

THE INDIAN PATROL IN MINNEAPOLIS: SOCIAL CONTROL AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN AN URBAN CONTEXT

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: The names of groups and places have not been changed for this paper. The reason for this somewhat unorthodox procedure is that most of the individuals involved requested that no pseudonyms be used. Written consents were gathered so that individual preferences could be honored. The co-operation of all of the people who participated in this study is gratefully acknowledged. Special thanks go to the AIM Board of Directors for their official approval of the research, and to the Indian Patrollers for their continuous help and their generous gift of time and interest in the study. Financial support was provided by a National Science Foundation Pre-Doctoral Fellowship.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a proliferation of voluntary citizens' patrols (hereafter called citizens' patrols) in the urban areas of this country (Brown, 1969; Knopf, 1969; Marx and Archer, 1970 and in press). Many of these groups were short-lived responses to situations of social unrest and upheaval. They frequently were based on the premise that community residents could do more to prevent an area from burning to the ground than could the regular police, who were envisioned as an invading army. When the riot or disturbance was over, and the rationale of the citizens' patrol as an agent of social control became less obvious, such groups tended to disappear.

Some citizens' patrols, however, have been organized on a more enduring basis as part of larger groups which seek basic change in the social conditions which affect their members. In patrols of this type, even when the initial conditions (to which the patrols may have responded at first) are changed, the patrols often continue less as agents of social control than as actors in a symbolic representation of the ideology of the social action-social change organization. This typology is, of course, by no means exhaustive.

This paper focuses on a citizens' patrol of the relatively enduring type: the Indian Patrol of Minneapolis, which was

sponsored by the American Indian Movement (AIM). The material presented here is drawn from a field study which was conducted between January 1969 and June 1970. Patrols were observed by the author on twenty evenings. In addition, the research included a survey of a selected sample of 40 AIM members and a survey of a random sample of 44 residents of the neighborhood served by the Indian Patrol. Participant-observation of regular police squad car patrols in the neighborhood and interviews with policemen, police officials, and city officials provided additional data. Although social scientists have shown an interest and provided some basic information about the existence and occurrence of citizens' patrols (e.g., Knopf, 1969; Marx and Archer, 1970 and in press), the present study is, to our knowledge, the first detailed case study based primarily upon an extended period of participant-observation.

History and Organization of the Indian Patrol

The American Indian Movement (AIM) was organized in Minneapolis, Minnesota in July, 1968 by a group of Indians, primarily Chippewa. The new members, drawn into the group by friends and relatives (and friends of relatives) were not new migrants to the city; most of them had lived in Minneapolis for more than five years. Most were in their twenties and thirties and most, on the basis of their personal experiences, knew the problems which Indians encountered in the city. Many, although not all, lived in one neighborhood, the East Franklin Avenue area.

One of the first projects adopted by the new group was the Indian Patrol, which they launched on August 23, 1968. The project began as a foot patrol; about twenty men, women and teenagers walked up and down East Franklin Avenue (the main thoroughfare of the neighborhood) and watched whatever action occurred each Friday and Saturday night. Several bars are located on the avenue and much of the street activity took place near the bars, especially at closing time.

Non-Indians (Caucasians and Orientals but not usually Blacks) also participated. Patrollers initially carried walkie-talkies and later also acquired red jackets with "Indian Patrol" printed on the backs. Patrollers engaged mainly in two activities: (1) they watched police squad car activity in the area; and (2) they arranged for drunks to be taken home, either in a cab if the drunk had enough money, or in a patroller's car.

As few as two or as many as six drunks per evening received these services. Occasionally, patrollers broke up fights, looked for missing teenagers, or became involved in other situations involving Indians. Throughout the patrol's history, there were people who said that they rode around after visiting friends or going out; these "spontaneous patrols" were seen as something less than real patrols by the regulars.

The relationship between AIM leaders and Indian Patrol leaders is too complex to discuss at any length here. The Indian Patrol had two "Patrol Leaders." The first (August 1968—May 1969) was politically active but not ascendant in AIM. The second (June 1969—August 1970) belonged to AIM but was not actively involved in group politics.

The Indian Patrol, in its foot patrol stage, lasted roughly from August until late November (see Table 1). It operated on the basis of certain underlying assumptions. The first assumption was that the high concentration of police squad cars in the area (as perceived by AIM members) boded no good. Some members even felt that the roughest officers were avoiding the Black neighborhoods because a Black Patrol had been established and were now trooping into the Indian neighborhood. AIM members and patrollers felt that the arrest of drunks was in itself a form of discrimination against Indians. They believed that non-Indians who drank in fashionable bars in wealthy neighborhoods were not likely to be arrested and taken to jail.

TABLE 1: PHASES OF THE INDIAN PATROL*

Phase One	Summer-Fall 1968	frequent foot patrols
Phase Two	Winter 1968-1969	infrequent car patrols
Phase Three	Spring-early Summer 1969	frequent car patrols
Phase Four	late Summer 1969 late Summer 1970	infrequent car patrols

* The delineation of these phases is based upon several factors: the number of people present at each patrol, the number of nights per month that the patrol operated, the amount of interest in the patrol among AIM members, etc. This table does not include patrol activity at AIM-sponsored powwows, which was more or less constant throughout the total time period.

Here it is important to note the way the police interpret their arrest of drunks, for they also see that the drunk may be a non-criminal for whom arrest may be inappropriate in an abstract sense. However, they view the arrest primarily as a means of initiating a kind of "protective custody"; the drunk, under arrest, is protected from being "rolled," or, equally important during Minnesota winters, from freezing to death.

Initially, the police had relatively positive attitudes towards the patrol. Although they generally denied that the Indian Patrol was necessary (and thus denied the underlying assumptions), they nonetheless saw it as a positive step by which community members were going to take care of their own. Police administrators informed their men that they were free, though not required, to hand drunks over to Indian Patrollers. The most prevalent reaction among the officers was: "If they want them, let them have them."

Other elements of city government, particularly the mayor's office, also did not oppose the Indian Patrol. The mayor had actively supported the formation of a Black Patrol the previous spring. He gave tacit approval to the Indian Patrol by allowing his earlier policy to stand.

The first phase of Indian Patrol operation continued until the Minnesota winter arrived in earnest. Then the patrollers took to their cars and concentrated primarily on logging police activity. They periodically communicated the results of these logs to the Chief of Police along with complaints that there were too many officers in the area. By and large, with the bad weather and the decrease in the amount of activity in the street, the Indian Patrol hibernated until March. Occasional patrols were held during this second phase, but they were both irregular in occurrence and attended by very few people. In late March, however, AIM leaders revived the Indian Patrol. Three events triggered this renewal: (1) the arrival of several police cars at a powwow where two Indian boys were fighting; (2) the arrest of an AIM member for careless driving, and (3) the arrest of the AIM chairman for interfering with that arrest. The AIM chairman also charged that the arresting officers had injured his wrists when they handcuffed him. The Indians were subsequently convicted and the officer acquitted. In the newspapers and in a large public meeting with the Chief of Police, the issues of police brutality and discrimination — and the need for change — were raised once again. Renewed support for the Indian Patrol occurred directly following these events.

During the third phase of the Indian Patrol, the police became increasingly disturbed about AIM's highly vocal and anti-police ideology. They resented being watched and claimed that the presence of Indian Patrollers made arrests more difficult and often shaded into interference. The change, however, was mainly attitudinal, because the nature of police/Indian

Patrol encounters stayed very much the same. There were no violent confrontations between the two groups, nor were any regular patrollers arrested while on patrol duty. Indeed, many officers continued to hand over drunks to the Indian Patrol.

As the initial furor of the events of March tapered off, so did patrol activity. Various events within AIM led to an emphasis on other activities. Thus by the end of the summer of 1969, the Indian Patrol was in its fourth phase, in which a few people continued to patrol on a few weekend nights each month. These persistent patrollers did not include the AIM leaders. The patrollers generally rode around "to see what's going on," but they did not log police activity. The Indian Patrol in this last phase persisted about one year. Among the reasons underlying the Indian Patrol's final demise were AIM's increasing involvement in other activities and decreasing organizational support for the patrol. Also, AIM members and patrollers perceived some change in police-community relations, as expressed with the election of a new mayor and the police administration's appointment of an Indian police officer to act as a liaison between the department and the Indian community.

It should be noted that the Indian Patrol also operated at AIM-sponsored powwows. At these gatherings, Indian Patrollers helped keep running children off the dance floor, asked drunks to leave, and generally kept order. They were usually paid five dollars for their services. Patrolling at powwows continued for many months after street patrolling ceased.

Functions of the Indian Patrol

The major function of the Indian Patrol was that it served as a symbolic representation of the AIM ideology of social change. As a symbol of AIM's philosophy, the Indian Patrol demonstrated the tenets that (1) Indians should be helping Indians, and (2) Indians needed help in their encounters with police. Most AIM members clearly believed that police discriminated against Indians. They also claimed that the Indian Patrol was helping to change this situation. AIM leaders claimed that arrests decreased during the months following the formation of the Indian Patrol. The statistics which are available from annual police reports—which might serve to prove or disprove the claims—are inconclusive.

In terms of absolute numbers of people helped, the Indian Patrollers were serving more ideological than operational func-

tions. On a given night, they might help no one. They might not observe any arrests nor encounter any police officers. Because they operated mainly in visible, public situations, they could not help residents—who largely did not know how to contact them—in most private situations.

A neighborhood survey was conducted including 44 respondents: 33 Caucasians, 4 Blacks, and 7 Indians. Because the sample was randomly drawn (using the city directory method described by Lazerwitz, 1966), there is no reason to believe that the sample, or its ethnic composition, is biased. Thus, even though the sample and ethnic subsamples are very small, they are probably reasonably representative. Data from the 1970 Census also indicate that the sample closely matches the composition of the neighborhood.

The results of the neighborhood survey support the notion that the Indian Patrol in the East Franklin Avenue neighborhood functioned primarily as a means by which a particular ideology could be demonstrated by one group and perceived by another. Although almost half of the residents interviewed had heard about the Indian Patrol, very few had ever seen it; even fewer had had any personal experience with it. None seemed to know how to get in touch with the patrol in time of need. Indians, on the whole, had more knowledge of the Indian Patrol and contact with it than non-Indians. About half of the Indian respondents had seen the patrol (mainly walking up and down the avenue), but only one—an Indian teenage girl who had herself participated—had had personal experience with it. No one in our sample—Indian or non-Indian—had ever received any services from the patrol.

Another part of the wider audience within the urban context was the police department. Although policemen did view the Indian Patrol as a self-help project, they also clearly perceived it as a symbol of AIM ideology. They sometimes equated AIM actions with Indian Patrol actions and AIM leaders with Indian Patrol leaders, when, in fact, the two were not always synonymous.

There is also behavioral evidence suggesting that the Indian Patrol functioned primarily symbolically vis-à-vis the police. In their encounters with police, Indian Patrollers were mainly “there”—standing around, watching, showing by their very presence that they held certain beliefs. Interaction beyond eye contact between patrollers and police was actually extremely low in terms of both frequency and intensity of

contact (see Table 2). In terms of the most common experiences of patrollers, watching arrests and writing down squad car numbers were the most prevalent type of police/patrol encounter. Only half of the Indian Patrollers ever spoke to police. Only one-fifth ever argued with police. In general, the message was conveyed by sheer presence, and only infrequently was reinforced by more intense contacts. The nature of encounters and the patrollers' style may be related to Indian culture and character (especially Chippewa culture and character). Comparative data would be most useful.

TABLE 2: "WHAT PATROLLERS DO"

Experiences	Number of patrollers having that experience at least once	Percent of patrollers having that experience at least once
Helped an Indian that I had never met before	29	94%
Took someone home	28	90%
Helped at a powwow	26	84%
Gave teenagers a ride	25	81%
Helped an Indian I knew	24	77%
Broke up a fight	22	71%
Helped a friend in some way	22	71%
Had coffee	22	71%
Rode with both Indians and non-Indians	21	68%
Watched police make an arrest	21	68%
Wrote down squad car license numbers	21	68%
Spoke to police	18	58%
Was given custody of someone who would have been arrested	16	52%
Took teenagers in my car to patrol	16	52%
Rode with Indians only	15	48%
Helped a non-Indian I didn't know before	13	42%
Took someone to the hospital	12	39%
Helped a relative	11	35%
Helped a non-Indian whom I knew before	10	32%
Rode with non-Indians only	6	19%
Got into an argument with police	6	19%
Got hurt	3	10%

* N = 31 patrollers. This table is compiled from responses to an item on the questionnaire survey of AIM members and Indian Patrollers.

The Indian Patrol never functioned in a manner similar to the Police Department. The Police Department (while no doubt having an ideological component) functioned primarily

to maintain order and to enforce laws on the basis of the authority given to it by (at least the dominant segment of) the society. Patrollers, police, and neighborhood residents were in agreement that the Indian Patrol had no authority and Indian Patrollers did not seek to enforce laws. It never functioned as either an official or a non-official enforcement agency, and in this respect it also differs from the vigilante groups seen throughout American history. Vigilantes, although their authority was questionable, did function as enforcement agencies. Although Brown (1969: 201) has suggested that the new era of citizens' patrols falls within the vigilante tradition, the present study indicates that this may not be true.

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