

1957

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### Recommended Citation

J. G. Caughley, A. J. W. Taylor, New Methods in the Promotion of Constables to Sergeants in the New Zealand Police Force, 48 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 207 (1957-1958)

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# POLICE SCIENCE

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## NEW METHODS IN THE PROMOTION OF CONSTABLES TO SERGEANTS IN THE NEW ZEALAND POLICE FORCE

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The Controller-General of New Zealand Police who also holds the office of Secretary for Justice instructed the Director of Police Education and the Chief Psychologist of the Justice Department to evolve a selection procedure for the promotion of Police Constables to the rank of Sergeant. As the Chief Psychologist had been closely associated for six years with War Office Selection Boards in the British Army during the 1939/45 war, it was considered that the Police Board should follow that pattern as closely as possible. After preliminary discussions, the following officers were asked to assist:

A Psychologist from the Justice Department,  
The Police Commissioner,  
An Advisory Officer from Police Department,  
An Inspector concerned mainly with Staff Training,  
The Detective Superintendent,

all of whom were Head Office staff. In addition a Senior Police Sergeant from the field, and clerical assistants were included.

The three-day course was residential being conducted at a well-equipped and modern Police Training School during the trainees' vacation. Prior to this course promotions had been based almost entirely on written examinations, seniority, interviews, and reports from senior officers. These were still considered to be significant factors, although inclined to be rather subjective.

### THE PROCESS

The purpose of the Board was to explore personality, in particular for character and leadership. The main object therefore was to ascertain the candidate's judgment, his latent abilities, and his adjustment towards new and unknown situations which, in reality, is another name for intelligence. Intelligence in the abstract can only be gauged by using an objective test such as the Raven Matrices which rules out any possibility of educational attainments, coaching, training, or environmental influences.





When all candidates had completed the Intelligence Test they were allowed an additional five minutes to give the following information on the back of their answer sheets:

“Write down as briefly as possible the most difficult task you have had to undertake as a Police Officer.”

This was really a brief test of literacy and the ability to express oneself in writing. It was also indicative of the candidate's imagination and feeling for others. The answers too could have been used as alternatives for Exercises 4 and 5 (below), providing that the candidate was not given his own problem to solve. A summary of the answers is as follows:

1. Dealing with fatalities, notifying death.....	10
2. Dealing with fatalities and investigating.....	7
3. Deciding whether to lay a charge in a particular case.....	7
4. Handling a mob.....	4
5. Dealing with an armed man.....	4
6. Police routine without previous instructions.....	3
7. Domestic disputes.....	2
Reporting child's theft to parent.....	1
Escorting men to mental hospitals.....	1
Personality difficulty.....	1
Pacifying a landlord.....	1
This examination.....	1
Rescuing from drowning.....	1
A particular arrest.....	1
	—
	44

#### EXERCISES AND TASKS

##### *Exercise 1: Leaderless group discussion by whole syndicate*

(Supervisor, Chief Psychologist)

Group of eight to ten men sit round table; Supervisor sits apart; he says to the group:

“I want you to discuss among yourselves what you think about capital punishment. You must not take any notice of or refer to me. I am quite outside your group. You may begin now.”

When the topic has worked itself out, another is given.

##### *Topics for Discussion:*

- (a) In a large organization, how should promotion be determined?
- (b) Our licensing laws.
- (c) Capital punishment.
- (d) Marriage guidance.
- (e) An ideal prison system.
- (f) Present political situation (Eden's policy with regard to Suez Canal).

*Exercise 2: Tactical exercise for whole syndicate*

(Leaderless group task.) (Supervisor, Detective Superintendent.)

*Instructions to Syndicate:* "This is an outdoor practical exercise. . . . An emergency has arisen and you have been directed here from different parts of the country to await a senior officer. He is delayed, presumably by an accident. The following message has been received, "A man is wanted for questioning regarding a shooting incident involving the death of two persons. His description is as follows: (to be filled in later). He is known to be in the bush at . . . Park." In the absence of the senior officer, take what action you consider necessary."

*Instructions to Syndicate Supervisors:*

- (a) Candidates are to submit reports to you after 1½ hours.
- (b) Detail a spare man to act as a criminal and give him instructions as to the area in which he must operate.
- (c) It will be necessary to supply suitable identification for candidates as you will have to observe them from a distance.
- (d) Transport, maps, arms etc. should be available if requested.

*Exercise 3: Job instruction, individual, practical*

(To make exercise more realistic, raw recruits from the Police School were used.)

(Supervisor, Senior Police Sergeant)

Instruct a young Constable how to proceed:

- (a) when called to a sudden death.
- (b) how to fill in an M. & S. form.
- (c) when required to take charge of the watch-house.
- (d) when going on the beat for the first time.

*Exercise 4: Planning, individual, theoretical*

(Supervisor, Inspector of Police)

What would you do if informed:

- (a) that there was an armed mentally deranged man in a house occupied by a woman and two children?
- (b) that it is reported that three men, probably safe-breakers, have entered a large building?

*Exercise 5: Taking action, individual, practical*

(Supervisor, Inspector of Police)

Take the action you consider necessary when:

- (a) a constable reports to you that he has been kicked in the stomach by a prisoner.
- (b) a prisoner reports to you that he has been struck by the watch-house keeper.
- (c) a constable reports that his pay has been stolen from his locker in the Police barracks.

FINAL MEETING AND ASSESSMENT

On the third day of the course at a meeting of the officers in charge, each candidate was considered in turn. Neither the Intelligence Test results nor the other supervisors' assessments had been disclosed previously. Supervisors not only reported numerical scores out of a possible maximum of 25 marks, but amplified particular strengths and weaknesses that candidates had revealed in test situations. As already mentioned before these tests were designed to evoke aspects of personality, ability, and aptitude, and to a certain extent this accounts for the variable pattern of scores that some candidates achieved. The fifth task for example dealt with police knowledge, and because most of the candidates were experienced with routine work, their scores were slightly higher on this task than on any other. Another important variable was that in the two group tasks, the individual's performance was largely governed by the quality of the group to which he had been arbitrarily assigned. Therefore, the two supervisors who were concerned with groups were anxious to consider the relative merits of each candidate not only in his immediate syndicate but in the whole group of candidates. The total assessment of each candidate was made on another five-point scale, i.e.

A—Superior.....	4 candidates
B—Above average.....	10 candidates
C—Acceptable.....	13 candidates
NY—Not yet ready for promotion .....	1 candidates
F—Failed.....	16 candidates
	—
	44

This summary presents the final outcome of three days of different kinds of testing, and it was submitted to the Police Promotion Board. The latter considered these findings together with results of job performance, written and oral examinations, and case histories, before taking executive action in promoting candidates to the rank of Sergeant. (As a matter of interest, they accepted the recommendations of the Police Officer Selection Board in its entirety).

To examine the ultimate value of this selection procedure it will be necessary to follow over a five-year period the activities of the 44 candidates who took part. The validity and justification of Selection Board procedure above the quicker but subjective methods that were used previously must ultimately depend on the way in which candidates conduct themselves in the course of their police duties. The shortest possible "follow up" (three months) indicates that as yet no fault can be found with the recommendations of what is believed to be the first "P.O.S.B.Y." of this type.