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VALUE OF TECHNICAL POLICE TRAINING IN THE PREVENTION OF CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

Donal E. J. MacNamara

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Training is important, vitally important, in the prevention of crime and delinquency. But what kinds of technical police training are available in the United States today, and how extensive is its availability?

We can all agree with Bruce Smith when he writes that even the most casual observer of police training programs in America must be impressed by their confused relationships and by the chaotic disturbances which afflict them at frequent intervals. One is likely to become more aware of the noise and disorder than of the striving for improvement that produces them. For it is only a few decades since the first systematic police training was introduced by the Pennsylvania State Police, and only since 1920 that the application of police training procedures has been at all common. At this mid-point in the 20th Century, entire states are without a single police training program worthy of the name; others have police schools conducted on such a casual basis and for such brief and uncertain periods as to have little influence in raising the general level of police service, or of effectively inhibiting criminal or delinquent behavior.

Police training and police education in the United States have assumed a variety of patterns, but the basic American pattern has been the local police academy, operating continuously or intermittently, and offering principally a program of recruit training. More and more frequently in recent years these recruit training courses have been supplemented by specialist training, refresher courses at one year, five year, or other interval, and advanced courses sometimes synchronized with promotion examinations. There are few large municipal or state police forces which do not have, at least on paper, a training director and a training program. Some smaller police organizations have outstandingly meritorious offerings.

Superimposed on this basic American pattern of local police recruit training are a variety of programs which have developed in the past

thirty years. These programs are designed to supplement basic recruit instruction; to furnish advanced training, and particularly specialist training, difficult to provide economically or efficiently at the local level; and to give basic training to officers in police organizations which have been unable or unwilling to plan and finance programs of their own. Among these supplementary training programs may be mentioned the local and regional institutes sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and by some state vocational education agencies, under the George-Deen Act, of which the California Peace Officers Training Program is an outstanding example; the individual and group instruction correspondence course developed by the Institute for Training in Municipal Administration; the cooperative arrangements for short training institutes presented jointly by universities and police agencies or police associations of which the program developed by Rollin Perkins at Iowa and that directed by Gordon Sheehe at the University of Washington may be cited as examples; the longer specialized intensive institutes such as the Northwestern University Traffic Institute, the Delinquency Control Institute of the University of Southern California, and the Yale Bureau of Highway Traffic; the outstanding educational program of the Federal Bureau of Investigation at the National Police Academy; the pre-service police training programs pioneered by August Vollmer and now regularly scheduled at nearly a dozen colleges and universities including the University of California, Michigan State, Washington State, San Jose State and Fresno State colleges; the advanced in-service programs leading to the bachelors, masters, and doctors degree in police administration at the University of Southern California; the special programs on minority problems pioneered by Joseph Lohmann in Chicago, Joseph Kluchesky in Milwaukee, Gordon Allport in Boston and others, and which have had a constructive effect in bringing into being the Carnegie-Rockefeller endowed Southern Police Institute at the University of Louisville under Col. David A. McCandless.

One cannot fail to mention here, for their graduates are legion and include important police administrators, the private police schools, correspondence and residence, albeit of greatly unequal merit, which have provided police training for nearly fifty years. Nor can an alumnus of the Military Police School fail to point out that it provided very high level police training to thousands of military police, air police, Navy shore patrol, and criminal investigation personnel during and after World War II.

There is an understandable similarity—understandable but not wholly defensible—in the subject materials presented in the wide variety of

police training programs. Much the same subjects are taught recruits in large metropolitan police academies as are taught students in the advanced specialized institutes; the same course titles and descriptions fit the offerings of the pre-service police courses in the state colleges as describe the content of the post-graduate programs leading to advanced university degrees. There is, of course, a difference in emphasis and time allotment although sometimes even this distinction fades into meaninglessness.¹

At all levels and in all areas, the study of law is emphasized, with instruction (single lectures or whole courses depending on the length of the training program) in such subjects as: Criminal law, criminal procedure, evidence, law of arrest, the administration of justice, traffic laws, penal code, municipal code, and other legal subjects including probation law and legal aspects of delinquency control. It is well-known that there is a European background for this preoccupation with legal training for in many European police agencies there is a sharp demarcation line drawn between the men doing patrol and other routine police duties and those assigned to supervisory and investigative functions. For the higher ranking and more specialized police, a law degree is almost invariably required, and though from time to time it happens that a non-legal man jumps the barrier and attains high police rank this is unusual. Many agencies in the police field in America have recognized the value of legal training—off hand one might mention the F. B. I. which restricts its recruitment pretty largely to lawyers, Los Angeles, which has just chosen a police-lawyer as Chief of Police, and New York which has just appointed a Federal criminal prosecutor as police commissioner.

Courses in special police techniques are next most frequently encountered. These include criminal investigation and accident investigation, laboratory techniques, photography, traffic control, and occasional courses in ballistics and the identification of questioned documents. Report writing, local departmental organization and regulations, and patrol techniques are frequently encountered. But police administration, public relations, teaching methods for police instructors, criminology, special techniques for handling juveniles, psychology, public speaking, constitutional law, or even American government are only infrequently

1. A recent study by Professor Frank Boolsen of Fresno State College, published by the Society for the Advancement of Criminology, outlines the courses and degree requirements in some twenty college and university offerings. The writer's article, "Higher Police Training at the University Level," in January-February 1950 issue of this Journal presents a detailed analysis of the most complete undergraduate and graduate offering available in any American college or university. There is a wealth of published material available on the content of individual departmental, organizational, or institutional police training programs.

met. At the recruit level much time is devoted to military drill, marksmanship, judo, first aid, and athletics.

In many of the most advanced programs, including those leading to degrees in law enforcement in American universities, it is possible to graduate without any training whatsoever in criminology or penology. It is probably for this reason that the public utterances of some of our "police experts" on problems of crime and delinquency control so often seem more appropriate to 950 than to 1950 A. D. In this connection it is perhaps noteworthy that the committee on legal medicine at the second International Criminological Congress strongly recommended that all police officers be taught methods of inquiry into the genesis of crime.

It would appear from a mere recital of the variety of police training patterns coexisting in the United States that over the years the great proportion of American police officers would receive fairly intensive technical training. Unfortunately this is not true. In point of numbers the Federal Bureau of Investigation local and regional schools, the George-Deen Act vocational education police programs, and the New York State type zone schools do reach tremendous numbers of police officers, some 75,000 to 100,000 annually. But for the most part these are very short courses, ranging from a few hours lectures to a maximum of one hundred hours of instruction spread out over a long period. Too, there is a large duplication factor with some officers repeating the same few hours of instruction year after year either because that is all that is available to them or for the less worthy purpose of amassing a collection of certificates.

These programs have positive and negative aspects. On the positive side they present experienced and capable instructors not otherwise available to small local departments, and by utilization of a uniform syllabus they contribute to the standardization of police procedures. Negative factors include their use by some police agencies to excuse failure to maintain year-round training programs and the acceptance by the unknowing of these short-course certificates with a distinction and prestige equal to that accorded diplomas of the National Police Academy, the Northwestern University Traffic Institute, or a university police curriculum.

Without definite statistics available, this writer believes that it is highly unlikely that more than two or three percent of American police personnel have had anything but token training above the recruit level, yet more than fifteen percent hold supervisory ranks in police agencies,

and a rather considerable number are serving in special assignments which demand advanced technical skills.

Let us now consider briefly some reasons for these conditions.

First. It is quite clear that small police forces cannot support adequate training facilities of their own nor does their manpower situation permit them to send men to such police training programs as are available to them. Remember that the average police manpower in the five-sixths of American cities and towns with fewer than 25,000 population is only eight men per department.

Second. Many large police forces, which could maintain training programs on a permanent basis, induct recruits at such irregular periods and in such small increments as to make difficult or impossible a planned training approach. These conditions are often forced on the police agency by budget technicalities or civil service regulations, but forward-looking police administrators, with an enthusiastic appreciation of the value of training, have in city after city overcome such difficulties.

Third. Some police administrators, harried by public demands for the sight of uniformed bodies on the streets, have rushed recruits through brief "training" periods and in some cases put them on the streets with no training at all.

Fourth. Many instructors in police schools, public and private, and at all levels, are inadequately prepared both in command of subject matter and teaching skill for their duties and responsibilities. The advances in adult education, the use of visual aids, and such devices as pupil participation in the teaching-learning process are infrequently encountered, while ill-prepared, rambling, and oft-times irrelevant lectures by police "brass" not primarily assigned to or interested in training fill too many of the school hours.

Fifth. Too many of the supplementary police training programs are so brief that it is impossible in the time allowed to cover even the most elementary police techniques. If these were just refresher sessions this would not be too disconcerting a problem, but since in many areas this is the only police training available the instruction very often fails to accomplish its purpose.

Sixth. While the standards in many of the police training programs are impressively high, others have such low standards as to make one wonder whether the sponsors are not more interested in the financial and publicity returns than in the professionalization or increased effectiveness of the police apparatus.

To recapitulate briefly, present police training has inadequate planning and preparation, inadequate participation, inadequate utilization of available facilities and personnel, and inadequate evaluation of the entire program and of each of its segments in terms of value to the individual police student, the police department, and the citizenry.

Attention must be directed, too, to a whole series of antiquated personnel practices which militate against the recruitment of high-caliber police careerists and thus make more difficult the construction and administration of adequate police training programs. Among these practices may be mentioned: Artificial restrictions on recruitment such as long-term local residence and unofficial political, religious, and racial entrance criteria; poor examination procedures emphasizing memorized factual data (particularly local laws and geography) instead of personality, intelligence, and aptitude for the police profession; limiting open recruitment to the lowest level and limiting promotions to grade-by-grade advances thus stultifying the able and ambitious; inadequate salaries at the entrance level and even more inadequate salaries for those who ascend the police hierarchy; and probably the culmination of all the preceding conditions the low social acceptance of policing as a career.

Perhaps an even more serious indictment of present police training approaches is that in few of these programs is there any attempt to present the whole picture of the social and political evolution of the criminal law, of the nature of crime and criminals, of the influences of natural and man-made phenomena on criminal patterns, and of the interdependence and interrelationships which exist among the agencies developed by society through the centuries to deal with crime and its concomitants. Police on the whole, even those who have had the benefit of advanced training, know almost nothing (and unfortunately are somewhat proud of their ignorance) about penological theories and practices, about probation and parole, or about the specialized functions and interests of the thousands of social agencies, public and private, which could be of inestimable assistance to them in carrying out their crime prevention responsibilities. Those police officers who are assigned to juvenile divisions or who are fortunate enough to be selected for attendance at the Delinquency Control Institute or similar schools get much more of a broadening experience than do the great majority not so assigned. Nothing is more irritating than the gratuitous and far-too-frequent attacks of some publicity-seeking or merely ill-informed law enforcement officers on the probation and parole system. Especially since these attackers seldom couple their criticisms with any construc-

tive suggestions for improving or remedying the conditions about which they complain.

Some thought and some action has been recently given to what might be termed "police psychology." It has been suggested that before there can be harmonious relationships between the police and other members of the community, police personnel must understand their own motivations in becoming law enforcement officers and their own conscious or unconscious motivations for many of their official actions. But first let it be clear that there is precious little of such training. Too many police officers after a short introduction to the theory and especially to the jargon of psychiatry—who have achieved what one might call a smattering of psychiatric ignorance—insist on displaying that ignorance at frequent intervals, often in the course of their official duties. A knowledge of psychology and psychiatry helps a policeman understand himself and understand those with whom he has to deal. It prepares him to be objective about things which make others emotional or hysterical. It enables him to recognize conduct-symptoms of mental disturbance and to prevent mentally-disturbed persons from injuring themselves or others. But it most decidedly does not qualify him as a diagnostician, an analyst, or a therapist. He should keep tight rein on his smattering of psychiatric ignorance lest his tongue or his pen embarrass him or his agency.

This paper has adverted perhaps in somewhat hit-or-miss fashion to police and to police training—with an occasional reversion to the prevention of crime and delinquency. Edwin Sutherland included the police among his "external inhibitors of crime." The degree to which they can inhibit crime depends upon their effectiveness in carrying out their major responsibilities; the providing of security for persons and property through actual physical protection—in other words, patrolling; the detection, apprehension, and incarceration of criminals; and the neutralization, either by elimination or supervision, of crime-breeding locations or conditions. These are all highly complex procedures. The untrained police officer, be he ever so well-intentioned, cannot hope to cope successfully with the artifices of the criminal elements. Only the thoroughly professional and the highly trained can compete successfully with organized modern criminal operations and can resist the political pressures and financial temptations to which police officers are continually subjected.

Remember, too, that almost all technical police training in the United States has emphasized the detection and apprehension aspects of police responsibilities. Only in traffic control training with its famous three "E's" of Enforcement, Engineering, and Education and in the field of

juvenile delinquency control has the preventive aspect been stressed. The record of accident fatalities which shows that as many Americans have been killed by automobiles since 1903 as have been killed in all of America's wars from the Revolution through the Korean "police action" and the almost meaningless jumble of contradictory statements and statistics on juvenile delinquency do not give much basis for the evaluation of this preventive emphasis.

But experience and common sense tell in the absence of acceptable statistical data that an untrained, non-professional police organization is not an external inhibitor of crime. It plays at best a neuter role, at worst a negative one, in the prevention of crime and delinquency. It is no accidental coincidence that those police organizations which enjoy high repute among students of police science as effective warriors in this never-ceasing battle against crime—that those police agencies which enjoy high public repute as effective and incorruptible—it is no accidental coincidence that these law enforcement bodies are the ones with the outstanding training programs.

Nor is it a coincidence that repeated and proved charges of corruption, brutality, political control, and underworld alliances have been leveled over many years against law enforcement agencies which upon examination disclose either exceedingly rudimentary or wholly "paper" training programs, ignored, and subordinated by the administrators, with a resultant absence of training and discipline among the rank-and-file police officers.

Nor can it be wholly coincidence that in a study of some scores of cases in which allegations of graft, corruption, brutality, or other non-professional conduct were leveled against individual police officers, in not one case had the officer involved received advanced police training of a professional level although several of the officers held exalted police rank.

Training is not the panacea, the cure-all, for the ills of America policing. Nor can training insure against the moral or professional lapses of individual police officers. But it is abundantly clear that while training cannot cure the administrative and organizational ailments of the American police system, it can alleviate many of the symptoms and secondary infections and permit the non-perfect police mechanism to carry on its day-to-day activities and meet its public responsibilities more effectively.