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BRIEFER CONTRIBUTIONS

THE ILLINOIS BUREAU OF CRIMINAL IDENTIFICATION AND INVESTIGATION

T. P. SULLIVAN¹

In December of 1930, a group of police officials, representing city, state and federal departments, and citizens interested in crime prevention and criminal apprehension, held a meeting in Chicago and it was the consensus of opinion of the persons attending that meeting that the most effective way to cope with the then existing crime condition in our State would be to enact legislation which would authorize the organization of a State Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. So that body appointed a legislative committee of which Mr. L. J. Benson, General Superintendent of Police of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad, was selected as chairman. Mr. Benson's committee labored long and intelligently and gave valuable assistance to the sponsor, Representative Lyons, on the passage of this important piece of anti-crime legislation. The proponents of the Bill, realizing the failure of the previous attempts to pass this legislation, purposely excluded an appropriation in their Bill, as they felt that an appropriation would give the opponents an additional weapon with which to fight their Bill; the Governor having previously made it known to the various state department heads that on account of the

depression and the financial condition of the State it was his wish and desire that no legislation be passed which would increase the expenditure of state revenues, and that all existing departments reduce their cost of operation to a minimum. Consequently, we are at this time attempting to organize the Bureau without a specific appropriation and with employées and equipment borrowed from other divisions of the Department of Public Welfare. The proponents also reduced their Bill to a skeleton of a law as compared to the laws creating and governing the other State Bureaus, and it will be very necessary to amend the present Act if we are to include the scientific investigation features which are being carried on by the other State Bureaus.

The idea of a Bureau was not a new one, as many times during the past fifteen years unsuccessful attempts have been made to pass such legislation. Police officials and others have long felt the need of such a Bureau and this hope was finally realized July 2, 1931, when Governor Emmerson signed House Bill No. 1073, which had been sponsored by the Honorable Richard J. Lyons, State Representative from Lake County.

The purpose of the creation of the Bureau, and the Statute so provides, is that the Bureau shall procure and file for record, as far as can be procured from any source,

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photographs, all plates, outline pictures, measurements, descriptions and information of all persons who have been or shall hereafter be convicted of a felony, or imprisoned for violating any of the military, naval, or criminal laws of the United States or the criminal laws of any State and all well known and habitual criminals.

The Statute makes it mandatory that the Sheriffs of the several counties of this State and the chief police officers of all cities, villages and incorporated towns in this State furnish to the Bureau, daily, copies of finger prints on standardized eight by eight inch cards, and descriptions, of all persons who are convicted of felonies; and of all persons in whose possession at the time of arrest are found goods or property reasonably believed by such sheriffs or chief police officers to have been stolen; and of all persons in whose possession are found burglar outfits or burglar tools or burglar keys or who have in their possession high power explosives intended to be used for unlawful purposes or who are in possession of infernal machines, bombs or other contrivances, in whole or in part intended to be used for unlawful purposes; and of all persons who, at the time of arrest, are in possession of firearms or other deadly weapons, intended to be used for unlawful purposes; and of all persons who have in their possession, inks, dye, paper or other articles necessary in the making of counterfeit notes, or in the alteration of bank notes or dies, molds or other articles used in the making of counterfeit money and intended to be used by them for such unlawful purposes.

These finger prints and records which are received daily, from the

various police departments and sheriffs are placed in a systematic file in a central Bureau with its headquarters at Springfield, and this information so collected is given out to assist the various police departments, sheriffs, state's attorneys, judges and pardon boards. When a person is arrested and his finger prints taken and sent to the Bureau, the file is searched for a previous record, and if this subject has a previous record, or is wanted by some other department, both departments are immediately notified; also a copy of this record is sent to the Division of Identification, Bureau of Investigation, Department of Justice at Washington, commonly called the National Bureau. If the man has a record in the National Bureau, the arresting department and the Bureau, both receive a copy of the record from Washington. In other words the primary purpose for the creation of the Bureau is for the effective collecting, filing and preservation of finger prints and criminal records, and in this way the Bureau serves as a criminal library for the various law enforcement bodies throughout the State, and on account of its various functions and activities, the Bureau becomes the connecting link between police departments, courts, penal institutions and pardon boards.

State Bureaus of Criminal Identification and Investigation have been created throughout the United States in recognition of the need for centralizing efforts in locating and identifying criminals and to make their apprehension more certain.

While the principal work of the Bureau is to collect criminal records and finger prints, it also has other duties to perform, such as the issuing of bulletins, giving descriptions

of persons wanted, and descriptions of stolen property; of educating especially the smaller departments and thereby generally creating more efficient departments throughout our State. The Bureau should be in a position to serve as a scientific crime investigation Bureau, and should be enlarged to include expert technicians for analysis of evidence, ballisticians, typewriting and handwriting identification experts, and all of the other various scientific departments. In many investigations, especially in the smaller cities, the guilty persons are acquitted or possibly never apprehended, for the reason that these departments do not have the facilities for handling the scientific investigation of their cases, and it would be a financial impossibility for each city or county to so equip themselves, but with this equipment in one central Bureau that would give service to the entire State, it would be a great deterrent to crime.

Contrary to the general public belief, there are many efficient police departments and many aggressive, efficient and honest police officials, but they have not been given the proper assistance or equipment, nor have they been given the power by legislation that would enable them to cope with conditions as they are today. A properly equipped Bureau will naturally encourage the various police officers throughout the State, and it is a matter of record that in our neighboring states where they have operating bureaus, we find better equipped and generally more efficient departments. Illinois is the twenty-third state in the Union to organize such a Bureau. Some figures from one of the Bureaus show with what success they are identifying criminals in their State.

The State of Ohio has the largest State Bureau in the United States, located at London, Ohio, having been organized in 1923, and has approximately 500,000 records on file. For the year ending December 31, 1931, that Bureau received a total of 33,667 finger prints from the State of Ohio; 31,367 outside the State of Ohio; and 80 foreign finger prints, making a grand total of finger prints received 65,114, from which the following identifications were made: Ohio, 13,056; out of State, 4,358; foreign, 8; making a grand total of identifications, 17,422. One can readily see from these figures the great assistance that has been rendered to the local departments of that State, for if it had not been for these identifications, no doubt many parole violators would not have been returned to correctional institutions, and other wanted persons would have been released to carry on their practice of crime.

The State Bureau reduces and prevents crime by placing habitual criminals in correctional institutions for a longer sentence than they would ordinarily receive. This is made possible by placing before the judge and state's attorney the subject's complete previous criminal record. It also offers an especially fine service to judges and pardon boards, for it places before them the record of a person who has been convicted, or who has plead guilty and is seeking probation or parole, and they can more intelligently distinguish between the first offender and the habitual criminal. In some States where Bureaus are operating, judges will not sentence or consider probation for a subject, until they have received a report from the State Bureau.

The investigation of crime and

the apprehension of criminals is not necessarily a local matter, for the criminals of today are a migratory class, moving about from city to city, where they can operate to the greatest advantage. This is made easy for them by the rapid means of transportation offered today. It has been a practice in the past for police departments to work more or less independently of each other, but with the assistance of the Bureau, the work of the various departments will be more closely coordinated, and once a person has a criminal record in our State, it will follow him from one city to another. This will assist the officers in causing his apprehension and conviction.

The Bureau will not only cooperate with all of the local cities within the State and the other State Bureaus, but will also closely cooperate with the National Bureau at Washington. There is an erroneous idea, even with some police officials, that the work of the State Bureau is a repetition of the services offered by the National Bureau. The National Bureau confines itself to the indexing, searching and filing of finger prints submitted to the National Bureau by departments who volunteer to send their finger prints. There being no law making it compulsory for each and every department to furnish such finger print records to the National Bureau, there are many departments within each State who send to their State Bureau, but who do not contribute to the National Bureau. The National Bureau does not maintain files carrying the numbers or initials of property stolen or pawned, and no Modus Operandi (method of operation) system is maintained.

There is no law compelling de-

partments to furnish the National Bureau with detailed descriptive reports of felonies committed. The only reports relative to the amount of crime consist of a total of the number of offenses committed within a community. The State Bureau being in possession of the details of all felony offenses committed, and having immediate access to a complete Modus Operandi file, can efficiently and systematically advise contributing departments relative to information concerning suspects. Should the National Bureau attempt to keep the Modus Operandi of habitual offenders operating throughout the United States, their files would be so voluminous that I am afraid the system would not prove successful. It would also be impossible for the National Bureau to make technical scientific tests of criminal evidence found at the scene of the crime without establishing and maintaining laboratories and technicians in a large number of communities in each State throughout the Union. The State Bureau and the National Bureau are not in competition and the State Bureau is part of a chain consisting of the city, county, state and national bureaus, all working together to identify criminals and reduce crime, and the National Bureau, through its Chief, J. Edgar Hoover, strongly and insistently encourages and endorses state bureaus.

With regard to the present status of the organization of the Bureau, we have not only complied with the Statute in furnishing the various police departments and sheriff's offices with eight-by-eight-inch forms for the taking of finger print impressions, but we have also furnished them with self-addressed envelopes for the convenient return of the records to the Bureau, and