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A PRACTICAL METHOD FOR SELECTING POLICEMEN¹

AUGUST VOLLMER²

Each city is entitled to have a police force recruited from the best men who apply for such service. An effort ought to be made to obtain men who are capable, honest, active in mind and body, industrious, cool-headed, actuated by sentiments of humanity and kindness, well educated, experienced in dealing with men, women and children, able to solve difficult problems quickly, and prompt to act on decisions formed on the basis of practical common sense and sound judgment. A police force composed of such material would be a good investment for any city. Such a police force can be had in any American city that is willing to pay the price, which need not be beyond reason, and that is willing to discontinue absolutely all political or social preferment in making appointments, relying solely on better methods in making examinations of applicants for positions.

Modern American police departments trace their origin to the Metropolitan police force organized in London in 1829. Passing rapidly through that period of their existence under political control when ignorance, brutality and intemperance characterized the police organizations in most of the larger cities in this country, we enter the era of civil service reform and the beginning of an intelligent, efficient, humane, sober and constructive police administration. However, there are some communities without sufficient pride to throw off the yoke of political control with its attendant evils while others are paying the penalty for past negligence in that direction and are not altogether free from the vile influences and vicious methods which prevailed during the early history of American police organizations.

Created originally to protect life and property and preserve the peace, responsibilities great enough to tax any single organization, the police department is now burdened with multifarious duties which should rightfully be performed by other departments; the policeman is the inspector of health, sanitation, building, fire prevention, licenses, boilers, weights and measures, milk and other foods, boarding and rooming houses, hotels, apartments, tenements, wharves, docks, bridges,

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gas and water meters, motion pictures, streets and sidewalks; he cares for the sick and wounded, regulates the keeping of animals, searches for lost persons, animals and property, and enforces hundreds of laws and ordinances, all of which activities serve to cloud and detract from the clearness of his vision and hinder him from concentrating attention on the most important police function, namely, crime prevention.

Formerly when defective individuals could not secure employment in the industrial field and were unable to float successfully on the sea of life, their friends or relatives induced politicians to provide berths for them in the police department. It was that type of policeman who was largely responsible for most of the criticism of the American police.

Civil service examinations have had a tendency to weed out the mentally unfit. The questions propounded by the examiners were originally devised to test the applicants' educational qualifications for positions on the force; as the examinations became more severe, the candidates of low mentality found that they could not compete with the more intelligent and were eliminated. Obviously this method is vastly superior to that of selecting patrolmen for their brawn or political affiliations. But despite the general improvement in the personnel of American police organizations there remains much to be done if they are to measure up to the standard demanded by the public, the press and the pulpit.

Newspapers all over the country, with few exceptions, are continually drawing attention to the fact that individual members of the police departments are unfit for the service, and in some instances entire organizations are criticized. Such headlines as these are not uncommon: "POLICE ARE INEFFICIENT," "POLICE SUSPECTED OF GRAFT," "POLICE FAIL TO ENFORCE LAW," "POLICEMAN BRUTALLY BEATS PRISONER," "POLICE UNABLE TO COPE WITH CRIME." In their editorials and news columns newspaper writers complain of the irresponsibility and lack of ability of the American police. Heads of departments are called weaklings and are said to be deficient in leadership and unable to command men. They are alleged to be either discourteous, domineering, mean, cowardly, slow or irritable. In truth, nothing has been left unprinted that could be printed which would convince the public that the organization which is paid to protect their lives and property and preserve the peace in the community is poorly equipped, physically, mentally and morally, to render that highly desirable service.

These criticisms are often unjustified and frequently are the result of political squabbles in the community or may be traceable to personal differences between the press representatives and the police, but occasionally their denouncements are warranted and much more could be written by them regarding vicious or unfair practices if they published all that they believed to be true, but are unable to prove.

Naturally the question arises, why do not the people of our cities correct the conditions complained of by eliminating the unfit and raising the standard of entrance requirements to police organizations?

When we consider that there are many unintelligent and uneducated men employed in occupations involving no risk of reputation or life, with less arduous and more regular hours of employment, receiving nearly twice as much compensation and enjoying many more opportunities for advancement, when we further take into consideration the not infrequent critical, unsympathetic and unreasonable attitude of the public toward policemen and the widespread unwillingness on the part of the citizen to co-operate with them and lend a willing hand in their endeavors to enforce laws, we can see some of the reasons why the most desirable type of man hesitates to enter the service. But supposing that an equitable basis of pay is agreed upon and other obstacles are overcome, the present method of selecting a policeman is not conducive to the efficient administration of a police department; and just as long as candidates are selected by the present method, police departments and the members thereof will continue to be harshly criticized, for no chain is stronger than its weakest link.

Where is there a business concern that compels applicants for various vacancies in the organization to submit to the same physical and mental examination; where the janitor, clerk, salesman, engineer, department heads, superintendents and managers are all compelled to answer the same questions, measure up to the same physical standards as to health, height, weight, age and sex, and all commencing their employment at the same occupational level and at the same pay?

Where is there a business concern that limits the selection of men for technical positions to employees holding inferior positions in the same establishment; and where in this land, outside of police organizations, is there the foolish residential clause which excludes applicants that have not been residents, in the city in which the business is located, for a period of from three to five years?

A cure for police inefficiency is better pay and a more practical method for the selection of policemen.

With regard to pay, we can dispose of this question quickly by stating that it should be sufficient to induce the right sort of men to qualify for and remain in the service, but the method for examining applicants for police vacancies needs some explanation. Before adding to this, however, it is necessary to know just what qualities the candidates should possess to successfully perform his duties.

Doctor Gross, in his work entitled "Criminal Investigation," says that "The services of the investigating officer are great and his labors are full of interest, but rarely even among specialists is full credit given to the difficulties of the position. An investigating officer must possess vigor of youth, energy, alertness, robust health and extensive acquaintance with all branches of the law. He ought to know men, proceed skillfully and possess liveliness and vigilance. Tact is indispensable, true courage is required in many stations and he must be always ready in an emergency to risk health and life, as when dangerous criminals are to be dealt with, fatiguing duties to be performed, contagious diseases to be examined, or dangerous postmortems to be attended. He must be able, moreover, to solve problems relating to every conceivable branch of human knowledge. He should know what medical men can tell him and what he should ask the medical man; he must be conversant with the wiles of the stock broker; as well acquainted with fabricating a will as with the cause of a railroad accident; he must know the tricks of card sharps, why boilers explode, how a horse thief can turn an old crowbait into a young hunter. He should be able to pick his way through account books, understand criminal slang, read ciphers, and be familiar with the processes and tools of all classes of workmen."

The policeman must not only possess the qualities mentioned by Doctor Gross but in addition thereto must be blessed with a phenomenal memory, because he is obliged to remember everything that he hears and sees on or off the beat during his tour of duty and be able to relate his perceptions accurately without error or omission.

Frequently he is required to exercise powers of reasoning and judgment; points of law which take supreme courts months to settle are to be decided without hesitancy, and woe betide him should judgment fail him at the critical moment.

His fidelity and loyalty to the department must be great enough to resist whatever temptations beset him, and truthfulness, honesty and definiteness of purpose are demanded in all of his dealings with the public. No matter how tantalizing or abusive the individual or the crowd may be, the policeman under all circumstances must have

self-control and never lose his temper. Experience has taught us that the cheerful, sympathetic, kind-hearted, gentle but firm policeman, who makes friends easily, cultivates the love of the children, is helpful to the aged, infirm, dependent and delinquent, who treats everyone with the same courtesy and respect he accords to his superior officers, is much more valuable to the department than the grouchy, sullen or brutal one.

If the policeman would command the respect of others he must be mentally, morally and physically clean at all times, neat in dress and general appearance, with an instinctive love for what is right, good, true and commendable, abhorring everything which he would resent in an accusation made by another, never tolerating for a moment in his own inner consciousness what he would fear or blush to have known to friends or foes, adding dignity to his profession by the pride he takes in doing his work without hope of reward other than the satisfaction of doing his duty whenever and wherever demanded.

The many discouragements met with in the attempts of policemen to settle differences between people, the constant interference by ignorant or misguided citizens with their plans for public betterment, and the numerous failures attending their efforts to solve all kinds of problems and surmount obstacles of every description, indicate the need for perseverance and patience. Without these virtues the policeman is a vocational misfit, incapable of performing the duties of his office, and should be removed, for the good of the service.

Nearly everyone will say that this statement of necessary qualities for a policeman is overdrawn and idealistic. The few who will agree are the chiefs of police, who from experience know the kind of men that have made good on the force, and are familiar with the special traits and qualities of intelligence, character and temperament possessed by certain successful policemen.

Having determined the type of persons needed, an explanation of the method of selecting them from among the candidates is the next consideration. The World War taught us many lessons, one of which was the necessity for securing men fit to fight on the other side of the Atlantic. Guided by wise counsel and profiting by the experience of our allies, Army and Navy leaders enlisted the services of the greatest minds in the fields of medicine and psychology in this country, who, after holding numerous consultations with the officials and spending days and nights studying the problem in the field and laboratory, finally submitted a plan for the examination of conscripted men and officers. Without entering into details, suffice is to say that the plan had a two-fold purpose: First, the elimination of the unstable and

unfit; second, the recognition of desirable material for commanding positions in the Army and Navy. Men were required to run the gauntlet of medical specialists; eyes, ears, nose, throat, teeth, lungs, heart and all the other parts and processes of the body were examined and tested for defects and diseases. The recruit was then passed on to the specialist in mental and nervous diseases who rejected those with apparent flaws and held for further examination those with latent symptoms of deficiencies; and finally the intelligence of the embryo soldier was tested by special intelligence group tests. A card with all information as to the previous occupations of each soldier accompanied his service record whenever transferred from one branch of the Army to another. Thus each commander knew what each man under his command could do, from polishing a diamond or repairing a watch to caring for horses or repairing an automobile, without calling the man to headquarters. The ultimate result was the finest body of citizen soldiers that ever carried arms in defense of their country's honor.

Examining and testing large bodies of men has been standardized by the Army and if the Army plan were adopted by civil service examiners for selecting police candidates, we could be certain that such misfits as the stupid, hot-headed, sullen, cranky, slow, lazy, slovenly, unreliable and brutal would never get into the service.

Supplementing the Army method of selecting men, special examinations should be held to determine the education, training and experience of candidates for positions in the department, such as clerks, sergeants, investigators, specialists of various kinds and commissioned officers; physical requirements, as for example, sex, age, height and weight should be modified in examinations for clerks, handwriting experts, photographers, chemical analysts, microscopists and medico-psychologists.

Provision should be made for the promotion of some men of special or exceptional ability without examination, since it cannot be denied that some of our most valued investigators would be disqualified if required to enter competitive examination. Handicapped through lack of early schooling these men have intelligence and other inherent qualities such as cunning, inquisitiveness and shrewdness which more than compensate for education defects. Some have a large and often intimate acquaintance with the inhabitants of certain precincts, as well as special knowledge of conditions therein, which is of value to the department in clearing up minor offenses; they are occasionally helpful in the investigation and solution of more serious crimes. Others have special abilities for preventing certain kinds of crimes

The examination was divided into two parts as follows:

A.—Preliminary examination (held December 15, 1919).

B.—Qualifying or special examination (held December 18, 1919).

Seventeen men took the preliminary examination. *Nine* of these men were selected to take the qualifying examination. *Four* of those taking the qualifying examination or examination *B* are recommended as desirable for your department, according to the qualifications submitted to me.

The qualifications are:

- 1.—At least average intelligence (to be determined by one or more of the standard tests for intelligence).
- 2.—Good physical condition.
- 3.—Good nervous condition (determined by neurological examination).
- 4.—Good mental condition (determined by psychiatric examination).
- 5.—Personality characteristics of special kind (aside from normal intelligence) as:
 - (a) Normal control and activity of innate tendencies or instincts (according to McDougall's outline), as well as bodily activity.
 - (b) Satisfactory disposition.
 - (c) Good and desirable habits.
 - (d) Recognized normal personal ideals.
 - (e) Recognized normal social ideals.
 - (f) Normal tastes.
 - (g) Strength of character.
 - (h) Satisfactory temperament.
- 6.—Speed.
- 7.—Accuracy.
- 8.—Good reasoning ability.
- 9.—Good auditory memory.
- 10.—Good visual memory.

The score for each individual is based upon the ten qualifications enumerated above, but classed under five heads or topics which also serve for scoring other traits.

The persons recommended are those who came nearest to the special qualifications.

The score for each person is the total number of points obtained. In no case can this score be more than 100. It must be borne in mind that this is not a percentage score, that is, it is not on a percentage basis, but each grade of a quality or group of qualities has a special value which has been arbitrarily determined.

The values for each qualification or group of qualifications is indicated numerically after each one. The following list of qualities has been decided upon as a basis for scoring:

A—PHYSICAL	
1. Physique.	Superior 15
2. Neatness.	Above average 12
3. Voice.	Average 9
4. Endurance.	

5. (Gauged by physical examination and observation.)	Below average	6
	Inferior	3

B—NERVOUS

1. Motor reactions.	Superior	15
2. Sensory reactions.	Above average	12
3. Special senses.	Average	9
(Gauged by neurological examination.)	Below average	6
	Inferior	3

C—MENTAL

1. Ideation.	Superior	15
2. Judgment.	Above average	12
3. Reasoning.	Average	9
4. Memory (auditory and visual).	Below average	6
(Gauged by psychiatric and psychological examinations.)	Inferior	3

D—PERSONALTY

1. Innate tendencies.	Superior	15
2. Disposition.	Above average	12
3. Habits.	Average	9
4. Temperament.	Below average	6
5. Personal ideals.	Inferior	3
6. Social ideals.		
7. Intellect.		

E—GENERAL VALUES

1. Intellect.	Superior	40
2. Learning ability.	Above average	32
3. Reporting ability.	Average	24
4. Memory (auditory and visual).	Below average	16
5. Speed.	Inferior	8
6. Accuracy.		
7. Leadership.		

You will note that each qualification used for scoring has also a *descriptive* value and that the *numerical* value corresponds to the descriptive value; as superior, above average, average, below average, inferior, with the values 15, 12, 9, 6, 3, respectively for each of the qualifications except *E*, which has a higher numerical value as indicated above.

The scheme for rating and the numerical valuation is similar to the rating scale of the army, and the above idea is derived from it, but the values are arrived at by *actual examinations* and not by a *man-to-man* comparison, which latter method is used in the army.

Only the nine men taking examination B or the qualifying examination are rated as above. The others were eliminated for reasons stated in the preliminary report.

SUMMARY

For the results of examination A or the preliminary examination I refer you to the report made to you December 15, 1919.

The results of examination B or the qualifying examination are as indicated below. Attached herewith you will find copies of the individual reports on the nine men and also a personality chart for each man.

The personality chart is explained as follows:

The Roman numerals indicate:

- I. Very superior.
- II. Superior.
- III. Above average.
- IV. Average.
- V. Below average.
- VI. Inferior.
- VII. Very inferior.

The top row of letters indicate:

- A. Education.
- B. Intelligence.
- C. Physical.
- D. Nervous.
- E. Mental.
- F. Social.
- G. Auditory memory.
- H. Visual memory.
- I. Speed.
- J. Accuracy.
- K. Attention.
- L. Personality.
- M. Disposition.
- N.
- O. Opinion.
- P. Special abilities.
 - 1. Learning.
 - 2. Reporting.
 - 3. Planning.
 - 4. Follow directions.
 - 5. Expression.

Nine men took examination B and are graded as follows:

No.	Name	Age	Education	Otis Test	Stearns Test	Score	Qualified (A, B, C, D, E)*
1.	H. C. H.	21	U-2	150	100	83	A
2.	H. W. M.	24.1	U-2	91	68	66	C
3.	P. J. B.	37.10	U-2	126	93	65	B
4.	J. R. S.	23.8	Grm.8	127	79	60	C
5.	E. H. M.	22.4	H.S.3	94	90	54	E
6.	F. F. W.	36.11	Grm.8	95	86	54	E
7.	H. K. T.	21.6	Grm.8	88	51	47	E
8.	H. M. B.	30.4	Grm.8	96	67	43	E
9.	W. R.	37.7	Grm.8	85	74	43	E

The above report is respectfully submitted for your consideration.

(Signed). JAU DON BALL, M. D.

*The letters A, B, C, D, E, under the column "Qualified" means commissioned officer, non-commissioned officer, patrolman first class, patrolman second class, disqualified, respectively.

CASE No. I

Laboratory Report:

Age, 21 years. Student. Intelligence (Otis 150; Stearns 100). Heredity good. Few nervous symptoms (Post influenzal). Quick, accurate, attentive. Visual and auditory memory especially good.

Score:

- 1. Physical 12
- 2. Nervous 12
- 3. Mental 12
- 4. Personality 15
- 5. General values 32
- Total 83

Recommendations:

Excellent man. Especially fitted for high class work. Commissioned officer material. Class A.

INDIVIDUAL VOCATIONAL GUIDANCE CHART

No. 1 Sex Male Age 21 Wage 0 M. S. W. D. S- Occupation Student
 Organization Police Department
 Plant City of Berkeley, Calif.
 Department _____

Examiner J. D. B.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	1	2	3	4	5
I
II	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.	.	—	—	—	—	—
III
IV
V
VI
VII

Personality _____ Recommendations: A

Character _____

Habits: No bad habits

Traits { Desirable xx
 Undesirable

References _____

Labor { Especially Skilled
 Skilled
 Experienced Employed as _____
 Unskilled x