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CITIZEN CO-OPERATION WITH THE POLICE DEPARTMENT¹

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I notice from Mr. Fuld's introduction that he has evidently read a book called "The Police History of England," but he omitted to state one of the requirements in the early days in England which was that a person who did not join the decenary or group of ten men organized in the various towns and municipalities had to furnish a bond that he himself would obey the law and that he would diligently prosecute any person who violated it. I think while this was all right in those days, it would be a bit hard now to require every person in New York to furnish a bond that he would conform to the law.

According to Mr. Fuld's introduction my subject should be the co-operation of the citizen with the police force. Almost every city employe with whom the police department has to deal in the enforcement of the law immediately shows a badge or tells the policeman that he works for the department of water supply, or the highway department, or some other department, and asks the policeman to let up on him on that account. I think the first thing we should do when we begin to co-operate with one another is to avoid using our office for the purpose of evading the law. I suppose that is true in many instances of policemen. I imagine that when the tenement house department or the board of health inspector go around to a policeman's house requesting him to comply with the law the policeman does the same thing. He tells the inspector: "Now, I am a policeman," and shows his shield. "Interference may be all right for the fellow next door. The law is a good thing to have and to enforce on everybody, but not on me. Let me out of it." There are a great many policemen who think the law is not made for them. The first principle we should bear in mind is that the laws are made for city employes also. Therefore, in order to co-operate with the police department it is necessary to know what the police department is trying to do and what it is required to do by law. The police department's functions are five in number, viz: the preservation of the peace, the enforcement of the law, the protection of life and property, and the prevention and the detection of crime. While all city departments are not required by

¹Lecture delivered to municipal employes in Municipal Building, Borough of Manhattan, March 6, 1918.

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law to co-operate with the police department, the police department is more peculiarly situated in that it is required to co-operate with every other department.

Within the last twenty years various city departments, among them the fire department, the bureau of fire prevention, the health department, etc., were permitted to make ordinances, which with the approval of the board of aldermen became law, but as a rule these departments never made any provisions to enforce the laws. Therefore, it becomes the duty of the police department to enforce the laws that are enacted by the other departments of the city government.

As an instance, the fire department's functions are to prevent and extinguish fires. Every branch of its service is organized along these two lines. In conjunction with the fire department, the police department's job is to give the fire department at a fire the free and uninterrupted use of the streets in the vicinity of the fire. In the congested sections of the city, the fire department cannot work without the police department. Absolute team work is required between the two departments to handle a large fire in the city. Yet we find that we are constantly hampered by city employes at fires. There are certain persons in the city government who by reason of their employment with the department are entitled to pass inside of the fire lines. These are very few in number. Under the law at a fire the commanding officer of the fire forces is in charge. The fire commissioner designates what city employes he desires to be permitted inside of the fire lines, and when they exercise this privilege they must display their shield or badge of office. The police department is constantly hindered and interfered with by employes of various city departments who come around at fires and other places where police lines are established showing their shields and asking to be permitted inside of the lines. This is a violation of the rules of the police department and a violation of the law. In this instance the city departments do not co-operate with the police department. City employes should not continuously try to break inside the lines either during parades or at other places where police lines are established for the purpose of preserving order and protecting life and property.

The police department co-operates with the health department by enforcing the sanitary code which is established for the purpose of preserving the health and the sanitary conditions of the city, and it is peculiar how many city employes refuse to comply with the regulations established by the department of health. They feel that because they are city employes they are privileged; the law was made for everyone else, but not for themselves.

Of course, the police department can be held responsible only for the crimes committed from the building line on one side of the street to the building line on the other side. It is difficult for the police department to prevent crimes which are committed in buildings. If a crime is committed in a building, there is only one chance in a hundred of its being witnessed. There is a possibility of catching the criminal either while he is going in or going out of the building or while he is attempting to dispose of the property, but you can appreciate how difficult it is for the police force to guard the rear, the roof, etc., of buildings. In view of this situation it is apparent that it is necessary for people who live in buildings to exercise ordinary care in the protection of their property.

We find that most thieves in this city profit by the lack of caution that is exercised by the average householder. The average thief feels that if he can get into and can get out of a building without being seen, and can dispose of the property without getting caught, so far as the individuals inside of the building are concerned, he is perfectly safe.

Thieves profit by the carelessness that is exercised in buildings. Here in the City of New York we find thousands of dollars of property stored in lofts, such as silks of every description, feathers, etc., with absolutely no care exercised to safeguard it by the persons who own it or by the persons in charge. There are no burglar alarms and the rooms have thin papier mache partitions so that a thief can easily break in or if he gets in by subterfuge it is easy for him to break out. We find householders leaving property of value in bureau drawers, under vases, in the beer mug on the dutch shelf, and in other hiding places peculiar to the housekeeper. The thief knows that. The housekeeper before hiding any property says: "Now where will the thief be least likely to look for my property?" She thinks he will not look under the paper in the bureau drawer, he will not look under the dutch shelf, he will not look under the rug or under the vase, and she accordingly puts it in these places. When the thief gets into the room he says to himself: "Now where did this woman think I would be least likely to look?" The result is that a great many of the crimes committed in this city inside of the buildings can be prevented if the owner of the property exercises ordinary care in safeguarding his valuables.

One of the big jobs and one of the most necessary duties of the police department is to try to prevent crime. You will notice that the framers of the charter in describing the functions of the department very wisely put prevention before detection. They said the functions

of the department were the prevention and the detection of crime. For the purpose of preventing crime, the department has established in various precincts throughout the city what are known as welfare offices. It is a sort of uplift name, "Welfare," but about the best we could think of for it. Usually when a squad or a branch of the city service is created, if a regular name is given to it, it goes. Well, we continued this branch of the service under the name of "welfare" for the reason that we could not think of a better one. The work of the welfare officers is to try to prevent crime. They try to prevent the young boy in the city from becoming a thief. Usually when a boy is arrested he is taken to the station-house, then to court and then sent to jail. There is nothing corrective about it; it does not do him any good. When he comes out of jail he feels that he is an outcast of society; he sees no avenue open to him except to commit crime. Thousands of dollars and considerable effort are spent by the City of New York and by well-intentioned persons to correct the boy after he comes out of jail, but it is a question in my mind whether they succeed. The department feels that something should be done before the boy goes wrong. Here the question arises as to what should be done, and it has been decided that the best thing is to follow out the Lord's prayer, "Lead us not into temptation." We try to remove temptation through the welfare officers.

For instance, if you go over on the west side of the city, or to various parts of Brooklyn, the Bronx, Staten Island or Queens, you will find coal yards and coal dealers who are very careless about the manner in which they safeguard their coal. Usually there is a fence in the yard. A boy, a couple of boys, come along the street with no intention of stealing. They see a board loose. An opportunity presents itself of stealing the coal, and like an old hardened thief (an old hardened thief will never steal anything unless he knows where he can dispose of it) they begin to plan. They know if they take the coal they can sell it. There are enough people around the neighborhood who would buy it and ask no questions. They know when a boy comes around with coal he does not represent Burns Bros., but it does not interest them; they want coal. If we can get the owner of the coal yard to safeguard that fence, both the temptation and the opportunity for the boy to steal are removed.

There are other cases. You will find a wagon loaded with produce bulging out of the back going down the street. The driver is sitting on the front seat; all he sees is the horse. The boys come along with no intention of doing wrong; they see the wagon passing

with the things sticking out of the back and immediately an inspiration arises to steal and dispose of the produce. Possibly five minutes before starting, they had no intention of doing wrong, but they steal, are arrested, possibly taken to court, committed to jail, and then come out and usually start a life of crime. If we can get the driver or the owner of that wagon to screen the back so that a boy cannot get at the goods there will be no temptation. Hundreds of instances can be related where boys can become thieves because of the temptations that are offered them on our streets here today.

In ninety per cent of the cases boys become crooks because there is a lack of parental control. Sometimes a parent is not responsible; the father may have died or he may be a bum and the mother must go out and work for the family. She cannot be there to supervise the children, to see that they go to school or to see what company they keep. The result is that if the boy has the inclination, he becomes bad because it is the only path for him to follow. The other boys, bad boys, are always willing to pick him up. Assuming that this boy is arrested, what can he do? He cannot go to any of the clubs that are organized in his immediate neighborhood, he cannot go to the various church clubs, etc., because the mothers of the good boys do not want that bad boy to associate with their own sons. There is nobody to pick him up. There is no agency in New York City to look after that boy, although there are hundreds of agencies to take care of the good boy. In the average club where boys congregate you will find many boys who would not take anything should they find the United States Treasury open.

The welfare officers in the department are following this particular point. They are going after and pointing out to this bad boy what he can do to make himself a good citizen, talking to him in a fatherly manner and telling him that the route he is traveling will surely land him in jail; that he will have more amusement and get more recreation by doing the things that are within the law. These welfare officers try to find out what is the matter with the boy. There is no use giving him oranges and candy. What is necessary is to find out what is the matter; is it the fault of the mother or is it the fault of the father? If it is the fault of the father and the father is able to work, the welfare officers try to put him in jail if they can, because that is the place for him. Kind words are no good to him. If they can, they would like to put that fellow to work, lock him up and have the profits of his labor go to the support of the family. Then something might be accomplished. But, unfortunately, when you arrest

him the law then takes him away from his family and whatever chance he had of supporting them, and it is up to the citizens of the city to support that loafer in jail. When we ask that man what is the matter with him and why he does not support his family, he immediately says he cannot get a job. The welfare officers get him a job. They find a man who employs labor, tell him they have a man who is neglecting his family and ask him if he will give him work. He consents. Then the welfare officer goes after the man and offers him the alternative of either going to work or going to jail, because when there is a job offered there is no excuse. If you can get him to work his wife is relieved of the necessity of working and has an opportunity of caring for her children which, together with voting, is the proper function.

We co-operate with the parole commission. The parole commission which was established here a short while ago has not enough officers to supervise this work. We have designated in each precinct in the City of New York a parole officer who, in addition to his other duties, is required to supervise the men who are on parole and live in that precinct. Their job is to get hold of this fellow as soon as he comes out of jail and tell him that the police department stands ready to help him. The feeling of the average person who is released from jail is that every agency of the police department is organized for the purpose of putting him back into jail. We try to point out to the man who has been paroled that we want to help him. The police department and the individual policemen in the department are not judged by the number of arrests that are made; they are judged by the absence of crime in the City of New York. The people of the City of New York are not interested in the statement of the department that during 1917 twenty-five thousand arrests were made. Nobody is interested in that, but everyone who pays taxes is interested in the question whether during 1917 the police department made New York City a better place in which to live. If it did, it has accomplished something. The individual policeman is not judged by the number of arrests he makes but by the absence of crime on his post.

We point out to the fellow who has been released from jail that the policeman who arrested him and the police department are not interested in putting him back in jail but are interested in making a better citizen of him. We then try to find out how we can help him make an honest living. He, of course, lost his job when he went to jail. The big thing for a fellow who gets out of jail is to get a job quickly. He has no money, he has to live, and he is going to steal to

live. There is no question about it, and no one can blame him either. There is, however, no agency in the City of New York which takes care of that man with any success. The police department knows he wants work and advises him as follows: "Now, you won't get along very well in the street you lived on formerly—live in such and such a place." They always get work and it is surprising, since the introduction of this system in the police department, what a large number of men who have come back from jail have made good.

The department wants to prevent crime, but here the question arises as to how it is going to do it? How will it get the city employes to help? I have tried to explain to you what we are trying to do toward that end. We have some up-hill fights, we have some opposition, a number of people contend that it is not the proper police function. Don't you see it is because we are required by the charter to prevent and detect crime? We find it better to bend the services of a man in a precinct toward the prevention of crime than to have him arrest a man who is neglecting his family and then interest the City of New York not only in supporting him in idleness while he is in jail, but also in looking after his wife and children while he is there.

I would like to talk about the summons system which has been introduced into the police department. Last year there were made two hundred thousand arrests, and eighty thousand of these people were summoned to court. A great many of these summonses are issued by the police department in co-operation with other departments, particularly with the street cleaning department. If you remember when you went over on the East Side a few years ago you found refuse piled on the streets sometimes two feet high. Everyone was throwing stuff into the street. The department began a campaign of education to interest the people in keeping our streets clean. After about three months of warning persons not to litter the streets and to keep them clean, we found that we had to take them to court, and in one inspection district, the Fifth Inspection District, extending from Forty-second to One Hundred and Sixteenth Streets and from Fifth Avenue to the East River, we served twelve hundred summonses in one month. More than twelve hundred persons in that section were summoned to court for violating the sanitary law. We have warned the people to correct this condition. When the policeman on his post finds sawdust on the sidewalk he can trace it to a butcher shop nearby, and it is his duty to go to that butcher to have the condition corrected.

Sometimes the owner of a tenement house or an apartment house did not provide sufficient receptacles for holding refuse from a building. There would be only about three cans to receive the refuse of

possibly twenty families in that building. At about eleven o'clock in the day the three cans would be filled and then from eleven o'clock that day until the first removal by the street cleaning department the next morning every one coming from the house with refuse threw it on top of the other stuff, with the result that there was more garbage on the street and on the sidewalk than there was in the cans. Then we got after the owner of the building because the law at that time required that sufficient receptacles had to be provided to hold the refuse from a building for forty-eight hours. Since then an amendment has made it sixty hours. The big job was to try to get sufficient receptacles to contain the refuse of the buildings. We now have this situation pretty well in hand throughout the city. You will find that most of the buildings throughout the city have sufficient receptacles.

We also get after the people who carelessly throw newspapers into the street. Throwing newspapers in the street is no crime, but when you realize that there are possibly ten sheets to the paper, which blow in ten different ways, the street is soon littered up in this way.

By observing these and similar conditions and correcting them where possible, city employes can materially aid the police department in the performance of its many functions.