem in the attitude of the police towards minority people.



The witness suffered severe internal bleeding after the officer allegedly pulled the chair out from under him during interrogation.

Toronto Police Chief Adamson once publicly admitted the existence of this problem attitude in his force: "Some members on the force are 'anti' whatever they're dealing with." Although there is no actual figure available or any survey tested on police officers' attitudes in Canada, the Director of the Center of Research on Social Organization of the University of Michigan, Professor Albert Reiss, found that "In predominantly Negro precincts over three-fourths of the white policemen express prejudiced





**WOULD YOU LIKE TO ESCAPE WITH MOTHER NATURE?**

Why not do what we did, we took a raft, yes we did Whitewater rafting on the Thompson River. Truly a trip never to be forgotten with its terrifying, but exciting adventurous moments.

Rates from \$65 per person (1 day expedition).

Contact our office today for details and brochure.

D W TOURS & TRAVEL  
Room #402, 10049 Jasper Avenue  
EDMONTON, Alberta, TQJ 1T7  
Telephone (403) 421-1073 Telex 03743198



**EDMONTON'S ONLY ROCK PRESENTS**

**★ SUPERSTARS ★**

LISTEN FOR DIFFERENT SUPERSTAR FEATURES EVERY HOUR

STARTS 4 P.M. FRIDAY, APR. 3  
ENDS MIDNIGHT, SUNDAY, APR. 5

**97.3 FM**