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COOPERATIVE ENFORCEMENT: THE LANSING PLAN

M. Waldorf Pletcher

(The author of the article, Lt. M. Waldorf Pletcher, has been a member of the Lansing, Michigan, Police Department for the past ten years and is now the director of its Traffic and Safety Division. In 1941 he won a Kemper fellowship for study at the Northwestern University Traffic Institute. At the present time he is on leave of absence from his department and is serving as a field representative for the Safety Division, International Association of Chiefs of Police.—EDITOR.)

This is the story of how co-operation between the local citizenry, the municipal government, and the police department in one community—Lansing, Michigan—has gone far to accomplish the goal of effective traffic control. It is a story of timely interest, for, in the recent National Traffic Safety contest sponsored by the National Safety Council, Lansing was awarded the grand safety award for cities in the United States.

A police department cannot function alone, cannot operate in a vacuum. Its effectiveness depends not only upon its own integrity and capability, but upon the support it receives from the local government and citizenry. A corrupt, backward or unstable government can wreck the finest police machine. An irresponsible citizenry can throttle the best-organized, most able police department. Conversely, good government, good legislation, and an awakened citizenry are of no avail in the matter of effective law enforcement, if the police department lacks intelligent leadership and capable personnel.

Lansing's achievements in traffic control show what can be accomplished when a community works together to solve its traffic control problems—law enforcement problems which, perhaps more than any other category, affect the entire community.

Legislation

The Lansing police have had the whole-hearted co-operation of the mayor and city council. Together the executive and legislators have accepted their responsibility by giving complete support to the enforcement program. Their actions have not been tempered by fear of political repercussions. They have been simply the result of a governmental group carrying out its duties in accordance with the democratic form of government. Briefly, the co-operation of the mayor and city council has been expressed through:

- (1) Moral support and approval of the program.
- (2) Increased budgets for the police, the court, and the office of the traffic engineer.

- (3) The provision of necessary personnel, equipment, housing, and proper training for the police force.
- (4) The enactment of enabling traffic legislation as follows:
 - (a) Non-fix traffic ticket system.
 - (b) Adoption of the Uniform Vehicle Code.
 - (c) Adoption of uniform traffic control devices, as recommended by the Institute of Traffic Engineers.
- (5) Complete "hands off" policy on traffic law enforcement and engineering.

The quality of Lansing's government and its administration, is attested further by the following facts:

- (1) A debt free city—there is no bonded indebtedness.
- (2) A school system where each school has been paid up in full before construction.
- (3) A \$10,000,000 Municipal Power and Light System whose rates are the third lowest in the country.

The Police Department

Policing in its professionalization has adopted certain standards by which a department may measure or evaluate its performances. The International Association of Chiefs of Police has established certain performance standards as guides for the police administrator. They indicate quantity and quality work in the traffic field and their achievement is an accomplishment which the administrator can point to with pride. The standards are as follows:

- (1) An accident-severity ratio of 1:35:150 for cities.
- (2) The investigation of 90 per cent of accidents at the scene.
- (3) The investigation of 90 per cent of the foregoing by *trained squads*.
- (4) Arrests in 50 per cent of accidents investigated.
- (5) Convictions in 80 per cent of all arrests made by traffic police.
- (6) Convictions in 90 per cent of the foregoing.

How well the activities of the Lansing police have measured up to these performance standards is indicated by the following comparative figures for the year 1944:

- (1) Percentage of reported accidents investigated—100 per cent (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—90 per cent.)
- (2) Percentage of these accidents investigated on the scene by trained accident investigation squads—98 per cent. (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—90 per cent.)

- (3) Percentage of arrests in accidents investigated—85 per cent. (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—50 per cent.)
- (4) Percentage of convictions in accident arrests—97 per cent. (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—80 per cent.)
- (5) Percentage of apprehensions in hit-and-run cases—87 per cent. (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—80 per cent.)
- (6) Percentage of convictions in hit-and-run apprehensions—100 per cent. (International Association of Chiefs of Police standards—75 per cent.)

The administration of the police department is invested in the chief and a Board of Police and Fire Commissioners. Board members are appointed for a four-year term by the mayor with the approval of the city council. The position is an honorary one and members serve without pay. All are citizens holding responsible positions in the community. A listing of positions held by the present board members in the community may serve to indicate something of the general stature of this board:

- (1) President of grocery company.
- (2) Postmaster of Lansing.
- (3) Leading lawyer.
- (4) Insurance broker.
- (5) Head of institutional commissary.
- (6) President of hardware company.
- (7) Director of labor relations—Olds Motor Works, General Motors Company.
- (8) Superintendent of a division of the Olds Motor Works.

The Chief of Police and the Board for years have recognized the need for effective police action to combat the rising accident experience. Realizing that specialization was necessary to accomplish a complete and qualified job, they requested the Safety Division of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1941 to make a survey of the police department for the purpose of installing a specialized traffic division. About this same time several members of the department were encouraged to apply for a fellowship to the Northwestern University Traffic Institute. One of the members of the police department was awarded a Kemper Fellowship and attended the nine months' course at Northwestern University. This provided the department with a police officer qualified to "head up" the new division. The recommendations of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, made in consequence of its field

survey, were accepted in full and it was asked to assist in the establishment of the new division by selecting and training the men to work in this division.

The police were then instructed to approach the traffic problem in the following ways:

- (1) *Selection of qualified personnel.* All traffic division men were picked for traffic control work on the basis of Otis Intelligence Quotient and adaptability examinations, plus oral interviews designed to disclose the candidates most qualified to perform traffic duties.
- (2) *Proper training of the men selected.* A 100-hour training course was conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police with the aid of qualified police officers from the Lansing Police Department and the Michigan State Police. Interesting was the fact that all class members were paid their regular salary during the training period. Among the 18 subjects in this course were the following:
 - (a) Accident Investigation.
 - (b) Hit-and-Run Investigation.
 - (c) Evidentiary Law.
 - (d) Law of Arrest.
 - (e) Case Preparation and Court Presentation.
 - (f) Report Writing and Records.
 - (g) Patrol Techniques.
 - (h) Photography.
- (3) *Specification of Equipment required.* In this instance such equipment as the following was provided: Complete record system and office, accident investigation car, speed graphic camera, steel tape, flares, professional first aid kit, blankets, crowbar, broom and photoflash equipment. New motorcycles—both solo and three-wheel servi-cars for parking control.
- (4) *Selective assignment of traffic personnel.* All enforcement units were assigned according to needs as disclosed through record analysis, and in terms of the time, location and type of violation.
- (5) *Establishment of sound policies, procedures and techniques.* In so doing, policies were determined by and with the aid of the municipal judge. Here, again, is an example of the cooperative approach to effective traffic law enforcement. Procedures followed were in keeping with accepted police standards. Techniques were designed to encourage public support rather than public censure.

- (6) *Employment of scientific methods of gathering evidence.* In this connection, emphasis was directed to use of skid mark formulas for determining speed, photographs showing the relative position of cars involved in accidents for aid in court presentation, paint samples to aid in hit-and-run identification, bits of clothing, hair, stray parts and the like for purposes of identification in regular and hit-and-run cases.
- (7) To predicate all activities only after analysis of detailed reports and records.

In review, the basic purpose of the program of enforcement was (and is) to establish a necessary quality and quantity of enforcement effort. Where these are accomplished, understanding and support of the community follows as a matter of course.

The Municipal Court

The court personifies the ultimate in the American form of government. For here is the sanctuary from persecution, the source of redress from violations against our rights of freedom, from restraint, and search and seizure without process. Here, too, more than any other place, the success or failure of a program is determined. The court which is not sympathetic or does not support the efforts of the police can nullify all of the constructive efforts of any police department. And more important, a laggard court can completely destroy the morale of the police who are trying their best to uphold the law. Unfortunately, there is encountered the occasional judge who is merely using his position as a tool to further his political ambitions. If this be the case then the ticket fixing through suspended sentences, dismissals and other vicious practices soon end any ambition on the part of the individual police officer to do the job which he is capable of performing.

It is for this reason that the police should and must familiarize the court with the enforcement program to better enlist the aid and support of the court. The police *must* place particular emphasis upon the quality of their program and with the aid of the court, program arrest policies and techniques. In this way the court becomes more integrally connected with the program. Here, again, coordination plays a conspicuous role. In Lansing Judge Louis E. Coash of the Municipal Court, as a means of better understanding the accident program, rode with our accident investigation squads on a number of occasions. This enabled him to evaluate the work of the squads and see first hand the causative factors of accidents, the direction and scope of traffic violations and police tech-

niques of enforcement. We found, too, that officers were given valuable advice by the judge in matters of gathering necessary evidence to support a conviction.

Then, too, we found that a second cooperative technique proved of exceptional value. After each trial the judge would discuss the case with the arresting officer, commending him on his competent work of pointing out errors. This procedure, too, did much to establish a better understanding between the judiciary and the police.

In Lansing, all moving violation cases must be heard before the judge. As these number over 5,000 a year they make for a full docket. In addition, the judge hears all criminal cases amounting to misdemeanors, and the arraignment of all felony cases in his jurisdiction. Finally, all civil cases not in excess of \$500 are heard in his court.

In traffic violations each case must appear before the judge and is adjudicated on its own merits. There is no predetermined scale of fines and punishments. Repeaters are listed as such when the daily list is brought in from the traffic division and copies of the repeater's previous violations and penalties are attached. The "repeater" is apt to find his return trip to the court a rather costly one. This acts as a definite deterrent.

All records of convictions are forwarded to the office of the secretary of state. There they are listed on the driver's permanent statewide record. Warrants are issued 48 hours after the 72 hour grace period has expired. Naturally a court with a docket as full as this one cannot be burdened by a back log of old cases. By the same reasoning there are very few continuances or adjournments, and these only where it is an absolute necessity and not merely an excuse to delay. A very complete and detailed record system is maintained by the court and is kept up to the minute by an efficient staff. All trials on not guilty pleas are held on Wednesday afternoon of each week. Due to the quality of enforcement and the integrity of the court these trials have been cut to a minimum. Also the absolute adherence to the non-fix ordinance has educated citizens to the principle that one and all are treated alike before the bar of justice. In consequence, actual trials in the fullest sense have dropped to a few a week.

Contrary to common belief, these actions on the part of the judge have not spelled his political end. Instead, he has emerged stronger politically than any of his predecessors and is respected by the community for his fulfillment of his sworn oath of office. Such is the strength of his position that he was unopposed in the last election.

The Traffic Engineer

Good engineering is one of the vital prerequisites to any program of traffic control. Intersections and stretches of highway that have not had the benefit of good safety engineering will add to the accident experience despite good enforcement. Traffic engineering is a science based on facts, formulae and warrants. It is a profession that cannot be undertaken by the uninitiated or by those operating on a rule of thumb basis. Too often cities have found to their cost that the apparently simple task of determining proper locations for stop-street signs and traffic signals is not a job for the amateur. Such practices as these have generally increased congestion and accidents rather than reducing them.

Under the relentless toll of traffic accidents, delays, and congestion communities have come to realize that they must approach their traffic problems realistically and factually. The day has gone when traffic efficiency and security must rely upon untried and inadequate control devices. Today the traffic engineer may not have the final answer to all control problems, but he has at his command scientific principles and proven techniques of great assistance in effecting at least partial remedy of traffic flow difficulties, pending the construction of adequately designed streets, overheads and bridges.

Consider some of the inadequacies which the trained engineer encounters in his work: lack of arterial highways, poor road services, inadequate street lighting, poor drainage, sharp curves and turns, confusing or inadequate signs and markers, bad laning, inadequate parking facilities, faulty control devices and improperly timed and synchronized signals. These are simply a few of the countless inefficiencies that retard the safe and speedy transportation of persons and property and emphasize the need for the trained engineer.

The traffic engineer must necessarily work toward a dual objective:

- (1) The reduction of accidents.
- (2) The free flow of traffic, in controlled units, to eliminate loss through congestion.

These objectives depend for their accomplishment upon:

- (1) The elimination of traffic flow conflict between intersectional, medial, internal-stream, and marginal types of vehicular friction.
- (2) The promotion of free flow of traffic through:
 - (a) The location and elimination of potential and existing hazards created by obstruction to visibility and inadequate street maintenance.

- (b) The proper use of uniform signs, signals, street markings and traffic control devices, as recommended by the Institute of Traffic Engineers.
- (c) The making of studies of the "worst group" accident locations and the elimination of the hazards through scientific approach.
- (d) The routing of thru-traffic by improving street design and by special restrictions governing the direction of vehicular movement.

All of these good engineering practices are carried out by Lansing's traffic engineer. The value of this type of work to the cooperative enforcement program is obvious.

To accomplish these objectives the engineer must have three basic supports:

- (1) Financial support from the city council.
- (2) Good accident reports from the police.
- (3) Whole-hearted co-operation of the police.

Lansing has provided the engineer with these necessities. His appropriation aggregates \$25,000 a year. And above all, there is the closest working cooperation between the engineer and the traffic division of the police department

Now a word regarding some of the engineering activities carried out during the past year. All pedestal type signals in the city were completely overhauled and painted. Traffic volume counts were made at 46 locations scattered throughout the city, mainly on those streets and highways which traffic moves into Lansing from other areas.¹ A study of traffic movements at one of the war plants resulted in the creation of a one-way traffic regulation during those hours when shift changes were being made. This regulation resulted in a 25 per cent saving of time in emptying the parking lot at the plant. Actual control of plant movement was done by the plant's protection officers, who were trained in point control by the Lansing police traffic division. Centerlinings were painted on 26 miles of street. This required as many as four or five applications, particularly on the heavier travelled routes. Approximately 600 gallons of white paint were used in centerline marking. One hundred gallons of yellow paint were used, mainly for curb markings indicating a no-parking zone and for certain special street markings.

¹ It is interesting to observe that the volume of traffic has in most cases remained constant. However, the average daily traffic on several of the arterial streets indicates a considerable increase. For example, on four of the major access routes there was a 15 per cent increase over the previous year.

"Watch, Wait and Walk" signs at all downtown intersections were maintained throughout the year. Painted crosswalks were maintained at all intersections controlled by traffic signals, 280 additional crosswalks were maintained in the school areas. Other crosswalks were maintained in all of the plant areas. These crosswalks were illuminated during the hours of darkness by large floodlights. Approximately 650 new parking regulation signs were installed throughout the city during 1944. All metal signs were replaced whenever they became faded and were sent to the sign shop where the old paint was removed and the sign refinished. Special studies and surveys were made of 24 "worst spot" intersections and areas for the purpose of reducing accidents and aiding congestion. Finally, among engineering activities during the year was the maintenance of the 900 parking meters in Lansing.²

The Safety Council

The Lansing Safety Council provides a natural outlet for all traffic safety education. Through this medium the engineering and enforcement units can publicize what is being done, why it is being done and what it accomplishes. As the safety council memberships are made up of the citizens themselves, in their various fields of endeavor, it actually means public education by the public.

The immeasurable value of having a non-governmental agency as an educational outlet is self-evident. The safety council, through its organization and centralization of all divisions of safety, is the focal point around which all engaged or interested in public safety can meet on common ground. In this way all have the opportunity of appreciating the work done by others and at the same time to assist the efforts of others in their own particular field. *The safety council in Lansing is the personification of unification and cooperation of common effort.*

To have a safety council that fulfills these aims does not necessarily entail a large budget. The story of the establishment of the Lansing Safety Council illustrates the point. At an informal luncheon held several years ago, several business and industrial leaders of the city met with the mayor for the purpose of establishing such a council. They realized that in view of the increasing accident experience in the city they must meet the traffic problem with an organization designed solely for that problem. The plan received backing of the city government as well as business and industrial concerns. The safety

²Note that the entire income from parking meters, which aggregates \$75,000 annually, is earmarked for traffic safety purposes.

council was originally established on a budget totalling less than \$5,000. As the safety council grew with experience and years the value of its services was recognized more and more by the community. Now greatly increased in size, strength and finance, the Council has established itself as a positive need in the city's daily welfare.

In brief, the Lansing Safety Council's program of public education in traffic law enforcement and engineering includes:

- (1) Dramatizing accident facts through preparation of interesting analyses, charts, posters and other devices emphasizing local conditions.
- (2) Focusing public attention on specific traffic hazards.
- (3) Encouraging removal of physical hazards and bad driving practices, through the media of the press, the radio, posters, talks, etc.
- (4) Mobilizing public support of the traffic activities of the police and engineer.
- (5) Reporting progress of its various committees.
- (6) Justifying expenditures for educational facilities.
- (7) Aiding in organizing curricula studies emphasizing traffic safety and other forms of safety.

In Lansing this valuable work of the safety council and the results it achieves are obtained at a per capita cost of less than 30 cents annually. Certainly the ends achieved have far outweighed the monetary investment.

Other Cooperative Endeavors

We now turn to those community agencies which, while not actively engaged in traffic, can provide, through their support, the cooperative spirit necessary for effective traffic enforcement. Conversely, these same agencies, through opposition or apathetic reception, can gravely retard the enforcement program.

It is in the phase of cooperative effort that one of the supporting agencies—The *Lansing State Journal*—plays a dual and significant role. Had it not been for the extensive free-of-charge advertising given by the *Journal* for the cause of safety, it is doubtful if the present safety program in Lansing could have been accomplished.³ Another of the *Journal's* contributions is its daily column (now in its third year of publication) which lists the name, address, age and type of violation of each person receiving a traffic citation the day previously. In the lower half of this column is shown the disposition of traffic

³ The *State Journal* last year gave freely, to traffic publicity, column space with a value of over \$6,000.

cases and the amount of fines paid in court. Between the two sections of the column appears a daily "box score" on accidents.

To this column goes a major portion of the success of our non-fix traffic ticket system. For it is here that the public secures a day-by-day account of persons arrested and the fines paid. It should be stated, too, that the column is designed to be no respecter of persons. All violators are listed, irrespective of name, family or position. The true spirit of the *Journal* was shown when the name of one of its managers was listed among the violators.

This informative and interesting column of violators' activities is now in its third year of publication and, definitely, the public has come to realize that a traffic citation means required appearance of the violator in court followed by adjudication of the case. *There is absolutely no ticket fixing.* This alone has been of incalculable importance to the whole program. Unquestionably, the establishment of impartial justice has done as much to fix the ideal of public safety and security in the minds of the citizen and the police officer as any other single factor.

The *State Journal* has participated in the safety program in still another way. Twenty years ago it founded the School Boy Safety Patrol. And during these 20 years, it has given constant support in every way, including a collection campaign each year for the purpose of providing an annual picnic for the patrol at a local amusement park. Thus, it should be said that the *State Journal* has long been and is one of the binding factors in the whole field of community safety and as such is definitely one of the integral spokes in the wheel of traffic safety progress.

The whole cooperative program in Lansing has been completed by the willing and participating support of the following community agencies and, briefly, in the following manner:

- (1) *Churches*—appeals from the pulpit—club sponsorship—humanitarian endeavors.
- (2) *Schools*—class subjects in safety designed to aid the long range safety through better driver training.
- (3) *PTA groups*—active cooperation in the school program—support in obtaining safety restrictions in school area.
- (4) *Industry*—financial support of safety council—war transportation committees—plant protection assistance in traffic control in plant area.
- (5) *Labor*—obtaining observance of workers in special restricted areas around plant—natural interest in welfare of members in off-job accidents.

- (6) *Civic clubs and groups*—active support of safety endeavors—financial support of educational campaigns.
- (7) *Allied interests*—oil companies—insurance companies—auto-parts sales—etc.
- (8) *Radio stations*—spot broadcasts—daily news highlighting accidents—warnings for hazardous road conditions—etc.
- (9) *Municipal light and power groups*—adequate street lighting cooperation.

Conclusions

The cooperative enforcement plan of Lansing can be likened to a wheel. A wheel depends upon a hub, spokes, and a smooth outer rim to do the required job. If any one of these integral parts fails to accomplish its task or carry on its part of the burden, then the whole wheel is thrown off balance and is no longer effective.

The "Three E's," enforcement, education and engineering, as accomplished by the city council, the police, the engineer, and the safety council form the hub of the wheel. The spokes are those community activities and agencies who serve as distributors and radiating activators. The outer rim represents the rolling progress of the whole program. Plainly, such a wheel must have an equal balance and weight distribution if it is to perform its role successfully. Fortunately, through this cooperative wheel program, we in Lansing have been able to effect a substantial decrease in our accident experience. During the past three years the cooperative movement has resulted in a 54 per cent reduction of traffic fatalities and a 39 per cent reduction in personal injuries as compared to the three years previous to the establishment of the present program.

Over and again, Lansing's experience in saving lives and property and in the prevention of injuries has demonstrated that it is *only* through cooperative endeavor of the citizenry and of their government that effective traffic security can be accomplished. "Cooperation" has been and continues to be Lansing's guide to traffic safety. It is hoped that this picture of cooperative enforcement in Lansing will serve to assist other communities in the accomplishment of safety and security on the streets and highways.
