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AIMS AND IDEALS OF THE POLICE¹

AUGUST VOLLMER²

Article I, Section 2, of the Constitution of the International Association of Chiefs of Police reads as follows:

“The purposes for which this Association is organized are to secure a closer official and personal relationship among police officials at home and abroad; to secure unity of action in police matters; to elevate the standard of police institutions by urging the elimination of politics from their conduct; a tenure of office for those employed in the service; the maintenance of honorable men and means in the transaction of police business; the general adoption of pensions and relief laws; the adoption of humane efforts in the enforcement of laws; the provision of temporary relief for its worthy members and their families in certain emergencies; the advancement along all lines pertaining to the prevention and detection of crime and the identification and treatment of prisoners.”

These are indeed worthy objects and their attainment is dependent upon our ability and power. For the present purpose, ability is here defined as “The capacity and desire to acquire knowledge, an understanding of what branches of knowledge are requisite, the general nature of every branch, the principles upon which each is based, and the talent and skill to apply knowledge.

But ability alone is not enough. After planning a course, including a methodical arrangement of the various means conducive to the attainment of our objects and bringing each constituent into systematic connection and co-operation as a part of a whole, we must have force and character of a degree commensurate with the plan of action combined with sufficient zeal and enthusiasm to insure the realization of our ideals.

A few of the essentials which, in my opinion, should be included in a comprehensive plan of action are briefly mentioned in the following paragraphs, and are respectfully submitted in the hope that they may stimulate discussion, arouse imagination, furnish inspiration and initiate power to produce results at this, the twenty-ninth conclave of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Legislative bodies seem somewhat confused at times regarding the purpose and function of the police. In one community they limit police

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activities to the protection of life and property and the regulation of traffic, while in others every state and municipal function is assigned to the police. Our duties have been drafted by lawmakers and theorists without seeking aid from expert policemen, primarily because the policeman himself has never been altogether clear on the subject. Therefore, the time is ripe for police executives to discuss this fundamental question and prepare a form which may be helpful to legislators in the future. Universal acceptance of the form cannot be immediately expected, but there is every reason to believe that recommendations from this organization will be given serious thought by men entrusted with the responsibility of writing instruments which provide for the creation of police departments.

How to organize a police department and secure for the community the maximum of police protection at the lowest possible expense, is the principal problem that besets every chief of police during the entire period of his incumbency, and is of vital interest to the law-abiding members of society. This, too, is a question that can best be answered by men actively engaged in serving the public, who have intimate knowledge of what other police departments are doing, who know how to profit from others' experience, who have studied their own local situation, and who utilize the human power and equipment under their command to the best of their ability in protecting lives and property and preserving the peace. Here in this convention an opportunity is afforded to express and crystallize our opinions and prepare an outline embodying the knowledge, wisdom and experience of our members. Such an outline would serve as a guide or standard for every city, modified as may be necessary to meet local conditions.

Much thought has been given to the methods now in vogue for selecting applicants for positions on the force. Few departments have the same standard of mental, physical, moral and educational qualifications. Moreover, no provision has been made in any of the examinations for the specialists, such as stenographers, filing clerks, typists, photographers, identification and handwriting experts, and other skilled professionals, now regarded as indispensable in modern police organizations. Incidentally, any person desiring to enter the service, regardless of his special ability, is obliged to start at the bottom and work his way up through promotional examinations. There are many who share the opinion that this method of recruiting a police department is wholly inadequate, and largely responsible for existing weaknesses. Our work in the community is much more important than is generally believed by the public and experience has taught us that only the very best human

material can render the type of service demanded. We cannot induce specialists to enter our ranks unless our present recruiting system is changed. Obviously, here is a field of endeavor that deserves early attention by police executives. While on the subject, a word should be said about policewomen. Wherever their duties have been carefully defined and the right type of women selected, the policewoman has proven her value to the department and community. However, their activities have been limited to handling delinquents after an overt act has been committed and the supervision of questionable resorts. There remain the vast field of pre-delinquency which should be covered by women and which has not as yet been touched. This field offers rare opportunities for the most practical preventive police work.

Assume that it would be possible, through examinations, to skim the cream of society, and select applicants, male and female, who were especially qualified for the very highest standards of police service, there remains the necessity for intensive preliminary training before we dare entrust to recruits the responsibilities of a police officer. After assignment, their training in practical police work should continue at regular intervals as long as they remain on the force. Not only does such training improve the members as individuals, but it also promotes better team work, and improves the morale of the organization. Hence police schools are essential in every department. The subjects considered desirable may vary slightly in different communities, but the fundamentals in the police school curriculum should be identical in all departments.

When we have reached a point where the best people in society are selected for police service, there will be little confusion regarding the duties of the members. Meanwhile, during the process of evolution, we shall be obliged to study and analyze the different positions on the force, define the duties of each carefully, and thus avoid, as far as possible, the unceasing conflicts occurring in all departments occasioned by loosely drawn rules governing the activities of the rank and file.

Modern equipment, such as signal devices, wireless telephony and telegraphy, automobiles, motorcycles, bicycles, motorboats, gas bombs, traffic devices, signs and towers, and laboratory apparatus, is indispensable in an up-to-date department. No longer can we hope to compete with the criminals of today unless we discard antiquated and obsolete equipment, and strengthen our force with the recognized and desirable tools of our profession. The criminal uses every new invention and is usually a league in advance of the police because of that fact. We must give more attention in the future to new contrivances, and

quickly seize and utilize in police departments every instrument, device or appliance which may be helpful in defending the public against the anti-social. No time must be lost in adopting new equipment or discarding the old when it has outlived its usefulness. Blindly following the old trail in wornout shoes is foolish economy and makes the policeman ridiculous in the eyes of the criminal and provides excellent material for the funny papers and movie comedies. We must be prepared to meet the criminal with better tools and better brains than he possesses if we hope to command the respect of the community that we serve.

Every department will profit if this organization will devote some time toward devising practical methods for the solution of some of our important police problems, such, for example, as the corruption of the police, prostitution, gambling, illicit sale and use of drugs, traffic, accident prevention, and the elimination of dishonest jurists, lawyers, bail bond brokers and corrupting politicians. These problems are common to all, and if properly and intensively studied we will find the means of overcoming them, with the aid of the public. But the public should be honestly informed and this information must come from the police.

"He has always had a good home." "I can't understand why he did it." "I never thought that I would live to see my boy behind the bars." "What can be wrong with him?" "He is the last man that I ever expected would commit such a crime." These and hundreds of similar expressions are of daily occurrence in every police station. The parents struggle to recall some bump on the head that the offender received while a child. Friends explain the departure from rectitude by disappointment in love or business. The public can furnish a thousand different reasons for the crooked act, but the wise policeman remains silent, ventures no opinion, knowing that every factor in the delinquent's heredity and environment must be investigated before an intelligent explanation can be given for the individual's failure to conform to the rules made to govern our conduct. Prevention of crime is our principal function, and we must be thoroughly informed regarding all of the causes underlying delinquency before we can ever hope to reduce the number of crimes that are committed annually. Merely arresting the offender and sending him to jail is like pouring water into a sieve. The time thus expended is largely wasted, if census statistics are reliable. Common sense teaches us that the time to begin crime prevention is in the formative part of the child's life, and in many cases even before that period. Hence, most of our energies should be conserved for effort in that direction. Human being are not exempt

from biological laws and the increase of insanity, feeble-mindedness, epilepsy, degeneracy, prostitution and criminality indicates a polluted blood stream. Extreme measures may be necessary to prevent further pollution, otherwise the Jukes, Kallikaks, and Namms will preponderate and furnish fertile soil for national decadence.

Dissatisfaction with criminal procedure is common and we are forced to admit that the complaints made regarding unnecessary delay and miscarriage of justice in criminal trials are not without justification. While the police are not responsible for the delays incident to defects in the procedure, it is our duty, nevertheless, as officers of the law, to give heed to the rumblings of discontent, and contribute our mite toward unraveling this perplexing problem.

Uniform national and even international laws, uniform classification of crimes, simplified court procedure, better methods of selecting and promoting properly trained jurists, are modern requirements, and deserving of much thought by the police. When we have convinced ourselves that new legislation will be beneficial, let us give expression to our sentiments on the platform and in the press, and conduct a campaign of education until public opinion is strengthened enough to influence the lawmakers. We must create reverence for the law. But to do this it is necessary to admit and point out deficiencies wherever they exist and appeal to the public for co-operation and assistance in correcting the faults. Our power for good in this direction is measured only by the will to work.

When a crime has been committed, it becomes the duty of the investigator to learn how the crime was committed, with what, who is responsible and why, and how to locate the offender. We cannot do this by trial and error methods, but a well-planned method of procedure must be followed. Accordingly investigators who show special aptitudes should be selected and detailed for duty with squads that give these men opportunities to develop their latent ability. They should be trained for their duties as specialists are trained in every other field of endeavor. Moreover, we cannot ignore the value of a fully equipped, scientific police laboratory as an aid in the detection and apprehension of criminals and the prevention of crime. A single hair, a blood stain, or particles of dust have been the sole clues that finally solved mysterious and perplexing crimes in the past. Microscopists, chemical analysts, medico-psychologists, and handwriting experts are effective co-workers. They should be encouraged to enter the police service and devote their energies and lives toward educating and improving the skill of policemen, assist them in outwitting cunning criminals who live by preying

on society, and further help us by pointing out removable contributories of delinquency.

Formerly police records were kept in each of the police units within the city. Experience has shown that they are inseparable and to be correctly informed regarding crime conditions in a community we must needs centralize our records. Centralization affords opportunities for intimate study of police problems which, when completed, can be shown in the form of charts, graphs, tables and maps, thus enabling executives to place members of the force where and when they are most needed and furnish ample protection with the force at their command. A bureau of records, if properly organized, is the hub of the police wheel. It serves to connect the several police branches, speeds up the force, eliminates waste, prevents neglect and derelictions by the members and increases the efficiency of the entire organization. Bureaus can be strengthened by the use of standardized complaint, report, record and identification forms and files, and in this respect the International Association has a very important duty to perform. We should recommend standardization and urge each and every department to adopt the approved forms and files. This will not only save time and money, but will aid materially in the compilation of desirable police statistics.

A national bureau of criminal records and crime statistics is imperative and a workable plan for such a bureau should be devised at this meeting. Migratory criminals are causing an endless amount of trouble and property stolen by them is hopelessly lost due to the lack of a centralized bureau of records. When we consider the actual amount of lost and stolen property that a well-organized bureau can assist in recovering, the expense incident to establishing and maintaining a national bureau is comparatively small.

Statisticians claim that crime costs nearly twice as much as education. If this be true, then some of the money spent for less important theoretical courses in universities should be set aside for the study of human behavior, its bearing upon political and social problems, and for the training of practical criminologists, jurists, prosecutors, policemen and policewomen. We should unite in petitioning the regents of the several universities to assist in reducing this tremendous unnecessary economic waste by establishing such courses without further delay.

Team work determine the strength of an organization, not the performance or ability of a particular individual or group of individuals. Therefore, to accomplish the purposes of this association the active co-operation of every member is solicited. No one is asked to assume

burdensome tasks, but let each select the phase of police activity or problem that interests him and contribute to the organization his study and knowledge of that subject during and between conventions. For example, one group could devote its entire time and thought toward improving methods for selecting applicants. Another could acquire information regarding training and education of the recruits, and so on throughout the various police activities and problems. They should report annually at regular conventions, and also be prepared to furnish information regarding their specialty whenever called upon by subscribing members.

During the perilous growing period of this organization it would have been unsafe and ungrateful to have selected a new president at every convention, but continuation of this custom would have been unwise. The meeting at St. Louis has made it possible for our officers to advance to a higher chair annually. Vice-presidents, serving as section leaders, prepare themselves for greater responsibilities, and are deserving of higher honors and should be rewarded for their unselfish labor by continuous and orderly advancement.