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## WOMEN POLICE SERVICE

Lois Higgins

Lois Higgins, M.S.W., LL.D., who is the assistant director of the newly organized Chicago Crime Prevention Bureau, has been a policewoman in the City of Chicago since 1937 and is an Instructor, Institute of Social Administration, Loyola University, Chicago. In the November-December, 1948, issue of this Journal appeared an article by J. R. Leevy "The Role of the Police Matron." Mrs. Higgins and others have felt that his article, which did not fully define the term "police matron," may have lead readers to the impression that policewomen and police matrons performed identical duties. In her present article the function of these two groups are differentiated and attention is given to the broader aspects of a policewoman's work.—EDITOR.

Matrons were first appointed in the United States in New York City in 1845. Since that time, the plan of appointing women to be responsible for women who are held in custody by public departments has become an accepted plan of procedure. The work of matrons, as distinguished from that of policewomen, centers around the direct supervision of women held in custody. It includes such duties as accompanying the woman when it is necessary for her to leave the detention quarters during the period of detention; to keep the detention quarters clean and orderly; to minister to the physical well-being of the woman in custody; to furnish chaperonage in court. This is a necessary and important part of the work of the police department, but is quite distinct from the work of the policewomen which includes active law enforcement duties, investigative or patrol work prior to arrests, and preparation of cases for court. Duties of policewomen also include the investigation of many non-court cases in which proper referral to the agency best suited to assist the individual involved is of primary importance. This pre-supposes a knowledge of these agencies in the community as well as their policies of intake.

A glance at the qualifications for women police set up by the police chiefs themselves will show the high standard that is sought for women police. As far back as 1916 the International Association of Policewomen recognized the need for, and advocated certain minimum standards for policewomen. At the Twenty-Ninth Convention of the Chiefs of Police in San Francisco in 1922, these early educational requirements were further defined and standardized. They were unanimously adopted as a basis for the appointment of women police officers. These standards, as they were set up and approved by both the International Association of Policewomen and the International Association of Chiefs of Police, included:

1. Graduation from a four-year course in a standard high school or the completion of at least fourteen college entrance units of study

and not less than two years' experience, recent and responsible in social service or educational work;

2. Graduation from a recognized school for trained nurses requiring a residence of at least two years; or
3. Completion of at least seven college entrance units of study or two years in a standard high school and not less than two years of responsible commercial work involving public contacts and responsibilities, tending to qualify the applicant to perform the duties or possessing the equivalent of a college education through experience such as secretarial work.<sup>1</sup>

Matron duty has been imposed on some women police from time to time by their superior officers, but the trend is away from this practice since the recognition of a more specialized type of service from a policewoman is indicated. The latest publication of the National Advisory Police Committee on Social Protection of the Federal Security Agency contains a statement relative to the functions and duties of the two groups: "Matrons and women employed as police stenographers, clerks, and telephone operators are not generally included in the classification of policewomen."<sup>2</sup> This statement places police matrons in a category occupied by women untrained for police work as such, although employed in the same department.

The exact expression of the duties of policewomen, in forms other than patrolling, has always been somewhat vague and undefined. As a result of this lack of definition, the office of the women police officers has been the outlet for an assortment of miscellaneous duties. In small communities where the policewoman is the only public servant, she must make her own adjustment to the total program of the department and develop her activities to meet the needs and emergencies of her own locality, regardless of any possible definition of functions and duties.

Out of this confusion of definition one point is clear, that is, a policewoman is an official of the police department. As such, she is responsible for the prevention and detection of crime and for the enforcement of the law. She is expected to conform to the rules and regulations of the department, and she also shares in the salary, powers, and privileges of the department. It is a matter of opinion as to the type of organization which has best recognized and made use of policewomen. Some authorities consider that the best results have been obtained when the women in the department are organized in a single unit known as the Woman's Bureau, or Women's Division, under the direction of a woman of rank, who is responsible to the Chief of Police. These authorities have

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1. Proceedings of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1922.

2. Techniques of Law Enforcement in the Use of Policewomen, p. 2.

offered two principal reasons for their opinions: (1) The plan offers the women their own headquarters with facilities for proper detention, and (2) it prevents their being parceled out among the various districts or precincts, where they are sometimes used as clerks, switchboard operators, or matrons. It insures their use in a comprehensive, constructive program directed toward the prevention of crime and toward the protection of women and children. These functions can best be emphasized when the organization is in one unit. In 1943, according to the information received in connection with a study by this writer, there were eight such bureaus in the various cities covered.<sup>3</sup>

Other authorities, while not in active opposition to the establishment of Women's Bureaus in a department, feel that women work best under a Crime Prevention Division, or an already existing Division of the Department, headed by a male Captain or Lieutenant, who is responsible directly to the Chief of Police.

In addition to these differences of opinion relative to the organization of policewomen within the police department, there are further differences relative to whether or not the work of the policewoman is essentially a form of social case work.

The White House Conference on Child Health and Protection offers a statement to the effect that "the Police should not undertake the intensive and continuous direction of children's cases." If this statement is construed as referring to the officer, whether man or woman, who does not have professional training in social work, it serves to confirm the findings of the present study. However, the idea of the woman police officer was conceived in a spirit, and with a purpose, very different from the spirit and purpose that governed the regular police force. Responsibility for the legal aspects of cases that require authoritative handling comes, automatically, within the jurisdiction of the police. It must be kept in mind, however, that the treatment of these cases requires understanding and skill; that the stress and strain attendant in every contact with the law, or on an actual arrest, is likely to form an indelible impression on the immature mind of a child. It is, therefore, extremely important to have these cases handled by women who understand the traumatic character of the experience and who appreciate the effect that it can have on the life of a child.

The point of view and method of professional case work then become the tools that can be of greatest service to the police officer, whether man

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3. Berkeley, California; Baltimore, Maryland; Detroit, Michigan; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Madison, Wisconsin; Seattle, Washington; Metropolitan Department, Washington, D. C.

or woman. This is true because, as has been previously stated, at no time is the child more in need of careful study and sympathetic understanding than during his first conflict with the law. The delinquent, using the term in its legal sense, may be no different inherently from many young people his age. He should not be considered different until such a difference is proven. While this difference is being proven or denied, there may be need for some modification of legal procedures and, at the same time, need for the maintenance of necessary disciplinary measures. It is at this point that the policewoman with training in social work should be able to lessen the trauma of the experience and, at the same time, protect the child from further delinquencies.

The following statement, taken from a Lecture given to the members of the Police Department at Washington, D. C., has direct bearing on this phase of the problem.

The police have been largely neglected in attempts to modify legal procedure in children's cases and to build up specialized agencies for dealing with juveniles. Only in some communities do the police deal with children by other than the conventional methods used in dealing with adults.

Proposals to improve police administration include organization which will provide technical direction, establishment of training schools, and the development of special department for dealing with juvenile problems or for crime prevention. The instruction of all police officers should include information necessary to enable them to deal intelligently with ordinary problems of child welfare with which they come in contact and to recognize the more serious problems requiring special attention. However, the preventive work of police departments is a growing activity. The effectiveness of cooperation of the police service with agencies such as Boy's and Girl's Clubs.

Such experience shows that it is important for each police department to establish and maintain a department or detail to specialize in work with children. This should be an independent detail and should include both men and women.

A socialized police force will be one of the greatest helps in community protection of children. Not only will a policeman of the right sort be a neighborhood friend who can talk to children in their own language and inspire respect for law and authority, but by working in cooperation with social agencies he can do much to safeguard the interests of children. Qualified policewomen whose duties include assistance in the enforcement of laws for child protection should be on the staff of every police department.<sup>4</sup>

These discussions, including the statement from the White House Conference group, indicate that, while case work as a specialized division of social work is not within the province of the policewoman, she must nevertheless be conscious of the fact that she is dealing with human beings and with the various factors in society which under certain con-

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4. Facts About Juvenile Delinquency, Leonard M. Dub, M.D. (The Washington Police Academy), p. 7.

ditions hinder their adaption and adjustment to society and to its laws. From this standpoint, her work has at least one characteristic that is common to all social work; it inquires into causes. In carrying on the investigation and attempting the remedy, the policewoman can analyze the individual's situation and attempt to arrive at some conclusion regarding causal factors. She may go still further and take on the responsibility for referring the individual to the social agency that is equipped to offer the service needed. Persons in police work sometimes fail to see the possibility for treatment such as this because the problem of law enforcement is, for them, the dominant one. It becomes easy to negate the reaction such an experience with the law might be causing the individual involved.

When this happens, that is when the person in authority loses sight of human reactions to punishment, he may also lose sight of the fact that, while punishment may force a person to conform, or may even lead him to want to conform, it cannot make him capable of conforming. The capacity to conform may be entirely lacking in some persons. When this is true, punishment will have no appreciable effect on the person concerned. In other persons, the capacity may be there but it has, perhaps, never been developed. If this is true, treatment has to follow the line of education rather than punishment, and the police officer who is successful, on a constructive level, is the one who uses a social rather than a legal approach to the individual who needs his help.

Actually there should be no conflict between police work and social work. The apparent dilemma arises from the fact that the two areas of endeavor are similar in aim and purpose but different in philosophy and method. The needs of the human beings who come into contact with the workers in each field are similar. The ultimate aim of the workers is similar, that is, the rehabilitation of a human being. The difficulty of fusion arises from the fact that the approach and method must of necessity be different. One approach is designed according to law, and the rules and regulations of legal procedure must be followed. A certain amount of elasticity characterizes the other, because the individual is the all-important focus, and the case worker is to a certain extent autonomous in handling a given situation. However, in spite of the restrictions within which police work must be carried on, there is a growing realization of late that crime prevention work is, in a certain measure, social work, and that its function must extend to meeting problems which cannot be handled merely by an "arrest." In meeting these

problems, a sympathetic approach is required. This approach combines understanding with whatever punitive measures may be necessary and attempts to help the individual to understand and conform to the laws that carry sanctions. This kind of an approach can be combined with the essentials of police science and can be adapted to the role that the police officer must play in society.

The possibilities for the adaptation of this approach to police work are perhaps most obvious in the area of juvenile delinquency and in cases where adults contribute to the delinquency of a minor. Such an approach is very often essential to the successful handling of a situation in which a father is found guilty of crime and where mother and children are deserted during his absence. These situations cannot be handled as mere "cases" to be solved through the possible arrest of the guilty party. They are problems which involve community as well as police responsibility. This means that they must be handled ultimately through an attempt to deal, not just with the person who is involved, but with the community in which that person lives. At this point, police work becomes social work, and the point of view of social work needs to be merged with the point of view of police work.

Crime prevention work builds up a special technique, especially for the proper handling of children's cases. There are two distinct sets of factors which must be considered in the work of crime prevention and, more specifically, in work with juveniles. There are first the conditions that operate within the individual from the outside. Removing temptations and situation provocative of crime, and guarding young people against criminal tendencies and influence are objective; emotional drives and desires and deprivations and hostilities are subjective. If policewomen are to take into consideration these internal and external factors, they must adopt the individualized approach to the offender and must attempt to reconcile that approach to the authoritative approach which is theirs by virtue of the power given to officers of the law. The reconciliation is sometimes difficult because of the fact that, unlike the social worker in the non-authoritative setting, the policewoman acts under legal rather than moral obligation. The caseworker *may* act; the policewoman *must* act. This obligation to act according to prescribed procedures when, from a humanitarian standpoint, the action seems severe or perhaps unwise, is one of the major difficulties that the policewoman has to face. She knows that this action is open to misunderstanding by those who witness it, and for that reason, constant interpretation of the total program is necessary.