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August Vollmer

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ABSTRACT OF THE "WICKERSHAM" POLICE REPORT

AUGUST VOLLMER

The original purpose of the police organization was difficult, but superimposed upon its difficulties are the modern problems of Traffic and Vice. Every other line of human endeavor is simple when placed alongside the problem which is now presented to Police Departments for solution.

Executive capacity of the highest degree should be demanded and universities should vie with each other in turning out from their institutions men adequately trained to serve their country as efficient police leaders. Fosdick, in "American Police Systems," says that "The irrational development of American police organization is due to inadequate leadership. To the lack of trained and intelligent administrators, obtaining and holding office on favorable conditions, much of the confusion and maladjustment of our police machinery is ascribable." Legislative bodies have heaped upon the police innumerable regulatory and inhibitory measures. Many of these are ill-advised and absolutely unenforceable. Quite aside from their unenforceability is the hostile attitude of the public, not only toward these regulations, but also toward the police.

More automobiles mean more complications to the crime and vice problems. New and dangerous types of crimes, new methods used in approach and escape from the scenes of their crimes, all add to the duties confronting police executives. To become a police expert, such as the head of a large police organization ought to be, takes several years. It takes the police commissioner the entire term of office to learn the details of the business and then when he is an expert he is turned out of office.

Improper recruiting methods over which the executive has no control impose insuperable personnel problems which keep the executive busy trying to run a department smoothly and effectively with incompetent, dishonest subordinates. Students of police problems know that police never have and probably never will be able to prevent prostitution, gambling and bootlegging by repressive methods alone. Honest enforcement of law is possible, but even with honest enforcement the truth must be recognized that the absolute repression of vice and its multiplicity of forms is beyond the power of law enforcement officials. Even attempts to enforce traffic regulations

were found useless until the great majority of people believed in and supported the traffic regulations.

Under the most favorable circumstances the position of the chief police executive of any city is an unhappy one. A combined attack may be made upon the administration and the chief of police ousted for no other reason than that he tried to do his sworn duty.

Crime is better organized and better financed than in the pre-Volstead days. Racketeers may be found in every city, operating successfully by intimidating business men and labor unions. Crime is big business and requires police executives of unusual ability to prevent it from destroying governmental foundations.

To win the support of subordinates police executives must know the police business and must have had long experience in the various branches of service, otherwise he is doomed to failure. Moreover, no subordinate can do his best if he is removed from one station and placed in another without reason or explanation. There are occasions when transfer is necessary, but huge shake-ups and transfers from one station to another break the spirit of the groups that are moved about and they soon develop an attitude of indifference.

Without knowledge concerning evildoers, their friends, relatives and haunts, the executive will be grossly deceived and will find himself in the embarrassing position of giving aid and comfort to the anti-social, favoring legislation designed to give them protection or recommending grants of licenses and privileges which will be utilized for continuing illegal business. An acquaintance with that large group of solid citizens who believe in law and order is also helpful. Information concerning the honesty and ability of the citizens can only be acquired through long service and many experiences. The executive also must know not only personalities whose activities may complicate his problems, but must be aware that in his city different sections require individual and intensive study for the reason that no two sections of a community are exactly alike.

Where the policy of the police department alters with each change of administration foreigners and new-comers never know what to expect and soon lose respect for law and the law enforcement officials. Police morale is built on a foundation of honest, intelligent and continuous leadership. No factor has contributed so greatly to police demoralization as has the practice of limiting the tenure of executives. Not until the practice is discontinued can we hope to make material progress in police procedure. Regardless of ability, the department head cannot hope to make an impression upon a large police department in the brief period that he is permitted to serve

in this country. It takes an executive years to become acquainted with the problems of crime, vice and traffic, to say nothing of the political, social and economic problems of the city he serves. Years of experience in police affairs are required to save the police executive from being hoodwinked by the crooks in the department, and the qualifications and honesty of persons who comprise the force can never be ascertained in the short tenure usually allotted police heads. Intimate and sympathetic understanding of the men by a leader distinguishes the effective from the ineffective department, promotes morale in the organization and can only be fully achieved where there is a continuity of leadership. Stabilization is possible when the executive's plans, purposes and policies are carried out over an extended period. Turmoil follows changes of department heads and there is always loss in police efficiency. Members of the force are mentally upset because they know that as a result of past experiences something is sure to happen. The general rule followed by most new executives is to discard everything that their predecessor instituted and cast in the wastepile along with other buried experiments, the result of his labors. If we could gaze into the future and there view the evils that follow in the wake of continued changes in police leadership it is doubtful if the taxpayers would accept the situation so complacently.

Communities which are able to see beyond their petty local politics and retain in office competent executives are least likely to be attacked by professional crooks. Criminals and underworld characters know that police leadership turnover works to their advantage. They leave nothing undone to encourage and make possible frequent changes. With the removal of police executives police departments always pass through some form of upheaval and when this occurs the members of the department are more concerned with interior strife and politics than with the effects of criminal depre-dations.

A deplorable situation exists in America as a result of the constant changes that have been made in police heads. No matter which way he turns, the police executive is doomed because the political system fails to protect and give security in office to honest, competent and courageous men. No factor is more certain to make the police department the plaything of crooked politicians than the American practice of appointing police executives for a short period without security of tenure. What does it matter if the rest of the force is protected by civil service provisions if their leader is the tool of political crooks?

A law enforcement program requires time and a well developed

plan which must be conducted piece-meal. With the force at his command, it is utterly impossible for any police executive in this country to completely eliminate vice and crime or even reduce the amount of vice and crime to an appreciable extent during the average term of a police executive.

The theory that the mayor, representing the people, will exercise wisdom in conducting the business of the city and, being directly responsible to the electors, will do his utmost to protect the lives and property of inhabitants, has been badly shattered, judging by the caliber of the police service which is to be found in the majority of communities. Failure to surround the department head with appropriate protection has made him subject to or obedient to the militant and active political minority. Seeking to avoid repression and to preserve democratic ideals, the people have virtually turned over their police departments to the most notorious and frequently the most dangerous persons in their cities.

A study of cities with a population of 10,000 or over reveals the fact that the average tenure of office for police heads is between four and five years. The average tenure of office for police heads in cities of 500,000 population or over is a fraction over two years.

With security of tenure, with intelligence, with training, with honesty and with sincerity of purpose, the criminal element can be controlled. Without these virtues and with political control as it now exists, police departments must continue to be unorganized, inefficient and corrupt.

Personnel.

Proper qualifications, careful selection, scientific training, thorough police schooling, singly or together, seem total strangers in the majority of our departments. Carefully selected police personnel is the foundation upon which successful police administration is constructed. When a department fails to function properly the cause frequently is found in its low entrance standards or inferior and improper selective methods. Because of the enormity of the task of policing a community it is necessary to emphasize the fact that the best human material in the country is none too good for police service. Former Commissioner Woods said—"The wise policeman is the guide, philosopher and friend of all those who come to him, and this is particularly true where the foreign element in so many thousands of our communities is totally unacquainted with the characteristics of present-day civilization."

Every policeman must be mentally, morally, physically and educationally sound, for the dignity of the profession demands that a

man possess the qualifications of a superior degree. As a first step in any plan to ameliorate conditions we should aim to keep out rather than weed out of the service undesirable persons. The great majority of police are not suited either by temperament, training or education for their position. From several studies that were made it was revealed that more than 60% of the present police personnel never entered high school. That the state of their intelligence is in accord with their educational accomplishments is certain after we have considered the results of the Army Alpha Test given to large groups of policemen. Mr. Amsden, Civil Service Examiner of Los Angeles, made this significant remark—"It is possible to score 212 points on the Army Alpha Test and we know from experience that unless a candidate can make a score of 120 in any of the Alpha Tests it is useless to appoint him as a patrolman." Accepting the standard established by the Los Angeles Civil Service Commission as the lowest standard compatible with good police service, we are forced to recognize the fact that over 75% of the members of the police force of this country are not mentally endowed to perform the duties assigned.

The necessity of providing police recruits with formal instruction in the nature of police duties and the manner of their performance is no longer a controversial subject. The policeman is no longer merely the suppressor of crime, but the social worker of the community as well. This fact, combined with the scientific methods utilized by the modern criminal, makes imperative a type of training which the police manual and walking a beat does not and cannot give to the recruit.

Of all the schools in America, New York has the most elaborate. The general purpose of the course is described in the syllabus: (1) To test and develop the mental capacity: (2) instill the standards, ideals, ambitions, usages, and customs of the organization: (3) give a clear understanding of the penal law and the code of ordinances as well as a comprehensive grasp of the laws of arrests; (4) acquaint the recruit with court procedure and the laws of evidence. The plan embraces four separate courses: (1) Recruit training; (2) physical instruction; (3) firearms; (4) first aid.

Obviously, the training made necessary by present-day conditions cannot be met by the old methods. The ultimate goal is possible only through two means: State supported and controlled schools for police only, and secondly; university cooperation. One of the latest suggestions is that contained in the report of the Subcommittee of the Police Council, London, England, dated March 4, 1930. Among

other conclusions reached is the following: "The police college should provide a resident two-year course to consist of two parts, occupying roughly a year each. Part 1 would include police subjects of general application and other studies bearing on the work of police, while part 2 would include more technical and specialized police subjects and a period of travel for the comparative study of police organization at home and/or abroad."

The University of Chicago, University of Tennessee, Northwestern University, University of Southern California and the University of California are offering some form of courses helpful in training policemen. In addition to these courses there is a very highly specialized program offered at the Junior College located at San Jose, California. At this college two years' work is offered to students who are preparing to enter police service. Necessity has demanded the application of science to police work. Colleges, universities and police departments are recognizing that necessity. Only in this manner can the police ever hope to successfully cope with the crime situation.

Communication Systems and Equipment.

To serve the community effectively the policeman must be fully equipped with the tools of his profession. The police have been compelled to fight criminals without the aid of modern and necessary devices and appliances.

First in importance are means by which the police force is able to act in unison. This lies in the use of modern signalling systems. Only with such a system can the chief keep in touch with the men; only then can the isolated patrolman contact the police station. Without some means which will enable both parties to communicate, the entire force is paralyzed. Speed is essential in these days of rapid transportation and a minute or even a few seconds lost may give the professional crook a half mile start in his dash for freedom.

With the advent of the radio-equipped police car a new era has come. Districts of many square miles, which formerly were officially watched by foot patrolmen are now covered by the roving patrol car—fast and efficient. The radio and automobile in police work has assured a brilliant future.

Records.

Every police department of any considerable size should maintain a centralized records bureau with a responsible, competent officer

at its head. This officer should have the power to command reports from the heads of all units of the department so that he may not be thwarted in his efforts to secure all of the facts which are required in the conduct of his office. The organization of the division should be simple and yet be required to perform a complete and satisfactory service.

There has been an almost total absence of honest, complete, periodic and comparable reports of offenses, persons charged and dispositions until very recently. The status of police records at present leaves much to be desired. Primary information on which good police work must be predicated is often lacking in full or in part. Complaints as related to the occurrence of crime are generally lightly regarded and the attempts are quite uniformly ignored. Arrest records are reasonably well preserved, but that information is seldom used to the best advantage. Investigations are too frequently poorly reported in writing, if at all, and the results of prosecution little known. Records as a general rule are highly decentralized and lack organization in a striking degree. This results in information being either unavailable or else obtainable only after much delay. A high degree of administrative control is necessarily wanting when the records are poorly organized and where much important information is unrecorded or in a confused or complicated condition. Summarized routine reports cannot be manufactured out of whole cloth, and in their absence the police executives cannot visualize the full needs and work of the field units.

Crime Prevention.

No city can afford to be without a unit which will devote its whole time to Crime Prevention. Such a unit must receive official recognition in large enough measure to command respect from the members of the force and other community agencies. The workers must be scientifically trained for the task. No element of political influence should ever enter into their selection and a definite professional standard should be maintained. The crime prevention unit, by reason of its position in the city government, might initiate far-reaching plans for crime prevention through the medium of the school system. Such work, while in the nature of pre-delinquency activities, might in the long run be of broader value than any actual palliatives.

Police Service and the State.

The multitude of police forces in any state and the varying standards of organization and service have contributed immeasurably

to the general low grade of police performance in this country. The independence which police forces display toward each other and the absence of any central force which requires either a uniform or a minimum standard of service leave the way open for the profitable operation of criminals in an area where protection is often ineffectual at the best, generally only partial, and too frequently wholly absent. Vast areas are without the pretense of any sort of a patrol at any time. Bruce Smith, in the "State Police" says—"If protection is to be given a rural district we cannot rely upon the sheriff-constable system to supply it. They have neither the training or the necessary men. Authority must rest in a single responsible head."

Criminals may reside inoffensively in one section where the police are efficient and operate against society in a nearby community where the police system is less effective. Professional criminals know no political boundaries and are not disturbed by their existence. In fact, they frequently take advantage of them for their own security, while the officers of the law are hampered by these same boundaries.

No central agency is established, in many states, which is empowered to collect crime statistics. The number of individual bureaus, departments and institutions in a state which may deal with criminals or possess information about them is legion. In the ordinary course of events these agencies have few contacts with other law enforcement bodies, particularly if in remote sections, and their fund of information is not pooled for the common good. Where there are state bureaus in operation they have proved themselves of great value as clearing houses for information on crime and criminals.

The most complete institution of this kind is at Sacramento, California, where provision is made for collection of records of crime and criminals from all persons or units handling such records. No state in this nation and in this age of rapid transportation and shrewd criminals can afford to be without the services of a central bureau of identification and investigation.

The state bureau may be the hub of the communications system for the state. Mail, messenger, telegraph, telephone, teletype and radio may be employed to bring all of the available information to this clearing house. With these means the progress and direction of criminals may frequently be made the subject of warnings to police agencies throughout the state, and to those sections in particular which lie in the path of the criminal's progress.