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THE ASSOCIATION FOR PROFESSIONAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

W. J. SNYDER

Captain W. J. Snyder has been in charge of the Planning and Research Division of the Los Angeles Police Department since 1952 and has been a member of the Los Angeles Department for the last 19 years. He is a charter member of the Association for Professional Law Enforcement, an organization which is described in this paper, and served as its President from July, 1953, until April, 1955.—EDITOR.

During the past three decades the subject of professionalism has been a topic of discussion among law enforcement officers throughout the United States. With the disappearance of the raw vitality and roughshod methods of nineteenth-century American frontiers, new concepts have emerged in the field of police service. It can only be considered natural that in the highly specialized field of law enforcement the desire for identification with standards and ethics commensurate with the underlying spirit of service has become manifest.

An increasing number of police officers are beginning to recognize their work as a calling rather than a craft and as a profession rather than an occupation. Without being able to crystallize their desires, they have been groping to find a rallying point. Other areas of public service, such as medicine, law, teaching and science, have traversed the difficult path of professional recognition and now serve as representatives of a highly desired goal to the underpaid, politically dominated, and harassed American police. Progressive police administrators are becoming more insistent in their assertion that law enforcement is a service to humanity and as such is deserving of recognition as a profession.

The tenets of a profession are well known to students of business and social organizations. The methods of achievement differ with the various areas of endeavor. Law enforcement, like the others, has its own unique aspects that act as challenging barriers in the attempt to establish the framework of a professional pattern. The usual gamut of indifference, cynicism, resentment, and motives amounting to a determined position that the status quo shall be maintained has consistently held back consideration of the police service as a profession. Despite resistance, the police officer's desire for recognition has grown until now the wall of reaction can no longer contain the dedication to the high ideals of public service that stir the hearts of more and more law enforcement officers throughout the land.

Indicia of the trend of American police service are to be found in the recently organized Association for Professional Law Enforcement. The organization was created in the fall of 1952 by members of the Los Angeles Police Department. The fact that it started as a strictly grass roots movement leads one to believe that the idea developed in the minds of the police officers as a spontaneous, inwardly motivated action. No person or persons in high authority ordered its creation; no one even suggested it. The desire was there, and it became mandatory to give substance and form to the thought.

During the months of 1951 and 1952 a group of police officers of the Los Angeles Police Department, less than 30 in number, met from time to time in an informal manner. The topic of discussion centered mainly around the desire of this particular group to identify itself with an established organization purporting to work for the elevation of police service standards. Each member had a sincere desire to contribute personally in some way to the over-all problem of raising the standards of law enforcement. They were aware that there were social, fraternal, and union-type organizations in existence that worked for higher salaries, better working conditions, fringe benefits, and technological advancement. Nowhere could the group discover an organization dedicated primarily to the strengthening of ethical concepts and professional attitudes by the officer in the field. It was not the desire of the group to duplicate the efforts of an existing organization, but to explore fields of thought and endeavor that other law enforcement associations have barely touched.

The group verbalized some of its thinking on paper and as a consequence, a charter setting up a formal organization was created. On November 13, 1952, 35 police officers, from the ranks of captain, lieutenant, sergeant, and patrolman, met at luncheon at the Los Angeles Police Academy and affixed their signatures to a document establishing the Association for Professional Law Enforcement.

The constitution is typical of similar organizations. However, the objectives and the requirements for membership bear repeating.

Article 2

Section 1. **OBJECTIVES DEFINED.** The objectives of this Association shall be:

- a. To serve society by encouraging in both the police and the public a better understanding of the ideals of professional law enforcement and a mutual confidence based upon the realization that the police and the public are one and the same.
- b. To seek for the police service the highest standard of ethics, and to promote their widest adoption by encouraging the individual police officer to a full appreciation of the responsibilities of his office and a just pride in the honorable discharge of that trust.
- c. To add to the body of police knowledge by promoting research and scientific inquiry; to work for improved dissemination of police knowledge; and to strive to translate police knowledge into public service through elevation of academic and training standards and the adoption by law enforcement agencies of proven police techniques.

Section 2. **LIMITATIONS OF ACTIVITY.** The activities of this Association shall be restricted to those matters affecting the advancement of objectives listed under Section 1 of this Article and in no event shall this Association engage in partisan politics or intervene in the internal affairs of any law enforcement agency.

MEMBERSHIP. Limited to active law enforcement officers; a minimum of three years police experience required for active membership. No internal division by rank. No honorary members.

Analysis of the objectives reveals that two principal areas of action are emphasized. First, the desire for greater understanding between the police and the public, in other words, better communications. The barriers of distrust, suspicion, and fear that

have long separated the police and the people they serve shall be eliminated, and the individual policeman must come to understand his obligations and responsibilities to society. Secondly, the need for the development of the accoutrements of professionalism such as pre-education and post-entry training, an organized body of knowledge and a cogent code of ethics, without which, no field of human endeavor can achieve a professional status. Skeptics have long maintained that these goals are not attainable in the police field; some intimate that perhaps they are not desirable or at least not necessary.

The founders of APLE, as it has come to be known, would not accept a defeatist attitude but instead were determined to develop the thesis that there could be a more professional approach to police attitudes and concepts than theretofore had existed. With this goal, the organization and program, the Association was formed.

The constitution of the Association establishes a nine-member Board of Governors, elected from the membership. The Board then selects from the nine members the President, Vice-President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Eight operating committees are set up: Communications, Program, Finance, Publication, Public Relations, Projects, Membership, and Constitution and By-Laws. Each committee has as a chairman one of the members of the Board of Governors. The committee members are assigned by the President from the membership at large.

Membership of the organization is limited to officer personnel within the Los Angeles Police Department. At no time has there been a concerted membership drive. Each new member must be sponsored by two active members and is officially admitted to full membership status only by action of the Board of Governors. The new member must indicate that he fully subscribes to the purposes and objectives of the Association and that he will actively work to bring about their fulfillment.

The emphasis on membership has been to strive for quality and not quantity. Unless it seems evident that an individual is dedicated to the ideals, as set forth in the objectives of the organization, he is not invited to become a member. Prospective applicants are frankly told that the organization has no social, political, or union-type ramifications. It is not the sort of organization that appeals to the perennial joiner. Each member is urged to contribute his efforts with no promise of individual reward other than the personal satisfaction that comes from being a part of a worthwhile effort. Even with these qualifying factors or, perhaps, because of them, the membership has steadily increased since the birth of the organization.

Upon being formally inducted into the organization the new member is given a membership card and a lapel emblem. The emblem is a shield, denoting protection, and displays an American eagle, indicating strength and courage. Clasped in the claws of the eagle is a mace standing for authority. Behind the eagle is the picture of a lighted torch depicting enlightenment and knowledge. These symbols represent the principal guiding forces that govern the purposes and program of APLE.

The program of APLE falls into three major categories: meetings, publications, and projects. Meetings of the Association are held monthly. A meeting may be open only to the membership or upon occasion to all law enforcement agencies. The time and place of meeting vary. Luncheons are held. Outstanding judges, sociologists, and leaders of industry, labor and education are invited. These guests are asked to

present ideas or views which will enable the members of APLE to have a better understanding of other areas of endeavor. Frequently, panel discussions are held in order that opposing sides of an issue may be presented. Topics such as supervision and discipline, public relations, press relations, minority group problems, training, and the alcoholic problem stimulate lively discussions. Once a year a semisocial dinner event is held for the members and their spouses.

The publications of the Association are three in number. They are: *The Monthly Bulletin*, *The Educational Publication*, and *The Quarterly Journal*. All active members receive copies at the time of issuance. *The Monthly Bulletin* brings to the membership the announcements and news items that concern the activities of the Association. *The Educational Publication* principally consists of reprints of current articles and papers in the field of police science and law enforcement. *The Quarterly Journal* contains, for the most part, original articles prepared by members of the Association or individuals who, by their relationship with law enforcement, are invited to contribute papers on some particular phase of the problem of regulating human behavior in the American social order.

The Association has initiated various projects since its inception. The Fact Finding Committee project is one of the more recent to engage the attention and efforts of the members.

For many years the police service has been laboring under a distinct handicap, due to its reluctance to speak out in its own defense. Articles appear regularly in newspapers and periodicals concerning the police and their activities based upon half-truths, misinformation or deliberate falsehoods. Police officers have had to read these articles with a helpless feeling because of their inability to speak out and tell the truth. They have long been inarticulate with no defined channels of contact with the publishers or authors regarding the false and, at times, malicious printed material.

A meeting of the Association was held in the early part of 1956 for the purpose of discussing the subject of police public relations. Chief William H. Parker of the Los Angeles Police Department was the guest speaker. During his talk the Chief underlined the need of police officers to develop a medium of communications with agencies engaged in the reporting of police activities. He further suggested that the members of APLE should explore the feasibility of conducting a study regarding the problem. As a result of Chief Parker's address, a program was developed and set in motion. The plan called for the establishment of a group to be known as the Fact Finding Committee.

The Fact Finding Committee is an appointed group of APLE members who, either through their own awareness or by having it brought to their attention, examine all accounts regarding police activities that appear in print or are publicly recounted over radio or television. If there is an implication or a direct accusation that the law enforcement agency involved has been derelict or has failed to fully discharge its responsibilities, the case is investigated thoroughly. All facts are checked and the accuracy of the story, as related by the person making the report, is revealed either as correct or erroneous.

If the article or statement is of local origin the committee visits the responsible individual or individuals for the purpose of pointing out the inaccuracies of the

reporting. This is done in a dignified manner with the view of seeking the cooperation of the publisher, reporter, author, or newscaster to present the factual accounting of events involving police officers.

Although this project has only been operating for a short period, the results to date are encouraging. For the first time, the police are speaking out in their own defense. They are asking for fair treatment to the extent that the full and correct story be told. The reception of the committee has been, in the main, one of surprise upon the part of the persons contacted because of the long-standing position of passive submission to the reporting of police events by law enforcement officers. The desired result is, of course, to create a greater concern for factual reporting by persons who relate crime news and law enforcement programs to the reading and listening public.

Other projects involving training, public relations, law enforcement literature, a trained speakers bureau, and related activities have kept the Association busy since its inception. In fact, there are so many things to be done that the only problem is the order of priority to be assigned to the projects.

The genesis of the Association for Professional Law Enforcement has taken several years and it has required the favorable climate now prevailing in the Los Angeles Police Department to bring it to life. Under the enlightened administration of Chief William H. Parker, the Department has attained a position of prominence among law enforcement agencies in the United States. Chief Parker, by example, has encouraged the members of his Department to think and act in a professional manner. It is only natural that his vision and dynamic progressive administration should make possible the creation of an organization dedicated to the elevation of police standards. The Chief has supported APLE in its efforts by counsel and suggestion, not by domination or dictation. He perhaps visualizes the organization as an expression of the desire of career-minded police officers to become recognized as professionally constituted men and not merely pawns involved in the machinations of political expediency.

The members of APLE are not so naive as to believe that the organization alone will resolve the ills that beset the American police or that it will come up with all the answers to complete professionalization. They are intrigued, however, with the vision of the day when a law enforcement officer can take his place with the doctor, the lawyer, the teacher, the theologian, and the scientist as a trustworthy and proud servant of humanity. They see no good reason why an occupational entity, whose members dedicate their entire working lives to the protection of society, should not adopt the principles of conduct and attitude that are inherent in a professionally constituted group. The members of the Association for Professional Law Enforcement firmly believe that their efforts can contribute to the structure that the career-minded American law enforcement officer is determined to build in this country.