

# City Must Answer FBI On Police Board Charges

Many a Rochesterian, we believe, shares the critical opinion of the city's Police Advisory Board voiced in a letter on this page today.

In its riot report this week, the FBI pulled no punches in describing how "outside review boards" can crimp effective police work.

Where these boards existed (in Rochester and Philadelphia) at the time of the riots, the FBI told President Johnson, "the restraint of the police was so great that effective action against the rioters appeared to be impossible. This restraint was well known in the community, and the rioters were thereby emboldened to resist and completely defy the efforts of the police to restore order.

*"In short, the police were so careful to avoid accusations of improper conduct that they were virtually paralyzed."*

Some of the FBI's conclusions are debatable. For example, while the report played down the role of racial tensions in the riots, these tensions were obvious in some (though not all) aspects of the Rochester violence.

And some city officials may dispute the FBI's critical view of police review boards.

But this is certain: The FBI's charges must be dealt with squarely and in detail by City Manager Homer and other city officials who

are preparing their own riot findings.

Consider this FBI statement which seems to refer to Rochester (the FBI refuses — unwisely, in our judgment — to identify the community involved):

"In one city with . . . an outside review board, police action was so ineffective that the police were finally ordered to withdraw from the area completely, and limit themselves to attempting to prevent the riot from spreading to other sections of the city."

The report also cites fears by policemen "from patrolmen to high-ranking officers" that they will be "pilloried by citizens unfamiliar with the necessities of mob control, or even ordinary police action."

The International Association of Chiefs of Police recommended abolition of the Rochester board in a report otherwise enthusiastically received last fall at City Hall. Now the FBI joins the disapproval.

Perhaps the city administration can prove that effective law enforcement is not hampered by the Rochester review board, or that other considerations are more important, or even that the FBI's facts are wrong. It had better try, for it now stands accused by the nation's most respected law enforcement agency of rolling a huge roadblock into the path of those who seek to defend public safety.