

Police recruiting . . .

Blacks hired on merit constable says

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following is the second part in a series of articles about police recruiting by the Halton Regional Police Force. This week reported Brian MacLeod talks to a black police officer and a constable accepted on the force despite being under the old height restrictions.

Cultural training has become a priority with the Halton Regional Police Force. In an effort to familiarize Halton's 321 uniformed officers with the various ethnic backgrounds, the police department has introduced a 12 day cultural training course. Officials hope to expose every uniformed officer in Halton's police force to cultural training by the end of 1988.

But is cultural training enough? Staff Sergeant Ron Sullivan of the Human Resources Department says there is a potential for problems in dealings with various ethnic groups by officers not familiar with their cultural background.

Only six per cent of Halton's police force consists of visible minorities. The force intends to compare that number with the breakdown of Halton's ethnic groups to be released in the fall of this year. Any wide discrepancies between the composition of the police force and the population will attempt to be reconciled at the recruiting level, Staff Sgt. Sullivan said.

Attempts are being made to mirror the community in composition of the force, although an exact duplication would be impractical, Staff Sgt. Sullivan said.

But Officer Mike Brown, a black police officer working out of Oakville, strongly believes ethnic origin should not play a role in determining new recruits. Attempts should be made to bring the police force in line with the community, he said, but not at the expense of hiring a minority cadet over a more qualified white police officer.

Officer Brown doesn't know if he was hired in July of 1985 because he was black. Cadets aren't told how they scored on the various tests so it's difficult to know how they did compared to other potential recruits, Officer Brown said.

"I like to feel that I got hired on merit," said Officer Brown.

Tall doesn't mean policeman's better at his profession

By BRIAN MACLEOD
Herald Staff

Before 1978, Dave McCartney stood no chance of fulfilling his ambition to become a police officer. But in 1987, Dave McCartney earned the title of Constable and he's a full-fledged officer with the Halton Regional Police Force.

Nine years ago he would have been eliminated from a candidate's list almost immediately - not because of lack of education, or failure of physical or written tests, or even at the whim of an interviewing officer. Officer McCartney would not have made the force because of his physical stature.

At five feet six inches tall and 140 pounds, Officer McCartney wouldn't have measured up to the pre-1978 standards of five feet ten inches and 160 pounds demanded of male Halton Region Police officers.

He started as a dispatcher in the radio room in 1982. "You just have to want to do it. That was going to be my foot in the door," said Constable McCartney.

"You had to get into the pool (1,500 applicants in 1986). But I felt that I had an equal opportunity," Const. McCartney said.

"Years ago the taller ones had an advantage. Now everybody is evaluated individually on their merits," he said.

"It (lack of size) hasn't hurt me or helped me one way or the other. It hasn't affected my ability to do the job."

Const. McCartney had to pass gruelling physical tests given potential cadets in the same category as everyone else in his group. "The physical fitness part is a lot more strenuous now than it used to be," he said.

But he completed the sit-ups, pushups, one and a half mile run, flexibility tests and 100 yard sprint just the same as his taller competitors did.

No situations have cropped up where his stature has made a difference, he said.

Like other police officers on the Halton Regional Police Force, Const. McCartney believes it's the uniform and an officer's personality that makes the difference, not size of a constable. "There's no difference in the way they've (fellow police officers or the public) treated me or the way they've been treated (by me)," said Const. McCartney.

Police officers are regarded as equals and size, age or sex doesn't stand in the way, Const. McCartney said. "Once you're a member of the police force you don't discuss those kinds of things," he said.



QUESTIONS ANYONE? Const. Garry George, Community Relations and Crime Prevention Co-ordinator and Const. Kim Durcan, of the Regional Traffic Bureau were at the Optimist Bang-O-Rama Monday to answer questions from the police, whether the topic was recruitment, police duties or crime prevention. (Herald photo)

"It used to be that some police forces wouldn't look at minorities. I doubt if I would have been hired at the age of 21, seven years ago," he said.

"In my mind, if it wouldn't have been that way, you wouldn't have the discrepancy that you have now," he added.

But he agrees minorities are crucial to the police force. "If you look at a force and if you just see the same type of person all the time (someone who meets all the criteria) is going to say why can't I make the force?"

"Given the media coverage of lack of minorities on forces yes, a black would have a good chance of getting on the force, but not any better than whites," Officer Brown said of current minority recruiting procedures.

Officer Brown admits he has faced problems with the public because of

. . . second in a series

While problems with the public crop up only occasionally, problems with fellow police officers is not a problem, he said.

"Nobody's voiced any problems about working with me. I don't know who is a bigot on the force and I'm probably not likely to find out," he said.

But there have been incidents causing some concern. "Out of some people I've had contact with on the force there have been people that I am not sure of," he said.

Jokes and comments about his color or are common and individual remarks don't bother him but jokes all day by different officers who don't realize they might be the tenth one to make the remark can get on Officer Brown's nerves.

"Some people think it's all in fun and they really have a problem. Others are just insensitive and don't think before they open their mouth," he said.

"When you're on the force, a few wrong words in the wrong places and you're finished. You don't know what kind of damage can be done."

Some officers are over-sensitive, said Officer Brown. "There are a few people with a chip on their shoulder. They make their own trouble. They ask for it," he said.

Officer Brown believes he has been given "even-handed" treatment by his superiors. He said he hasn't been assigned to areas with a higher black population.

his color. But in most cases he suspects it's the uniform rather than the color of his skin that people are aiming at. "I generally think that if people treat you bad it's because of the uniform," he said.

Officer Brown has plenty of experience dealing with racial problems both in and out of uniform. When he attended West Humber Collegiate High School racial problems began to crop up. He admits it's sometimes difficult to tell if it is the uniform or the color of his skin people are aiming at. "When I was out of uniform, I've had people talking down to me and I know it's because of my skin color. I've been in a situation where you don't know if they're just teasing off at you or if they don't have any respect for the uniform," he said.

Problems arising directly out of his skin color have not been excessive, Officer Brown admits, but when they surface they can come in a big way and that's when a black officer must resist his human tendencies to fight back and remember his duties of a police officer, he said.

Officer Brown admits he has a temper when it comes to racial incidents and "there are some names which I just abhor."

He recalled a case in which a man used the protection of a jail cell to verbally attack him. He admitted he wanted to retaliate but he checked himself first. "I thought it is worth losing a \$30,000 a year job to tee off on the guy? But there are certain things I will not accept," he said.

But he admits it can work the other way too. In some of his dealings with Jamaican teenagers, "I think (they) would give you more respect than whites," he said.

"There is a difference between the way people talk to me outside the uniform and in," he said. But he attributed that to the uniform, not to his skin color. "I think in the uniform I get more respect - but the same amount from friends," he said.

Family planning

The Ministry of Health is being asked for a family planning clinic in North Halton.

Halton Region is making the request to establish such a clinic in Milton's health department office. The clinic is to provide family planning counselling and other services to residents of Milton and Halton Hills.

Regional council approved the idea in 1983 and Ministry officials gave tentative approval for this expansion in March.

Total cost for the new clinic is estimated at \$116,001, all provincial funding.

Be boat wise

Registration is now taking place for Let's Be Boatwise, a boating safety course for children, co-hosted by Halton Hills Public Libraries and Georgetown Power Squadron. The course aims to provide 9 to 13-year-olds with the knowledge to identify a boat in distress and to call for assistance by VHF radio.

Members of the Power Squadron will be conducting the course on Tuesday and Thursday evenings, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m. from June 2 to June 18, in the Children's Dept. of the Georgetown Library. The cost of the course is \$15 for one child, and \$25 for two children in the same family. For further information, call the Library at 877-2681.



Fond farewell

Doug McDonald, the provincial field executive at Blue Springs Scout Reserve is leaving to go to Red Deer, Alberta as regional executive director. Recently, president of North Halton District Gary Elliott presented Mr. McDonald with a gift on behalf of the district. (Photo submitted)

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No major blazes

Halton Hills firefighters had a fairly quiet weekend. There were no major blazes to put out.

Friday evening, Acton firefighters were called when a teenager had an epileptic seizure, at Main and Mill Streets. Ambulance crews arrived soon after and took over.

Saturday, at 6:28 p.m., firefighters put out a fire to a propane tank at 109 Main St. N. in Georgetown. There was \$30 damage to the tank which belonged to a barbecue.

Reports of a brush fire at Lot 21 Con. 8 took firefighters to the Jehovah's Witness complex on Trafalgar Road Monday at 8:54 a.m. Once there, they discovered the fire was under control, and actually a rubbish fire by complex residents.

At 11 p.m. the same day, firefighters put out a fire in an abandoned Chevrolet at Highway 25 and St. Helena Road, north of Speyside. The car was upside down, without licence plates. OPP have been called into investigate.

Tuesday morning, at 3:40 a.m., firefighters crawled out of bed to a false alarm at the Georgetown A and P store on Guelph Street. The alarm had been pulled by accident.

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