

# Police Roust Meeting

Fifth Estate Collective

1968

Detroit's racist cops apparently unsatisfied at being forced to live in the city they occupy militarily blew their cool at a Detroit Common Council meeting May 17.

Robert Tindal, executive secretary of the Detroit NAACP was speaking strongly against relaxation of the rule requiring officers to live within the city. Several hundred white cops began yelling "racist" and "bigot" at Tindal and then stormed out of the hearing.

The *Michigan Chronicle* reported that Tindal said this display demonstrated the cops' "lack of control and of their general emotional instability".

"They displayed a complete lack of emotional control," said Tindal "which lends credibility to police brutality charges. They couldn't even take what happened at that meeting.

"I told them I saw nothing wrong with their living outside the city, but that they should not ask my support as a taxpayer."

"This thing about only a small group of officers being bigoted is in limbo now. As far as I'm concerned, the whole group reacted racially."

Attempts made by authorities at the meeting to control the officers' behavior only helped emphasize the irresponsibility of the group, according to Tindal.

"Mary Beck had cautioned the group earlier," said Tindal, "not to interrupt the speakers either with cheers or cat-calls, but the officers just ignored her. An Inspector was present during the entire session, but he made no attempt to control his police.

"There was one officer there who acted like a little Hitler. Every time he got up, he would lead the crowd in their cheers or jeers."

Tindal also pointed out that a relaxation of the residency rules might set a dangerous precedent.

"Anyone who has anything to do with running the city ought to have to live here," he said. "Otherwise, we might conceivably arrive at a situation where the mayor and council could be residents of Birmingham or somewhere—an absentee government."

As the officers left the hearing room, Tindal said, one of them made a veiled threat of another case of "blue flue" striking the department.

"The blue flue threat didn't bother me," Tindal recalled. "The last time we had it in the city, the crime rates went down right along with instances of police brutality."

"What happened at the hearing," he continued, "showed just what is wrong with the department. They are clearly undisciplined. That is the heart of our police problem."

# fifth Estate

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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/55-june-4-18-1968/police-roust-meeting>  
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