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POLICE SCIENCE



FRED E. INBAU [Ed.]

POLICE TRAINING—ITS NEEDS AND PROBLEMS

GEORGE H. BRERETON†

A few years ago the general public assumed that police work was largely a matter of common sense. If there existed any training at all, it was of such a superficial character that it meant very little to the patrolman in his daily work. The general practice was to assign the recruit to a "beat" which he would patrol in company with an experienced officer. This period of instruction usually lasted only a week or ten days, during which time the recruit was supposed to learn "the fundamentals of his work." Quite often he appeared for duty with no instruction at all. During that time, and even today, the idea still persists, "that a uniform, a revolver, a night-stick, and a police-manual are sufficient to transform any able-bodied citizen into an efficient guardian of the law."¹

Although many laws and ordinances have been drafted, creating standards for appointment to, or promotion within, the police force, too little thought has been given to the *training* of such appointees.

During the last decade an increasing interest has developed in this important problem. Not only students of public administration, but also outstanding police officials, have turned their attention toward the improvement of the police service through the development of systematic and comprehensive police training. Many such persons

†Under Sheriff, County of San Diego, San Diego, California.

¹MacDonald, A. F. *American City Government and Administration*, 531; 2, Munro, W. B., *Municipal Government and Administration*, 199.

feel that "the time has arrived when it is necessary for the State to establish recruit training schools where departments which do not, or cannot, maintain efficient training schools, would be required to send their new recruits for a course of training, the expense to be borne by the municipality."²

The Need of Training

There is no branch of public service where a man is so dependent upon his own initiative and resources as in the police department. When the police officer is sent out on patrol he must be ready to meet practically any situation at a moment's notice. He does not have anyone at hand to assist or advise him and he must often make an immediate decision which may bring discredit upon himself or upon the department. In any other department the new employee may be assigned to some unimportant or routine duty, where he can be watched and supervised. In the fire department the recruit is almost constantly under the control of a superior officer. "When a policeman leaves the station house on his first tour of patrol duty, no one, regardless of his police experience, can foresee the intricate and exacting problems that are likely to confront him. * * * On his first tour, full duty is expected of him by the public. They consider it a lame excuse for him or his superiors to claim that he failed because he was untrained or inexperienced."³

Bruce Smith, in a recent survey of a small city in the South, listed for the citizens of that community, twenty-seven different types of information that a police officer should know in order to function with some degree of efficiency. This list might be extended almost indefinitely, far beyond the actual capacity of any one man to acquire the information, and yet it still might not cover something of value to the police officer at some time in the future. Mr. Smith says: "No lesson of American or foreign police administration could be more clear than that the making of a policeman has only begun when he receives his warrant of appointment. The training which he must receive must be of both a theoretical and a practical nature." Although training in certain courses "would not in themselves qualify the recruit for police duties," after such training, "he may be placed on patrol with a larger degree of confidence than is now possible."⁴

²"Police Training," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* (Nov., 1929) 169.

³*Op. cit. supra* note 2 at p. 166.

⁴Smith, B., "Report on Rural Police Protection in Illinois," Report of the Governor's Advisory Committee on Crime; Territory of Hawaii (Feb., 1931) 23.

How much confidence should we have in the officer of a small town who had received not one word of instruction or training during the six months following his appointment. Sometimes the only orders he receives are from one sergeant, who tells him to stand on a corner, while another sergeant tells him "to keep moving."

Mr. Donald Stone of the Public Administration Service also indicates the need for training, in the following statement. "So broad are the problems with which the police must deal that to learn police work entirely through experience would require a lifetime or more. Obviously, there are a great many things that can be learned only by experience, but there are a host of things a man can learn through instruction which will make his experience much more valuable and successful. Why should a man learn the criminal law of the State of Illinois through trial and error, if he can learn it through instruction? Why should a patrolman burn his fingers by mishandling the problem encountered in his everyday life if he can learn through training schools from the experience of others what to look for on his beat and how to handle it? Police training is the benefitting from the experience of others."⁵

Although there are still a few of the "die-hard" type of police officials who are antagonistic toward any kind of "book-learning," the necessity for providing the recruit with adequate training should be no longer a matter of controversy. The tremendous growth of our cities, the almost universal use of the automobile, and the increasing complexity of our laws find the "old type" police officer sadly lacking in the qualifications necessary for the solving of his problems. He is "no longer the suppressor of crime alone, but the social service worker of the community as well."⁶ The modern methods of the criminal demand an education and a training of the police officer which cannot be obtained "from a police manual or walking the beat."

For many years European cities have maintained training schools for patrolmen, but it is only within comparatively recent years that American cities have seen fit to establish such schools. In 1911 Detroit established a training school for recruits and a few years afterward New York provided a three month's course of instruction for its new members. Schools of training are now being operated in several of the largest, and in some of the smaller cities of the United States, but "most of them are elementary compared to the European

⁵Stone, D., "Police Recruiting and Training," 24 J. Crim. Law 1001 (1934).

⁶Report No. 14, National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement: Report on Police (1931) 70.

schools."⁷ The New York Police Academy, the school at Louisville, and those of Cincinnati, Portland (Oregon), Los Angeles, and Berkeley, stand out in their respective spheres.

Although Detroit's police school was established over twenty years ago, there are surprisingly few cities that have followed her example. Where training *has* been inaugurated it is usually of a superficial and unsatisfactory character. Witness the following facts taken from the Wickersham "Report on Police."⁸ In "a personal survey of 225 towns of less than 10,000 there is absolutely nothing done which by any stretch of the imagination could be considered police training." . . . One hundred and eighty-five cities "sent the man out on duty with no instruction" while "forty cities placed the beginner with an older man from periods of a night to one week. In the counties, towns and hamlets of this class it must be stated that assumption of badge, revolver, and the authority of the law, has as a prerequisite *no training* or police experience in fact nothing."

In the larger cities the situation was found to be little better. Over seven hundred questionnaires were sent out to cities ranging from 10,000 to 75,000 population and of the 383 police departments answering, "only about 20 per cent possessed some form of training." Of this small group "not more than 15 gave courses which could be considered to qualify the recruit as the possessor of a proper background for efficient work."

The Problem

How to meet this need for training has been indeed a perplexing problem to those who understand its vital importance. We must realize that there are many intelligent police administrators who have recognized its need; many have pointed out its necessity. As a general rule, however, they have been unable to establish any systematic method particularly when their problem concerns a small police force.

On the other hand there are police officials who "still seem obsessed by the idea that brawn fully compensates for low intelligence. Proper qualifications, careful selection, scientific training" . . . and "certain tenure of office" . . . "seem total strangers to the majority of our departments."⁹ Many police chiefs still feel that the only way to appoint an officer is from a list furnished by the "political boss"; that the only way for the recruit to learn police work is by blundering through twenty years of service.

⁷Munro, *op. cit. supra* note 1.

⁸*Op. cit. supra* note 6 at pp. 70-71.

⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 57 and 53.

One of the oldest handicaps under which progressive police administrators are operating, and one of the greatest advantages that the political boss has, is to be found in the charter, or ordinance, provisions of residence required in most American cities. Although the American Bar Association states, "that policemen should be men of professional training," at the same time they maintain that "police chiefs should be appointed from the communities whose departments they are chosen to head."¹⁰ The same requirement applies to patrolmen and "in the small cities and towns almost without exception throughout the country, residence of a definite and frequently lengthy period is an absolute requirement to appointment. When restrictions upon age and training become at all common the inevitable result will be the elimination of all residence requirements and the selection of the best men available."¹¹

In addition to the inherent antagonism on the part of many police officials toward a system of training which might remove the police from political control, or which might jeopardize their own position, there is another important factor which has hindered the development of police training. This is a financial problem. The cost of carrying out such training, particularly in the smaller police departments under present conditions, is quite often prohibitive. This problem, together with that of residential restrictions, must be solved before any great progress can be made along the lines of universal training or before general basic educational requirements can be established for all police officers.

Solving the Training Problem

In the large city the problem of training the recruit should not present any serious difficulties if there is a real desire on the part of the officials that they have such training. There are usually many applicants, sufficient recruits, and facilities with which to work. At least the need is so apparent, that with some little effort the police administrator should be able to establish a training school and secure capable instructors. The New York Police Academy is often cited as the outstanding police school of this type in the United States.

In the smaller cities the problem is somewhat different and the smaller the city the more acute becomes the problem of providing adequate police training. Here there are insufficient numbers to justify the maintenance of a complete training school. Capable instructors

¹⁰Stone, D., *op. cit. supra* note 5 at p. 1002.

¹¹*Op. cit. supra* note 6 at p. 64.

are difficult, and quite often, impossible, to find. If by good chance an individual capable of instructing is employed within the department, he cannot be spared from his police duties to carry on the job as it should be done.

However, the police officer of the small department is just as important to his community as his brother officer is to the near-by metropolis. Quite often the problem he is called upon to meet is as important and sometimes more difficult than the one presented to the officer of a great city. Much of the difficulty which police departments have to face is due to a misunderstanding upon the part of many citizens. They do not realize that the criminal operates in the small, as well as the large city, and that crime, instead of being a problem of the individual city, is one which must be met by all police agencies presenting a united front. Since this is a fact, it is just as important to have well trained officers in the hundreds of small cities as it is to have them in the few large cities that have been able to give them a thorough police education.

How are we going to give to our small cities the same opportunities for having a well trained force as have their more fortunate "big sisters"? There are at least three general possibilities.

One method of caring for the training of officers in the smaller police departments is by means of the "Regional School," or "Zone School," system. This system of training has been in operation for several years in New York state, and has been more recently inaugurated in Virginia. The State Police Chief's Association, in cooperation with the State Conference of Mayors in New York, and with the State League of Municipalities, in Virginia, operates or supervises these schools in the several "zones" or districts into which the state has been divided. Each district includes ten or twelve police departments. The chiefs of police within each "zone" or district meet and agree upon a central city or town where classes are to be held, and at the same time select the instructors. The instructors may be taken from any one of the police departments or brought from college, university or some other department of public service. Each chief then selects from among his men, those younger members of the force who are interested in the school and who will benefit most from the course. Each city or town is responsible for the expense incurred in teaching its officers. During the past year over 3000 police officers received from four to six week's instruction in these "regional" schools.¹²

¹²American City Magazine (Feb., 1934) 73.

Some attempts at training have been made in other states by means of "police institutes." Minnesota, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, Wisconsin and a number of other states have followed this plan. However, although better than nothing, this type of training cannot be substituted for the training "school."

The *second* possibility of training for police in small cities, or for other officers employed in rural areas, is to be found in states having State Police. Not all State Police have adequate facilities for training, but in certain states there have been established training schools which are attended not only by the state officers, but also by the local peace officers if they wish to avail themselves of the same opportunity. Some states seem to have made considerable progress in this direction and in most cases these state police organizations are "specially organized and highly trained." Certain states have provided by statute for training schools while others conduct such schools "by virtue of administrative action."¹³

In New York State, for example, the Training School is conducted at Troy where it was established in 1921. Since its inception 1,304 men have graduated from the school which covers a period of six weeks. Members of *any* police organization either in New York or any other state are eligible to attend.¹⁴

Connecticut also has a police school for its State Police where the "*applicants*" must attend for ten weeks and then serve as probationary patrolmen for six months.

The training school for the Michigan State Police is situated at Lansing. It is available to local peace officers and "probably is one of the most elaborate schools of its kind in the country."¹⁵

The *third*, and what might be termed, the "professional," type of training which offers possibilities for the training of the police in small cities, is to be found in the college or university. Here we have the beginning of an idea—which has no doubt been considered for some time in the past—the preparation and training of the officer *prior* to entering the police service. In this school, although offering opportunities for training to those already in a police department, the emphasis is often placed upon training those who hope to enter the police service as a life work.¹⁶ This emphasis really sounds "the keynote of a new era" in which residential requirements will be abolished,

¹³State Organization for the Apprehension of Criminals, . . . Research Committee Minnesota (dated and published December 31, 1930).

¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 175.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 177.

¹⁶Breton, George H., "Police Training in College and University," 3 Am. J. Police Sci. 64-71 (1932).

permanent tenure established, and high standards of intelligence, education, and training maintained. Suitable remuneration also must be offered for the type of men demanded, and the standardization of all police service upon a high plane of professionalism, will attract to, and keep within, the police forces of the city, state, and nation, men of the highest type possible.

In 1930, Mrs. John P. Buwalda, director of a police institute at Riverside, California, made the following statement: "It is an amazing thing that we maintain Annapolis and West Point to train officers against possible foreign aggression and that we have no comparable training for our officers in the war against crime, which is a constant thing, costing infinitely more." At the same meeting Dean Justin Miller also remarked, "that an inevitable result of a more informed and constructive public opinion would be a better police administration, because members of society *would insist upon better trained police.*"¹⁷

Before any great amount of progress can be made in developing the idea of professionalization of police work and its consequent requirements of preparation and training, city, state, and national officials, together with others interested in public service, must take unto themselves the task of *improving* their police services. Although a gradual development is possible in which the public citizen may demand standards of efficiency, training, and education—such as they demand from their teaching profession—still, much of the ultimate success is dependent upon the initiative of the city father, the mayor, city manager, or police executive. If *they* abolish residential requirements and establish police employment upon a fair and competitive basis, in addition to making such improvements as have already been suggested, it will not be long before the educational institutions of the land will be turning out for their approval, "career men," trained for the police service just as they are trained for any other profession.

Gradually the standards of education and intelligence have been raised in many police departments. It is not too much to expect that at some time in the future, a state credential or certificate, will be required of the person seeking employment in any police department.

¹⁷Occasional Papers of Riverside Junior College (Riverside, Cal.), Vol. 5, No. 1, pp. 41 and 66.