

Spokesmen Want Man On Beat Returned

Let's put the foot patrol back in the police force, seemed to be the theme at a meeting of the York Regional Police Commission October 23.

A cry to return to the old days when the cop on the beat patrolled the streets of a town and everybody knew he was around and felt a little better because of his presence was made by two deputations to the meeting: one from Watson Sweezie, a private citizen from Newmarket; the other from Councillor Ab Hollingshead of Vaughan, who was accompanied by John Foote, a resident of Woodbridge.

Both deputations appeared to complain about conditions in their respective areas, but after some two hours of hit-and-miss debate, produced little in the way of tangible complaints for the commission to deal with.

PERSONAL GRUDGE?
In fact, at one point, Commissioner Ray Twinney hinted that Mr. Sweezie, who was the first to appear, might be satisfying a personal grudge against the police, having been involved in an altercation with a youth on Main Street last month.

A charge was laid by the youth and then subsequently withdrawn. A 100-signature petition charging rowdiness on the street was handed into the police three days later. "I don't mean to imply anything, but you had a run-in September 26 on Main Street," Mr. Twinney said to Mr. Sweezie. "It seems awfully funny... it seems the kid was the one having trouble."

Mr. Sweezie told the meeting that youthful loiterers on Newmarket's Main Street made life difficult for older people trying to use the street. The youth not only used bad language, but forced people off the street, he said. There was one person, for example, who wouldn't drive up Main Street at night, because of the intimidation, he said.

If there were an "old-fashioned man" on foot and less police in cruisers, there would be more contact with the general public, he said. A plain clothesman would also be a help when problems became more acute. "The worse elements disperse when police are in cars," Mr. Sweezie said. They could sense them, he said. It was obvious there was something missing, which the old force had, despite the efficiency of the radar system and other modern police methods.

PEEPING TOMS
Mr. Sweezie said residents of a senior citizens' home in Newmarket had also complained about people staring into their windows. "Did the people complain to the police about this?" The police were unable to do anything about it if they didn't complain.

"If there was a man on foot, this situation might not happen," Mr. Sweezie said.

Mr. Twinney said there had always been a problem on Main Street, and when police made a big crackdown several weeks ago, they received complaints that they were over-enforcing the law. He said the street now had

two liquor outlets, which it didn't have before. This, along with the lowered drinking age, produced problems.

He said he didn't think there was a "drastic problem" on the street, and much as he'd like to see more police there, the town couldn't afford them. On the other hand, he didn't want the police harassing the kids.

"What price public peace?" asked Mr. Sweezie, who admitted he had never signed the petition, but was only presenting it for those who did. He said if the problem persisted, he would move from the town.

Chief Bruce Crawford said he had been unaware there was a problem but that didn't say there wasn't. However, there was loitering on any street and, despite word to the contrary, the peeping Tom and not prostitution was the oldest crime known to man.

He said the town's loitering bylaw was rigidly, but not unreasonably, enforced. The chief said if there really was a serious problem on the street, the people could "rest assured we'll step in and clean it up."

WANTS NAME
He said he would like the name of the woman who said she was afraid to drive up Main Street, and was later supplied with a name by Mr. Sweezie.

When further pressed for a regular man on the beat, Chief Crawford said he would supply one if he could be assured the people would pay the \$70,000 a year necessary to pay for one policeman.

Commissioner Gordon Cook, in elaborating on the matter, said it took five policemen to have one man on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

CHIEF TO REPORT
Judge William Lyon, chairman of the commission, said there seemed to be a difference of opinion as to whether there was trouble on Main Street. As a result, he suggested the chief look into the situation and report back in a month or six weeks, and then decide if any particular measures should be taken.

After the meeting approved a motion by Commissioner Stewart Rumble that the chief report back in four weeks, Mr. Sweezie said he would continue to publicize the matter; television would be the next step.

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ROWDYISM IN WOODBRIDGE

Vaughan Councillor Hollingshead appeared to back up an earlier petition — 141 signatures — sent to the commission from Woodbridge, complaining about the lack of police control on its Main Street.

Accompanying the petition was a resolution from Vaughan Council accusing the police of failing to bring the street under control despite "repeated requests." Councillor Hollingshead said the "root of the problem" was not solved. There had been "harassments or petty crack downs on people we don't want to chase."

The councillor, who has a store in Woodbridge, said the area had a problem being so close to Metro, and had obtained a "bad image" since the regional police took over.

He said the village had a drug and a vandalism problem, and while many of the complaints were based on hearsay, "I believe the police are chasing the wrong people."

"What do you mean?" asked Commissioner Rumble.

POLICE BEING PETTY?
Mr. Hollingshead said that, while vandalism and dope were one way, the police dealt with other things of a minor nature, such as stopping in front of a fire hydrant.

"I thought you meant that when two people were running down the street, the police chased the wrong one," said Mr. Rumble.

The councillor said the police were concentrating on the wrong segment of society, the people who were normally law abiding.

"Why do you say that?" asked Judge Lyon.

Mr. Hollingshead replied that Woodbridge had enough commerce to attract outside people; it was generally known that it was a drug-drop centre.

Bad language on the street and motorists racing their cars and squealing their tires were problems. There were other problems, although he couldn't give specific cases, as he was mostly on hand as a representative of council, he said.

Woodbridge was formerly patrolled by two full-time policemen and one part-time man before the region took over. The policemen were off from 1 am to 8 am and on the weekends when civilian help was hired.

When asked by Mr. Twinney how the former police had managed to control the area, Mr. Hollingshead said they knew the town and the characters there.

Mr. Twinney said the reg-

ion was probably using seven men to patrol the 2,400-person area, with one man available 24 hours a day.

CONDUCTED INTERVIEWS

Chief Crawford said his department had interviewed 40 of the petitioners, which he felt represented 63 of the signatures they could identify, and had asked the following questions:

Have you phoned police in the past 12 months?

A total of 55 percent said no; 45 percent, yes.

What is your complaint in relation to Woodbridge Avenue?

Cars, motorcycles, shouting and swearing were listed by 38 people as the main complaint. A much smaller portion listed loitering, vandalism, intimidation, drinking and traffic in that order.

What is your complaint about policing in your area? A total of 85 percent found it satisfactory, and 15 percent said they preferred resident policemen, as before.

What would you like us to do to better police the area?

Continue frequent appearances, 38 people; two-man cars, 3; man on beat, 8; motorcycle unit, 1; local station, 1; more mature police, 1; resident policing, 4.

How were you treated by police?

Well, 30; no contact, 6; unsatisfactorily, 4. The latter described a lack of sincerity and concern and abruptness of police when issuing parking tickets.

NO DRUG COMPLAINTS

"Not one person made any complaint about a drug problem, and only four about vandalism," Chief Crawford said.

The problem in the main seemed to be cars, as it was in most communities, he said.

The chief also cited other statistics which showed that during a 184-day period from March to August, the police were called on 515 times to Woodbridge, and of these, 110, or 20 percent — less than one complaint per day — were regarding disorderly conduct.

There were 97 criminal occurrences during that time — less than one every two days — and 51 were cleared by arrest or investigation, the chief said.

"That doesn't indicate a GALLEY 2... serious crime problem in that area," he said. The chief said, also, he found it hard to justify Vaughan's resolution that the police had failed to bring the situation under control.

Mr. Hollingshead said he felt "greater sensitivity and more maturity" were needed on the part of the police "to sort out what was fact and what was fiction."

The police seemed to be taking the line of least resistance and not moving in on the "hard-core problems", such as tire squealing, loitering, profanity and "just generally bad conduct."

Hard core? wondered Judge Lyon.

If those were hard-core problems, they could be cleaned up in no time, said Chief Crawford. Council could assist by passing a by-law against loitering.

"Will do," said Mr. Hollingshead.

Chief Crawford said the police had already started a move to clean up the disorderliness, and Judge Lyon said the police would continue to provide the same sort of coverage as in the past.

"I'm not here to complain, but I think we have to sort it out for the benefit of all," said Mr. Hollingshead.

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