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A CENTER FOR POLICE PLANNING AND RESEARCH

A Proposal

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One concerned with the "practical" and "academic" facets of law enforcement and who, through his teaching duties, attempts to join both in the classroom, must eventually be visited by a simple and often discouraging conclusion: The function and study of law enforcement as an instrument of social defense is hindered by a lack of valid, easily accessible, and pertinent data. The law enforcement practitioner, chief or patrolman, requires data as the basis for sound planning, programming, and focusing of operational effort. The academician needs such data to fulfill his responsibilities to student and practitioner alike as he attempts to stimulate analysis, convey knowledge, design and execute research.

The purpose of this essay is to propose a facility (for purposes of this discussion, A Center for Police Planning and Research) which would foster the analysis of problems faced by law enforcement, collect and disseminate such research to appropriate persons and agencies, and thereby aid in improving administrative procedures and techniques in law enforcement. The discussion will be divided into two parts:

Part I: An inquiry into the status of contemporary police planning and research.

Part II: The Proposal for the Center.

Two appendices, "A" and "B" are added to illustrate the character of problems attacked by formal police planning and research agencies.

DEFINITIONS

Law enforcement, in this paper, refers to local tax-supported agencies having that responsibility; for example, municipal police departments, county sheriff's departments, county police departments.

Research, as used in this paper, refers to a systematic technique of inquiry that asks both "why" and "how"?¹

THE STATUS OF CONTEMPORARY POLICE PLANNING AND RESEARCH

The main stream of research in law enforcement in this country is of the applied form, although it may be assumed there is a small trickle of what could be termed basic research conducted chiefly by students and academicians. Broadly speaking, there are two varieties of applied law enforcement research: the organizational or administrative survey and the administrative analysis and research conducted by members of the department.

The Organizational or Administrative Survey. From time to time, usually during a period of crisis, the legislative body of a city or county will call in an "outside expert" to survey the agency and prepare a report of recommendations by which the agency may be "overhauled" or "improved." This process, it is admitted, serves a purpose. However, since it is so often an expedient and as often a political compromise, its value is limited. The surveyor often is an administrative generalist with research interests and has never been a policeman.

¹ There are important distinctions between the terms basic and applied research. Basic research may not be of direct, immediate value to the field in which it is undertaken, whereas applied research is concerned with acquiring information to solve current problems. Basic research may not be structured to arrive at a foreseeable conclusion, whereas applied research is undertaken to solve specific problems. Basic research is intimately concerned with the fundamental knowledge, philosophy, and controlling principles of the field; applied research functions on a so-called practical plane, often concealing or ignoring ultimate cause. Cf: "The Age of Research," TIME MAGAZINE, June 9, 1956, for a discussion of industrial research.

This may be an advantage, but nevertheless, since the surveyor lacks "face validity" the police have little confidence in him. Too, the survey is conducted over a relatively short span of time, and it is frequently charged by the surveyed that the surveyor has revealed problems that are not representative. Finally, since no provisions are made to implement the recommendations ordinarily, the police, who often approve of many of the recommendations, are frustrated and embittered.

This variety of research contributes little to the feeble body of police knowledge. At the best it affirms that which is often well known, particularly by the police themselves: The operation of a law enforcement agency in a state of anarchy, administratively speaking, results in a chaos. In terms of contributing to law enforcement as a profession, this is not research at all.²

Administrative Analysis and Research by Members of the Agency. There are two variations of this form of law enforcement research. In the first instance, projects are assigned from time to time to ranking officers in the agency who report the results of their labors to the chief executive.³ In the second instance, a formal planning and research unit within the agency may be established and given identity within the department.

In the first instance, although individuals often produce creditable research products, the rule is that the very informality and lack of coordination of such an arrangement results in a low grade form of research. Most professional staff and line officers are not research oriented or trained; competency as a criminal investigator or supervisor is no guarantee of competency as an administrative investigator. Finally, and this is the greatest defi-

ciency of this species of planning and research, it is undertaken *after*, and not *before* an unfavorable administrative or operational incident.

These weaknesses are offset of the formal planning and research unit which is usually characterized by these features:

The unit is goal-oriented, designed to accomplish a specific purpose; its business is planning and research, and fulltime personnel having top-level approval conduct it; it records its operations, regularly undertakes planning to correct past mistakes, and anticipates future problems; it employs standard research methodology in its operations.

The coming of the formal planning and research unit on the American municipal law enforcement scene is an outstanding evolutionary step. One may think of it as the dawn of Administrative Rationalism in the police field. It is to the credit of the police leadership that this has occurred. That many of the great municipal departments have such units must be more than coincidence.

Of course, the first responsibility of such units is to the department they serve. Thus, research activities are geared to the necessities of the sponsoring agency, and this is as it should be. However, in terms of law enforcement progress, in terms of total police effort, an unfortunate pouring of money down the rat-hole of duplicated effort is the consequence of no coordination or flow of information between these units.

Secondly, these units are not permitted, nor perhaps is it their function, to engage in basic research; their function is to render administrative prophylaxis to the agencies they serve. Finally, like the cobbler's children, these units suffer from their own ailments. We must not assume, then, that the mere presence of a planning and research unit on an organization chart is *ipso facto* evidence of enlightened administration.⁴

² One author concisely describes the methodology of this and related techniques: "Facts about an existing department are collected and analyzed, and the differentials between an existing state of affairs and modifications of a hypothetically more desirable or idealized system are projected . . . at the present state of our understanding of police administration, this relatively unscientific process appears to be about as near to measurement as can be projected." Spencer D. Parratt, "How Effective is a Police Department?" *THE ANNALS OF THE AMERICAN ACADEMY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCE*, V. 199, September, 1938, p. 161.

³ An example that illustrates the necessity for broadly qualified men to conduct research is the staff officer who was assigned, after a series of violent crimes in this city, to make a study of the crime trend-line in comparable cities over a five-year period. In the course of talking with this Captain, it became apparent that he understood the Uniform Crime Reporting System to be a collection of data pertaining to offenses committed by military personnel.

⁴ This was illustrated in an interview with a member of a planning and research unit which served a department of over 600 men. This officer complained of the difficulty in securing department-wide cooperation in the planning and research process: "The problem appears to be that the issues in professional police problems that are sufficiently critical to come to the attention of the planning and research bureau also might involve the integrity or competency of persons who are in charge of major divisions and whose sympathy and sanction must be obtained before planning and research can be undertaken. Therefore, these persons are sufficiently powerful to stop our activities by simply shelving them when they are sent up for approval, and in that way they throw a cog into the internal communications system."

What is responsible for this low state of police research? Is it possible a miasma of police-anti-eggheadism fogs our sight? Of course, there is no single cause to account for this condition. Law enforcement "knowledge-lag" is but the effect of a multiplicity of factors of which four can be identified for purposes of discussion: the lack of funds; fear of criticism from higher authority; the lack of qualified personnel; and anti-intellectualism. The fourth factor may be aptly described as the villain of the piece. Deeply ingrained in the political tradition of our country is the idea that the business of government, and by derivation, law enforcement, is best conducted by "men of affairs," who have no time for intellectual frivolity. In this mode of thought, action-over-reason is of the highest value and problems are best solved on a day-to-day basis. There is some indication that there is less of this today than in the past. Nevertheless, it is the present writer's thesis that this philosophy is the abiding barrier to police progress; all other barriers are variants.⁵

In the first place, if lack of funds were really a problem one might certainly expect more planning and research, not less, to insure that the police dollar is effectively spent. In the second case, a result of expert planning and research is the absence of criticism and interference of higher authority, not its cultivation.⁶ Thirdly, persons skilled in statistical analysis and the broader field of data processing and research methodology cannot be attracted to a field in which their talents are anathema in the system of values of the incumbent leadership.

⁵ Several examples come to mind: a chief of police who forbade anyone with any exposure to formal learning beyond high school to be recruited into his department; another who delighted in introducing himself to total strangers as a former sewer inspector with a third-grade education. An annual report of a convention of a well known police organization carries in its printed minutes a heated denunciation by a "practical man" of two developments of the day that the "scientific nuts" had created: the police radio and scientific crime detection. This reference is left anonymous. However, one of the departments that now claims the first use of the police radio was represented by this man at the meeting. The classical case is still the Indianapolis Mayor who appointed his tailor as Chief of Police because he believed that "He knows how to make good clothes, he ought to make a good chief." (National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, Report on Police, No. 14, June 26, 1931, p. 21.)

⁶ However, one Chief of Police told the writer that he was obliged to camouflage a police administrative analyst as an identification technician because several council members did not approve of this new-fangled position.

The ultimate objective of police administration must be the diminution of crime rather than its investigation. If this is not so, then the police must be prepared to remain "thief-takers" and reconcile themselves to never attaining a higher status than what can be euphemistically termed "sanitary engineers" of humanity. If the medical profession had maintained an equivalent disinterest in research, trepanning the skull to release evil spirits to cure melancholia, bloodletting, mystic incantations, all these would be today part of the physician's practice.

The police must find a way to run ahead, not behind, criminality. To do this, knowledge is required, and the only source of such knowledge is research. An observation on this, now dated by a quarter of a century, is still valid:

Concentration upon the detection of criminals and the investigation of crimes have absorbed the time of most police departments to the exclusion of any thought of crime prevention. The mouth of the river of crime has been patrolled, with varying degrees of success, while the source has been allowed to have its way. Even where some thought has been given to the source, it has been haphazard and often of such a nature as to jeopardize the dignity of the movement [of crime prevention] in its infancy.⁷

What significance has this to police administrators? There is some indication that the electorate no longer prefers "hobby public servants" in executive positions. In response to this, there is emerging a class of trained professional managers to administer the complex affairs of the democratic state, of which the safety and protection of its citizens is a major goal. In order for these administrators to function effectively, they must know a great deal about what they are doing. Lacking such knowledge, it is difficult to make sound decisions. Unsound executive decision-making in law enforcement is the stuff of which headlines are made. Law enforcement operations that fail to get into orbit are news and a reason for loss of citizen confidence in their police.

Nevertheless, police administration, even more so than the higher category of public administration, rests unsteadily on a shaky base of untested, unidentified, unproven data. One has only to scan excerpts from actual front-page stories to get a

⁷ National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, REPORT ON POLICE, No. 14, June 26, 1931, p. 115.

feeling of the intuitive administration that is present in the field.

The Use of Civilian Radio Dispatchers

Chief "A" If we use civilian dispatchers, we can use more patrolmen in the field—it is a good idea.

Chief "B" Civilians don't think like policemen so we would need an equal number of policemen to supervise them.

Integrated Fire-Police Systems

Chief "C" The idea that policemen can be firemen or fireman policemen is absurd. Policemen have enough work to do, the City Manager's real problem is to get the firemen busy.

Chief "D" The development of the public safety officer may result in a great savings for the government and greater all-round protection for the taxpayer.

One-Man Patrol Car Operation

Chief "E" There is no place in this city where one policeman in a car will result in anything but many killed and injured policemen.

Chief "F" . . . split the men up, get more coverage; our crime rate lowered in the first six months of operation of one-man cars.

Pre-Recruitment Residence Requirements

Chief "G" We should recruit hometown boys for the department; keep the money in the city; let's not attract a horde of would-be cops.

Chief "H" We are having trouble recruiting qualified men from within the city; I am asking the council to suspend the residence requirement.

The point is not, "who is wrong," but "who is right, and how do we know he is?" Uniformity of thought on these matters is neither possible nor desirable. Here is the question: are police managerial decisions to be derived from rational, objective inquiry, or are they to be a conglomerate of myth, intuition, and folk-wisdom? The paucity of unverified hypotheses has significance for the academician, also. In facing his students, he wants to discourse positively and soundly on the major issues in the field. He must never feel abashed if

he does not know the answers, but what are we to think of him if he cannot discuss the questions?

But how raise questions in a theoretical vacuum? There is not even sufficient descriptive source material worthy of the name available. We speak, for example, in apparent agreement upon the term "crime prevention" until someone begins asking questions:

Crime prevention as juvenile work or as hazard analysis?

Crime prevention as a patrol technique?

How much?

Where and how applied?

Is "door-shaking" superior to "field interrogation?"

How do we know?

How much of patrol time is necessary to produce optimum reduction of what types of crime?

What does "optimum" mean?

And so it goes. Each police issue, technique, is similarly begging verification, analysis, research. As it stands now, except for isolated bright-spots, there is very little going on in the American tongue in the way of vigorous debate in this field.

Assuming the assumptions presented so far comprise a fair picture of the situation, what can be done about it?

THE PROPOSAL

If we are to learn from the industrial, governmental, scientific, and military professions, steps should be taken by progressive police leadership to establish a Center for Police Planning and Research. The history of the development of these professions is common in that at some early stage, a roughly equivalent facility was established. However, if this can be done, many important questions must be raised and discussed.

No attempt at a blue-print for such a facility is possible at this time. A statement of a few of the basic questions is feasible. What are the obstacles in undertaking systematic police planning and research? How may they be overcome? Would an organization specifically charged with this responsibility and centrally located be feasible? What would the character of such an organization be? What are the contemporary law enforcement problems and how may be arranged on a schedule of priority for analysis? How may such an institution be financed, administered, staffed?

A common form of research institution is found in those which are associated with academic

institutions but which maintain close liaison with the field which they serve. The decision as to the actual character of the organization is dependent, in part, on the following considerations:

The actual role of the research facility, and what its contribution to the advancement of the field is to be.

Which type of knowledge is desired?

Methods and procedures employed by industrial, scientific, governmental research organizations, particularly as this information is applicable to law enforcement.

The definition of the functions of such an institution presents an entirely different set of problems. The following possibilities suggest themselves:

The Center shall isolate, identify, and submit to research and analysis the professional police problems faced by law enforcement agencies. The Center would integrate planning and research activities in the United States law enforcement agencies within the following perimeters: The distribution of information yielded by research through a periodical index and an abstract of research projects contemplated or completed by law enforcement or allied agencies that will eliminate unnecessary duplication of research.

The Center would offer consultant services to law enforcement agencies so requesting.

The Center would foster a society for police planning and research officials.

The Center would screen products of research agencies of the many academic disciplines, private industry, science, and government for applicability to law enforcement.

The Center would stimulate the development of case studies on police administration and investigation which would have research and instructional value.

CONCLUSION

Whether comprehensive, systematic, and broadly rejected research is an answer to some of the questions in the field of law enforcement, only time, experience, and research itself can tell. It is difficult to believe that any responsible police official can be content with the *status quo* of contemporary American law enforcement. The field teems with unexplored questions. The research idea has been well endorsed in many fields, but only in those in which progress is aspired to, not resisted. It is

evident that the great hope for development in the field of law enforcement lies in the acquisition of incisive and valid information relating to the pressures and forces that shape and control the police power in the democratic community.

APPENDIX "A"

The following list of planning and research projects was supplied by an Eastern police department. Part of the letter of transmittal reads:

"In our organization, planning and research is a functional responsibility of the service bureau rather than a separate organizational entity. Limited availability of funds and personnel prevents us from providing a separate staff with quarters and equipment for this exclusive purpose.

"The service bureau has the responsibility for coordinating research and planning projects with staff assistance supplied by other bureaus and with support from various units of the records section. Field employees having special skills are sometimes drafted to supply technical assistance."

Following is a list of some activities conducted in this manner:

1. Analysis of police experience and distribution of work load as a guide to reassignment of territory among patrol districts and alignment of districts and beat boundaries to coincide with boundaries of census tracts. Periodic comparisons of current experience as a guide to modifications.
2. Revision of the Manual of Rules and Regulations.
3. Determining costs of police services in specific areas affected by the expressway program, the urban development program, or under consideration for annexation.
4. Estimating future needs and preparing and presenting the annual budget.
5. Preparing analytical reports of police experience as a guide to tactical treatment.
6. Making survey of available locations for erection of new police buildings according to territory to be served and work load.
7. Serving in an advisory capacity in the design of police buildings.
8. Revising methods and forms in the Records Section.
9. Creation and publication of a General Order File.
10. Analysis and improvement in the use of semi-annual performance ratings.
11. Creation of an individual services file.

12. Control of funds, purchases, and disbursements.
13. Analysis of personnel requirements and control of overtime employment.
14. The creation and modification of city maps for the purpose of spotting police experience.
15. The creation of district and modification of city maps showing police coverage.
16. Intercommunication with other agencies to exchange information beneficial in planning and meeting current problem.
17. Securing data and drafting reports on special subjects upon request.
18. Planning for casualty care and other problems incidental to natural disasters.
19. Co-ordinating local plans with civilian defense authorities for major natural disaster or enemy attack in evacuation, protection and casualty care fields.
8. A study of line duty injuries and techniques for reducing their incidence.
9. A study of performance ratings.
10. A study of liability insurance program.
11. Academy facilities in the department.
12. A survey of benevolent police associations.
13. General departmental accounting, and intra-departmental accounting procedures.
14. Long-range budget prognostications; a 5-year projection that is revised annually, estimating projected capital outlay in terms of manpower and equipment to cope with: a transient population, industrial expansions, annexation.
15. The consumption of court-time by attendance of officers in court.
16. The issuance of orders in the department.
17. Organization studies within the department to meet changes in needs and growth.

APPENDIX "B"

The following list of planning and research activities comes from a department of roughly 600 men in size in which such activities are the responsibility of a formal planning and research unit. It will be noticed that there is considerable duplication of such activities as reflected in the items in both lists.

1. Outlining a curriculum in police science for a neighboring university.
2. Drawing up civil defense plans.
3. Organization for community disaster, riot control.
4. A computation of estimated salary savings as based on a percentage of departmental turnover.
5. A study of the department staff administration division.
6. Accident data of police equipment; accident rate per 100,000 miles.
7. The construction of promotional examinations.
18. In-service training.
19. A proposed police cadet system.
20. Existing recruitment practices and their improvement.
21. Budget analysis.
22. The annual report, and other consolidated reports.
23. Job analyses and classifications in the department.
24. The recording of personnel data on IBM.
25. Census tract studies with reference to the incidence of criminality.
26. Beat studies.
27. One-man vs. two-man patrol car operation.
28. A study of the trend and distribution of Part I offenses, plotting the incidence of them on patrol area maps.
29. A study to devise report areas and beat manuals for officers to acquaint them with the use of reporting areas.
30. Assignment of officers in the event of a bank hold-up.