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RECOGNITION AND STATUS FOR RANK AND FILE POLICEMEN

G. Douglas Gourley

Lieut. G. Douglas Gourley, who is a watch commander in a patrol division of the Los Angeles Police Department, has made a special study of the problems of police personnel. Recently he published in this Journal a report on his department's special training program for police supervisors (*An Experiment in the Use of the Conference Method for Training Police Supervisors*, Vol. 39, No. 3, p. 392). In his current article he discusses the findings of a survey of methods used in police departments throughout the country to recognize the service of personnel. Lieut. Gourley, in addition to his police duties, serves as an Instructor of Police Science in the School of Public Administration of the University of Southern California.
—EDITOR.

The great bulk of the work of a police department is done by the policeman on the street. There should always be the possibility of rewards for increasing experience and efficient service. Theoretically all policemen have equal opportunity for promotion, but actually in practice they do not. This is because of the very limited number of supervisory positions and the different relative abilities of the individuals concerned. Also, supervisory ability does not always go hand in hand with efficient performance as policemen in the field. Often good policemen have been rewarded with promotion only to become poor supervisors. Methods other than promotion must be, and in many cases have been, found to bestow status and give recognition to the rank and file policeman for loyal and efficient service.¹ Concerning this problem John M. Pfiffner² has said, in discussing "status for the little fellow", that one of the biggest problems in the motivation of people at work is to create some sort of recognition and prestige for the great mass of submerged humanity, because the need for ego-satisfaction exists with the humble worker just as for the manager or supervisor.

THE QUESTIONNAIRE

In an effort to obtain information on this important subject a

¹ Report by the Committee appointed to study and recommend Assignment, Supervision, and Promotion of Personnel in the Detroit Police Department. (Detroit Police Dept.: 1947) P. 22.

² John M. Pfiffner "Status for The Little Fellow" *Study Guide for Human Relations in Management* (Los Angeles University Book Store, mimeographer, University of Southern California. 1948) P. 59.

questionnaire was prepared under the direction of C. B. Horrall, Chief of Police of Los Angeles, and forwarded in April, 1948, to the Chiefs of Police of the larger cities in the United States, that is, those with populations of 250,000 or more.³ From the thirty-seven cities in this group, twenty-four replies were received, making a total return of 65 per cent of the questionnaires distributed. The response from the largest cities was particularly good. Four of the five or 80 per cent of the cities with populations over 1,000,000 and eight of the nine or 89 per cent of the cities with populations between 500,000 and 1,000,000 participated.

DEPARTMENTAL AND DIVISIONAL INSIGNIA

The first questions concerned emblems or insignia which identify the individual with his organization and the various subdivisions of it. Policemen, like workers in other fields, often derive a sense of prestige from their association with a successful organization.

Of the police departments replying, 67 per cent reported that their officers wore departmental emblems or insigne. Most of these emblems consist of cloth patches which are worn on the shoulder or upper arm. A few are of metal and are worn on the lapel or collar. The departments were about evenly divided between those whose divisions or units (patrol, accident investigation, foot traffic, et cetera) have emblems which are different or distinctive from each other. The replies showed 54 per cent with such separate emblems, and 46 per cent without them. It should be pointed out, however, that many of the departments using these divisional emblems do so only in their traffic divisions. Like the departmental emblems, most of the divisional emblems are of cloth and are worn on the upper arm. A few are of metal and are worn on the lapel or collar.

GRADES OF POLICEMEN AND PAY PLANS

When members of a police force find themselves working beside newcomers, the "old timers" know that they are the backbone of the department. They often feel that they are a sort of aristocracy in the organization to which the newcomers may not belong until they have demonstrated not only ability but also durability. What is more natural than that this more stable group should feel that they are carrying most of the load and

³ The International City Managers Association, *The Municipal Year Book*. (Chicago 1948) Pp. 399-400.

that they deserve as individuals more attention, recognition, and pay than are given to the recruits.⁴

A committee recently appointed to study personnel practices in one of the larger police departments realized the need for such recognition, and recommended that a salary step-up schedule be established which would allow nominal increases in salary for efficient service, such increases to be granted at stated intervals throughout the period of service. In this committee's opinion such increases are necessary to provide additional income to the average officer as his family obligations increase, and to provide the incentive for many to do their job to the best of their ability throughout their entire careers rather than to "coast" during the latter years. The committee reports:

It does not appear to be good employment practice to allow the maximum salary of the rank, particularly patrolman, to be reached in a comparatively short time, and to then close all future possibility of financial reward except through promotions. In many cases this removes all incentive.⁵

The International City Managers' Association believes that a good pay plan will provide for salary advancements within the pay range for any particular position. They feel that length of service is one factor to be considered in such pay raises, but that "automatic" raises are generally not advisable. They recommend that advances be based, in part at least, upon performance records, and that certain minimum standards of performance should be stipulated as a prerequisite for any advance in salary while outstanding performance should be rewarded by more rapid progress up the salary scale.⁶

There is great contrast between these recommendations and the present practices as reported in the replies to the questionnaire. Only 54 per cent of the police departments reporting have more than one class or grade of patrolman. Patrolmen reach their maximum pay in one year in three of the departments; in two years in three of the departments; in two and one-half years in two departments; in three years in eight departments; in five years in four departments; in six years in one department; and in twenty-five years in only one department. The greatest number of policemen in the reporting departments thus reach their top pay in three years and can look forward to increases in pay only through promotion. In most cases increases in pay are

⁴ Royal Parkinson "How Reward the Long Service Worker" *The Conference Board Management Record*. (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, Inc. February, 1944) P. 33.

⁵ Opus cited in note 1 at page 23.

⁶ Institute for Training in Municipal Administration, *Municipal Personnel Administration*. (Chicago: The International City Manager's Association, 4th Edition, 1947) P. 86.

based entirely upon length of service. In only five departments is recommendation by supervisors required, and in only three departments is a minimum service rating or performance report necessary. One department requires a written and an oral examination. Some of the grades of policemen which have been given names are: Patrolman Seventh Class to Patrolman First Class; Private First Class to Private Sixth Class; Patrolman First Year to Patrolman Fifth Year; Policeman, Class A, B, and C; Apprentice, Probationary, and Policeman.

SERVICE INSIGNIA

The giving of individual recognition may take the form of awarding service emblems to long-time employees. It was found in a national survey of employers that this resulted in (1) a closer feeling between workers and management, (2) increased worker interest in the job, (3) fewer labor troubles, (4) more constructive employee thinking, and (5) decreased absenteeism.⁷

The high value placed on service emblems was recently demonstrated in the Los Angeles Police Department when members of the motorcycle squad signed a petition stating that they felt it an honor to be with the squad as long as possible, and requesting that they be permitted to wear insignia showing their years of service in the motor squad in addition to the regular departmental service insignia.

American police departments, as well as business and industry generally, encourage and give special recognition to long service. Many years of service are usually regarded as evidence of loyalty and devotion to the organization. There is, however, some dissent from this assumption that long service of itself should be glorified. In some cases it may become a liability rather than an asset. If there is too high a proportion of "old timers" there is not enough "new blood" entering the department. Policemen may reach the "old timer" class only because they have managed to hold on to their jobs until either seniority regulations or a sense of obligation has required their retention. A long service record may mean a great deal but only when it is related directly to merit and accomplishment.⁸

The recognition of long service can be given either by appealing to the employee's pride and desire for special distinction, or through valuable awards or privileges. The most prevalent form of the first type of reward in the United States police

⁷ Henry Beaumont, *Psychology Applied to Personnel* (Longmans, Green & Co., Inc., 1946) P. 152.

⁸ *Recognizing Long Service Studies in Personnel Policy* No. 29 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1941) P. 1.

departments, as indicated by the present survey, is service insignia. Men with long service wear additional insignia on their uniforms in 75 per cent of the departments reporting. Most frequently used is a cloth bar or short stripe on the lower sleeve. Next in popularity are stripes which go completely around the lower sleeve and stars also located on the lower sleeve. One department wears a metal numeral on the flap of the left pocket, and one a chevron on the lower sleeve with the point down, one chevron for each five years of service. There is almost unanimous agreement on the length of service to be represented by each bar, stripe, or star; it is five years. The only city differing uses a four-year period. No police department reported any requirement for the wearing of this insigne other than the passage of time.

OTHER PRIVILEGES

No valuable gifts for long service and only a very few privileges were reported. In private industry when the company policy is intended to encourage or reward long service, a graduated type of vacation plan regulating length of vacation by years of service is used.⁹ Only three of the large United States police departments replying to the questionnaire have other than a uniform or "one step" vacation plan. One of these allows fifteen days vacation annually during the first ten years, and twenty-one days thereafter. Another allows from twenty to thirty days per year in nine steps by rank rather than by length of service, and the third allows two weeks for officers with less than ten years of service, three weeks for officers with from ten to twenty years of service, and four weeks annually for all officers with over twenty years of service. No cash allowances or bonuses are given with vacation periods. Preference in selecting vacation periods is given to men of equal rank but greater seniority in 67 per cent of the departments. Only one-half of these departments, however, have incorporated these preferences in written regulations. In every case except one where the preferences exist they are exercised by division or precinct, and in over one-half of all organizations reporting it is entirely a matter of discretion with the division or precinct commander as to how vacations are to be allowed. In the matter of sick leave, also, very little preference is given to men with long service, other than through accumulation provisions. Although all the departments reporting have sick leave allowances for officers, only one reported a graduated sick leave plan based on length

⁹ *Developments in Company Vacation Plans* Studies in Personnel Policy No. 13 (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1939) P. 9.

of service. Only one city reported a plan which did not include full salary for a given period of time. Exactly one-half of all reporting cities have sick leave allowances which are cumulative, permitted accumulations varying from thirty days to one year.

In the matter of assignments American policemen are given very little preference based on length of service. In only 29 per cent of all the reporting departments are men with seniority given preference as to type of assignment, i.e., beat, radio car, traffic, et cetera. When it comes to location and time of assignment our policemen have even less opportunity to choose, for in only 13 per cent of the departments are men with long service permitted to choose their division or location of assignment, and in but 20 per cent are their preferences considered as to watch or time of day, i.e., day, night, or morning. Only three cities reported that these preferences were set forth in written departmental regulations. There are, of course, many reasons why these preferences are not, and perhaps cannot, be allowed. The efficiency as well as the morale of the entire organization must be maintained.

COMMENDATIONS AND PRAISE

Everyone welcomes praise. From infancy to old age human beings tend to repeat and enlarge performances which have brought them attention and respect. It would seem evident then that commendations and praise should be used generously in police departments. There are, however, strong opposing forces at play. One of these is the feeling that to praise is to "spoil". Behaviorists know the contrary to be true. They know that there is no surer way of influencing a person than by letting him know that in his own circle certain behavior will make him admired while the opposite will cause him to be ignored.

Police Administrators apparently agree whole-heartedly with this viewpoint for it was reported by 91 per cent of the departments that they had systems for handling commendations and praise of officers from the public, and by 79 per cent that they had similar systems for handling praise from supervisors within their departments. All were unanimous in reporting that such commendations became a permanent part of the officers personnel record. It was also reported by 79 per cent of these police departments that commendations were given publicity throughout the department after being evaluated to determine whether or not they deserved publication. Supervisors are encouraged to commend or praise in the field meritorious acts of policemen in 87 per cent of the departments. Among the methods listed for encouraging the giving of such praise are supervisors' schools,

conferences, oral instructions, and departmental rules. Awards for acts of valor or acts above and beyond the line of duty are made in 67 per cent of the police departments. In most cases these awards are first passed upon by a board, and in a few cases by the Chief of Police only. Almost one-half of the awards are in the form of medals, and a similar number are certificates. In a few cases both are given, and in others a letter of commendation only is used. Only two cities reported something of monetary value given for such acts—a cash bonus in one and a pay increase in another. One department reported that points were added to the service rating of officers receiving these awards.

SERVICE RATINGS

Service ratings or performance reports are one way of giving recognition where it is merited. Such ratings, however, are not universally considered desirable. The large United States police departments differ in their beliefs and practices concerning rating systems. Although 54 per cent of the reporting departments currently have some form of rating system only one-half of these believe that their system has proven of value. Prejudice is most often given as a reason for the failure of service rating systems. Where these systems are in existence it is the most common practice to rate all except the higher ranking officers every six months; this is usually done by two or three immediate supervisors. Of the departments reporting the existence of service rating systems, 77 per cent give them some weight in promotional examinations, 38 per cent in making assignments and transfers, and only 15 per cent in determining pay increases.

DETECTIVE OR PLAIN-CLOTHES OFFICERS

Rightly or wrongly some types of police work carry more prestige or recognition than others. Detective work is usually considered one of the more desirable assignments. It is informative to observe how our large police departments select their plain-clothes officers. Several departments use more than one of the selection methods reported. The most popular methods are "selection by detective commander", and "recommendation of supervisors" followed closely by "outstanding police work", the percentages being 41 per cent, 41 per cent, and 37 per cent respectively. A minimum number of years of service as a policeman is required in only 25 per cent of the cities taking part in this survey. The average of the service requirements reported is three and one-half years. Only 17 per cent of the departments require a minimum service rating. Once a man becomes a detec-

tive his chance of bettering himself, except through promotion to a supervisory position, are not very promising. Fifty per cent of all cities replying have only one class or grade of detectives. The maximum number of classes reported was three and only 20 per cent reported this number. In exactly one-half of the police departments policemen in the uniform and detective assignments are interchangeable, in the other half they are not. In only one-third of the departments are supervisors (i.e., sergeants, lieutenants, captains, et cetera), interchangeable as between the uniform and detective ranks.

AUXILIARY ACTIVITIES

All men do not seek ego-satisfaction in their work. They may turn in other directions. An outlet through proficiency in sports is very common. Many of the large police departments recognize this, for 54 per cent of them sponsor competitive sports between their departments and other organizations, and 46 per cent have divisional or precinct teams which compete with each other. Many other outside activities are engaged in. The officers in all of the departments are called upon to make talks on police subjects before outside groups. Other police sponsored activities participated in by policemen, together with the percentage of departments reporting their existence are as follows:

Pistol Teams.....	75%
Directing School Boy Patrols.....	71%
Active in Junior Police, Boy Scouts or other Youth Activities...	54%
Police Band.....	46%
Directing Crossing Guards.....	46%
Police Drill Teams.....	25%
Directing Police Reserve or Auxiliary Police Activities.....	25%
Boys' and Girls' Camps.....	17%

Policemen in 87 per cent of the reporting departments belong to police sponsored social or fraternal groups. In only 21 per cent of the departments are there organizations which are limited to the rank of patrolman; one-half of these require a minimum period of service as a pre-requisite for membership, usually corresponding with the probationary period. One-half of the departments sponsor Police Posts of the American Legion. Other activities reported are bowling teams, golf teams, orchestras, and glee clubs.

EMPLOYEE PUBLICATIONS

Most people like to see their names in print and to receive public recognition. An effective way of marking the completing of periods of service is, therefore, to publicize the event through

an employee magazine. This, however, will be very difficult to do in most police departments, for only 20 per cent of the reporting departments publish departmental organs and only 8 per cent contribute to general city employee magazines.

GRIEVANCE AND SUGGESTION SYSTEMS

An adequate system for handling grievances and suggestions will do much to maintain morale and give recognition to individual members of an organization.¹⁰ Of the reporting police departments 80 per cent claimed that they had systems through which suggestions could be made to the Chief or other high ranking officers. In only one-half of these departments is the system made known to the policeman through written instructions. It is interesting to note that of the suggestion systems reported 90 per cent operate by written statements "up through channels", while in only 15 per cent of the departments can an oral statement be made directly to the Chief or other high ranking officer.

IN-SERVICE TRAINING

Skill and proficiency in police work as in other occupations bring recognition and status. Skill and proficiency are acquired by experience and training. The large American police departments recognize this for 91 per cent of them give in-service or continuation training regularly to their police officers. One-half of the departments give this training periodically on a full-time basis; the other half on a part-time basis. The attendance at these in-service training classes is compulsory in all except one police department. Two departments reported that in-service training was compulsory but that additional "incentive" or "promotional" training was on a voluntary basis. It is both interesting and significant to note that of all the procedures covered by this questionnaire the one mentioned most often by the police departments as contributing to the raising of morale was "in-service training".

ADEQUATE COMPENSATION

The struggle for economic existence and the search for recognition are closely related. Reward in terms of money is a symbol. Once the minimum essentials for living are assured the paycheck becomes important mainly because it makes possible greater satisfactions outside the job. Good pay means more

¹⁰ *Employee Suggestion Systems Studies in Personnel Policy No. 43* (New York: National Industrial Conference Board, 1942) P. 1.

comfort, more possessions, more entertainment, education for children, a higher social position, and wider opportunities for self-development. Adequate compensation is then of great importance in giving recognition and status to policemen in any community. To be significant statistics regarding police compensation must take into consideration the cost of living, salaries paid to other employees in the community, pension plans, vacations, sick benefits, whether or not uniforms and equipment are furnished, and many other factors. This important subject warrants a thorough study of its own. Some day it may be made.

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the results of the present survey will prove of value to some police administrators: By emphasizing the problem of "status for the little fellow"; by pointing out some of the things which are being done in police departments to bestow such status; by indicating things which might be, but are not being done in all Departments; and, perhaps, by stimulating additional thought and experimentation directed toward the giving of adequate recognition to rank and file policemen for loyal and efficient service.