

as we see it...



AT THE GRASS ROOTS

IN ITS 300 years of existence, the National Guard has grown as a *community* organization. Its strength as a National force with great prestige comes not so much from Federal coordination, as from strong personal ties between its members and their fellow citizens in more than 2,000 communities.

So strong are those ties; so solidly are the local units identified with their home towns, their counties, and their States, that it's a rare thing, when any evidence of really "sour" relations crops-up.

Two striking examples of such exceptions from the general rule of harmonious community life have come to attention recently. One involves considerable difficulty between an ANG jet outfit, trying to get a suitable "home," and local civic and business interests. (Even the Regular

Services have been having this trouble.) The second involves a City Manager who has decreed that Guardsmen and Reservists who attend field training must go to the bottom of their departmental vacation lists.

Both situations, obviously, run completely counter to the interests of National defense. Both are contrary to policies which the National Guard Bureau, the National Guard Assn, the Defense Dept, and the Military Services, have been trying for years—with considerable success, generally—to "sell" to the Nation at large.

In the promotion of these policies and the handling of local situations, the question arises as to who is to do what. It's like an automobile manufacturer and his local dealers: the manufacturer puts on a wingding of a National advertising campaign and supplies the dealers with tried-and-true suggestions, posters, booklets, etc., but it's the dealer's salesmen who have to sell the cars, and the dealer who has to satisfy the customers.

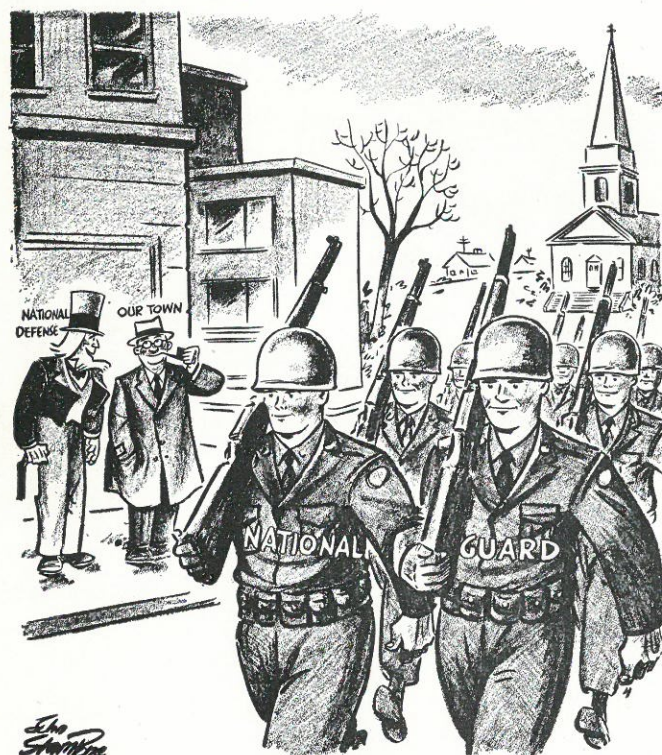
Both the National Guard Bureau and the National Guard Assn have pushed, in their respectively appropriate ways, various policies and specific aids for local Guard commanders to use in cementing community relations. The Bureau, specifically, has published a well-thought-out Community Relations kit full of how-to-do-it, along with "canned" speeches, editorial-type cartoons, etc. The Assn has published various books and booklets that have received widespread distribution through units, and has worked with Congress, governmental agencies and nationwide organizations.

Neither has the financial resources or the manpower to get down into each of the 2,000-some communities which have Guard units, and try to do the job at the local level. Neither has, nor can have, the personal contacts with the key people in those thousands of communities, that the local unit commanders and his men have—or should develop.

This applies particularly to any attempt to deal with a local controversy. To at least some of the parties to the dispute, any attempt by some "stranger" from Washington to intercede would be more likely to inflame the situation than to help it. It would be as bad as a neighbor trying to settle a family fight.

Each of us, at local, State and National level, has played a part in building a mighty National Guard. Each of us has his role to play in keeping it strong. But the strength of the Guard lies basically at the grass roots.

WE BOTH NEED THEM



One of the editorial-type cartoons provided for local newspaper use in NGB's Community Relations Kit.



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