

1954

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Recommended Citation

Charles F. Sloane, Police Professionalization, 45 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 77 (1954-1955)

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POLICE SCIENCE

POLICE PROFESSIONALIZATION

CHARLES F. SLOANE

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The word "professionalization" and the phrase "profession of police work" have been bandied about in police circles for the past decade in an apparent attempt, by constant repetition, to force the acceptance of police work into the ranks of the so-called professions.

It would appear from the writings of so many "police experts" that members of police forces are now either on the verge of entering the "police profession" or have already entered through an open door and are to be accepted as professional men. If it is true that we are on the threshold of becoming professional men in the accepted sense, or have already become professional men, then we in the police field have taken this immense stride forward with but little effort. A review of the facts, however, does not substantiate any such belief.

The word "profession" brings to mind long hours of effort and study, research and labor devoted to the learning of various subjects directly related to a certain field of endeavor. If this word picture is true, then how do we in the police field fit into the category of a profession? Would it not be more appropriate to frankly admit that some members in the police field have entered the portals of the professions and are, in every sense, professional men while others will never attain such status? When you consider that there are over two hundred thousand policemen in the United States, those men who, because of effort and study, through learning, research and labor, have become professional men are all too few to be a representative cross-section of our police. They are shining examples of what can be done by perseverance, but, unfortunately, they are in the great minority.

The "professional" question should be faced squarely by all persons in the police field, so that a clear-cut path can be hewn through the illogical and sometimes inane methods that have been attempted in an apparent effort to secure more prestige for the police. It would seem that more harm is being done to the prestige of our police, through such efforts, than benefits gained thereby.

Common sense dictates that the only method by which police work, in its entirety, can every hope to attain the status of a profession is to squarely face the facts concerned therein, set the goal and then, step by step, eliminate the obstacles confronting

them. That this cannot be done in a day or a year is readily apparent when the requirements are set forth.

A glance at the minimum requirements of several of the professions will readily convince any doubting Thomas that there is more to the professions than meets the eye. Medicine, teaching, engineering, ministry, and pharmacy all of these require a minimum of four years of college. Great stress is placed on learning in the specific fields and, some of the professions such as medicine, require more than four years of college. The study of medicine in most states requires eight years of college work plus at least one year of internship before the practice of medicine may begin. Most states require the passing of state examinations before a license to practice a profession is issued. These, then, are the requirements of the professions.

Readily discernible is the fact that each of the five professions listed above requires, as a bare minimum, graduation from a duly accredited college. *This is the minimum today.* In contrast to this are the minimum requirements in the police field today. These vary to a marked degree and range from "graduation from high school" to as low as having the "ability to read and write the English language." With these facts taken into consideration, how can anyone truthfully state that we are on the verge of "professionalization"?

Due respect must be given to the Federal Bureau of Investigation in raising its personnel requirement standards, years ago, to a full professional level. Its personnel are recruited from among law and accounting school graduates, and in addition to selecting men with this educational background, the FBI after this careful selection, painstakingly trains its agents in all phases of police work. This, however, is not the end of their training, since at regular intervals, agents are given in-service training courses. This is police work at its professional best.

Acknowledgement must also be made of the required standards and training given members of the Berkeley, California, Police Department. At Berkeley, the minimum standard is such that only a person of high intelligence can hope to become a member of this outstanding organization.

Police work has become an intricate, involved, and comprehensive field, but that the various phases of police work, viz., administration, patrol, traffic, identification, laboratory, vice, juvenile, training, investigation, records, maintenance, etc., cannot be done by men with a minimum education of high school graduation, after careful selection and training, is, to say the least, fallacious. Police work can and is being done well by men of this caliber. The unfortunate fact is that very few departments select only high school graduates and follow up these selections with careful character investigations and stringent general intelligence and aptitude tests. Further, very few administrators carefully review the attitudes, work, and general adaptability of the person selected during the probationary period and, if a weakness is found, decide the case in favor of the police department. These matters of selection, if carefully conducted, all will tend to raise the standards of our police departments. When all of these methods of selection are used, if careful and thorough training is given, men with a minimum of high school graduation can properly perform the arduous duties of police work in a commendable manner.

One interesting fact that few persons in the police field consider in evaluating police

work versus the professions is that a person who is interested in entering one of the professions educates himself. He is the one who supplies the monetary investment, the time, and the effort to secure the knowledge necessary to gain admittance to the profession. It is true that several universities and colleges, predominantly on the west coast, offer courses designed to give interested students a good background of public administration, police administration, and science. This is the one shining light in the problems posed in the education of men interested in entering the police field. Perhaps it is too much to hope for, that this movement will spread rapidly to at least one or more colleges or universities in every state. This type of education for our police is sorely needed.

The one truly malignant spot in our police recruitment program is the RESIDENCE REQUIREMENT, so widespread in the police system. To illustrate, let us assume that a highly intelligent, physically perfect young man, with a college degree in public administration, and, who is intensely interested in police work moves into your city from out-of-state. He, being married, is in need of an immediate income and makes application for a position on the police department. Before this individual can even take the entrance examination for such position, he must reside within the city for a period of anywhere from three months to three years, depending on the local requirement. If the residence requirement in the city should be one year, by the time the year has elapsed, this individual will have found a position in which to become established and will have lost his interest and zeal for work in the police field. Thus, the police field loses a likely prospect, perhaps one who, because of his education and training, with capable leadership, could have made an important contribution to the police field. Because of these restrictions, the same individual residing fifty yards outside the boundaries of the majority of municipalities would be unable to meet the residence requirements and, therefore, would be unable to become a candidate for a police position. This is a tragic situation. This is not the case in the professions. Educators, doctors, ministers, engineers, and others are recruited for positions regardless of residence.

A careful analysis of the facts presented reveals glaring defects in our police systems. It would be well for all police administrators to make a careful survey of their minimum educational, residence, and training requirements, and, through concerted efforts, perhaps through their police associations, they can create residence, entrance, and training standards that would be applicable throughout the country. Such uniformity is imperative, for only then can police work begin its climb into the ranks of the professions.