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## A CRISIS IN POLICE MANAGEMENT

RICHARD A. MYREN

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In this year of 1960, police management in the United States faces a crisis. For more than forty years, a battle has been waged to make success in policing depend on brain rather than on brawn. Today, with minimum intelligence and educational standards generally established, with better educated men answering each new call for applicants, with more and more colleges and universities providing sound academic training for potential policemen, this battle seems nearly won. But already voices are being heard which describe this as a useless victory. These voices say: "Applicants for police positions who have an I.Q. above 125 should not be considered." Progress in policing will stop if these voices are heeded.

This suggestion that policing cannot utilize the best brain power that it can attract is an overwhelming admission of failure by police management. This is so because the suggestion is not false. It is true. A few departments are brilliant exceptions to these statements, but on the whole they ring true. Typical police organization in 1960 cannot or will not utilize top brain power. Young policemen who are "too intelligent" do not remain with the police force. If they do, they all too frequently get into trouble. They become frustrated sowers of seeds of discontent. These men obviously do not fit into the general pattern of police organization in 1960.

But are there not two factors here—the men and the organization? What omniscience has established that it is the men who are at fault? Should not the organization be suspect as well as the intellect of the manpower? Can a case be made that the typical organizational structure is wrong?

Typical police management of 1960 is making the development of a police "profession" impossible. This is true for at least the following reasons:

- I. Police management has failed to define a homogeneous police group.
- II. Police management has failed to adapt the

basic police organizational structure to meet modern needs.

- III. Police management has failed to create the challenge and satisfaction in police service necessary for effective utilization of the brain power now available.

Until these failures are overcome, there can be no police "profession." Each deserves additional comment.

### FAILURE TO DEFINE A HOMOGENEOUS POLICE GROUP

Basic to the concept of a profession is the definition of a core of education, training, and experience which gives all the members of the group a basic common ground. One good lawyer or doctor or teacher can step into the shoes of another anywhere in the country with a minimum of orientation. This is true in spite of the fact that some individuals in each group utilize their basic skills in a manner which makes them specialists who cannot be replaced by just any member of the profession. Such people have not only met but have gone beyond the basic minimum requirements, and it is this additional training and experience which makes them difficult to replace. But the specialist can take over the duties of any basic member of the profession, despite the fact that the reverse is not true.

In American policing there is no basic core of education, training, and experience. The term policeman has no such definite meaning. Pick a number of persons at random from the police occupational group, and the only common factor will be that they have all taken the peace officer oath. One might be a janitor, another, an automotive or radio mechanic, a third, a receptionist, a fourth, a chauffeur, a fifth, a typist or file clerk, a sixth, an investigator of fact, a seventh, a bookkeeper, the eighth, a personnel psychologist, the ninth, a laboratory technician or scientist, and the tenth, an

executive who administers a multi-million dollar budget. This is a listing of jobs which happen to be paid from the same budget, not the description of a profession. Somewhere, sometime, some authoritative group of men who are clearly policemen must establish the characteristics which distinguish a policeman from a police employee. From observation of other professions it would appear that this definition should be in terms of specialized education prior to service and specific activity while in service. Those without this specialized training should not be allowed to perform the activities decided to be police activities. Similarly, those chosen to be policemen should perform no non-police tasks. To allow them to do so would be a waste of their specialized knowledge.

One of the shibboleths of police literature is the assumption that there will someday be a police profession which embraces all of the people performing the many diversified duties now found in police departments. Every profession has need for the services of non-professional employees. Medicine uses receptionists, office managers, clerical personnel of all types, janitors, ex-ray and other laboratory technicians, bookkeepers, dieticians, cooks, dish washers, public relations men, nurses, physical therapists, accountants, teachers, and even lawyers to mention just a few. But there is certainly no attempt to classify these persons as medical doctors—members of the medical profession. The same is true of the law and teaching professions. All utilize the services of non-professional employees in addition to members of the profession. Note, too, that members of other professions may be utilized as well as non-professional employees.

Policing should and must be regarded in the same light if a police profession is ever to be identified and developed. A police agency should be staffed by a career group—a police civil service, so to speak. Central to this career group would be the policemen. These men and women should have a similar professional education and should perform similar tasks—police tasks. They will direct the agency and carry out its principal line operations. But there should be no hesitation in using non-police employees and the members of other professions to perform non-police functions for the police core group. These persons, however, should not be given the peace officer's oath and called policemen. They should be recognized as non-professional police employees. Their hire should be

arranged on the same basis as it is for similar employees in other facets of government, in business, in industry, and in the professions. When the services of a member of another profession are needed, they should be contracted for as such. There is no need for a police surgeon or a police lawyer to take the peace officer oath and become a policeman. Let him be made available to serve policemen as a surgeon or a lawyer.

Recognition of these principles and definition of a homogeneous police career group would have far reaching effects. One of the immediate and important changes to occur would be in compensation and other conditions of employment. Policemen today are paid as such, whether they actually perform police duties or not. This means that the professional is lumped with the janitor and receptionist for compensation purposes. The result is a compromise level of compensation which underpays some and overpays others. Unfortunately, this leveling results in many being underpaid and relatively few overpaid. Identification of the truly police group would result in policemen being paid as policemen, janitors and other employees who work for police agencies being paid as they would be in the same job in any other context, and the surgeon and other members of well established professions also being compensated as such. Specification of educational requirements of a professional nature for policemen, those who perform exclusively the newly defined "police" tasks, would certainly result in a higher level of compensation than the compromise currently in use. There is no doubt in the mind of the author that this step would also assist materially in the solution of the two additional problems discussed below in this article.

#### FAILURE TO ADAPT BASIC POLICE ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE TO MODERN NEEDS

There has been tremendous progress in policing in this century. The police organizational structure has been refined so that it has given and does give better service, but it has never been thoroughly overhauled. Typical 1960 police organization is geared still to the days of non-professional police personnel. If progress is to be continued, a genuine organizational breakthrough is needed.

Policing can now attract the best brainpower in the nation on a regular rather than an accidental basis. This brainpower is apparently incompatible

with much current organizational structure. This has led to the suggestion of some administrators that policing should reject the best brainpower and utilize only mediocre talent. Present organizational structures and operating techniques have resulted from a need to utilize talent, which, on the whole, is mediocre at best. Does it not make better sense to modify the organizational structure and operating procedure than to turn away the top brainpower now available? A few possible modifications are discussed in the following paragraphs.

One of the basic assumptions that police administration might profitably re-examine is the assumption that police organization must be quasi-military in nature. If a police profession is to develop, similarly educated individuals must become available who will perform essentially similar tasks. Unrelated tasks should be performed by police employees and members of other professions recruited for service in the police agency, none of whom will be policemen. Intelligent and well educated members of the police profession performing the police function for which they have been trained will require much less supervision than is currently needed. This lack of detailed supervision, this change from relatively uneducated men performing simple tasks under close supervision to well educated men carrying out complicated police tasks as individual experts relying on their own independent judgment, would obviate the need for a military type organization. The only organizational hierarchy needed would be administrative. Line supervision would be minimized. In its place would develop a profession policing specialist analagous to the pathologist of the medical profession. Such an organization would not only draw but keep top brainpower.

Another basic principle of municipal police organization which should be challenged by some administrator somewhere is the concept of routine patrol. The very method of the assignment of personnel to this activity in itself merits such challenge. After a patrol unit commander is told how many men he will have on the average for service, he calculates the number needed for inspectional duty and to answer calls and then assigns the remainder to routine patrol. His theory is that the mere presence of these men on the street prevents some unmeasured and unmeasurable but yet appreciable amount of crime. With manpower becoming ever more expensive, can we afford this undocumented assumption? Who can say that this

manpower directed to the investigation of specific unsolved offenses with unending relentlessness would not lead to more solutions of crime and, eventually, to greater deterrence through the establishment of a community reputation for swift and sure punishment of wrongdoing? At the same time much of the deadly routine which frustrates educated talent would be eliminated.

Another aspect of this problem is the question of whether municipalities can afford to continue the inspectional services now taking such an appreciable percentage of police manpower. Research should be undertaken to discover whether the average business man in downtown Metropolis pays enough tax to merit the employment of a policeman to shake the door of his store several times a night. If he does not, this manpower could certainly be put to better use. If business does merit special police protection, it should probably consist of more than an occasional shake of the door. There is considerable room for doubt as to the effectiveness of this "protection". Statistics would probably show that very few breakings and enterings on a percentage basis are being discovered by the police while in progress. Indeed, they would probably show that the percentage discovered before the owner opens his place of business the following morning is even very low. If business taxes do pay for special police protection, cities would seem to have a duty to make it complete with modern electronic devices, devices which are "at the door" at all times. This would be expensive, but so is manpower—even average present day police manpower.

Then there is the problem of traffic regulation and control. Violations of traffic laws are, for the most part, distinctly different from burglary, murder, rape, and robbery. Probably the most important difference is that the people involved do not go to jail. They pay money. In addition, they are not a small aberrant number in our society. They are most of us—neighbors one and all. When caught, most of us know in our own hearts that we did commit the violation charged, even if we are reluctant to admit it. We also know that we have committed similar violations many times without getting caught and that our friends have likewise. But this guilty knowledge does not cause us concern. We know that there is little stigma attached to conviction. In this situation, any feeling of remorse that we might have had for having committed the violation is replaced with a feeling

of chagrin that we were caught. And it also leads to resentment against the officer who caught us rather than some other person.

Since experience has taught us that being caught will probably cost us a fixed sum of money, all too many will attempt to settle the matter with the officer for money, either in the amount which we would have to pay anyway after considerable inconvenience or for some lesser amount. Most policemen will not cooperate, but there are always a few who will. The entire situation is a source of corruption which did not exist prior to the traffic regulation problem. Even if attempted bribery does not enter into the picture, the motorist is a little angry at having to pay a fine for what he does not consider a serious anti-social act. All too frequently, the result is a lasting hostility toward policemen. When an investigator comes by two weeks later looking for information about a burglary, or a robbery, or a rape, or a murder, Mr. Citizen is not disposed to wrack his brain for the non-routine occurrence, that out-of-the-ordinary happening which he saw that night, which might lead to solution of the case. Traffic regulation and control is not necessarily "police" work. Some mayor or city manager somewhere would be conducting a most worthwhile experiment if he were to establish a separate city agency to handle this problem.

Another problem is that of physical standard for recruitment. In the days when brawn counted, rigid physical standards made sense. A policeman relying on brawn for success who had no brawn was in a bad way. But if brain is now more important, should not physical standards be less so? Certain minor physical defects particularly seem to be frequently associated with well trained brains—slightly impaired eyesight, for example. But how many police agencies will accept a man who wears glasses? Recent improvements in contact lenses should make persons who wear them acceptable for police work. Even if brawn were still the primary qualification, paratroopers and others in similarly rugged physical occupations perform well with contact lenses. Since the emphasis is now on brain it would seem that contact lenses should be acceptable for police officers. Several city departments have made this move, but others generally have not. Which federal investigative agency will be the first to modify its physical standard to make college trained applicants who wear contact lenses acceptable?

These examples are but a few of the obvious evidences of the failure of police management to adopt the basic police organizational structure to modern needs. A relationship between these problems and failure to define a homogeneous police group seems clear. A similar relationship can be established to failure to create the challenge and satisfaction in police service necessary for effective utilization of the brainpower now available.

#### FAILURE TO CREATE CHALLENGE NECESSARY FOR EFFECTIVE UTILIZATION OF AVAILABLE BRAIN POWER

A survey released in January of 1959 by Professor O. W. Wilson, Dean of the School of Criminology of the University of California at Berkeley, shows that colleges and universities in the United States have granted 1504 bachelor's degrees in law enforcement in the last eight academic years. During this same period, 44 master's degrees have been awarded. The yearly totals have increased steadily from 104 bachelor's degrees and three master's degrees in 1950-51 to 258 bachelor's degrees and 17 master's in 1957-58. This brain power has been made available to police administrators. There is more to come.

But how many of these 1504 persons with one or more academic degrees in law enforcement are policemen today? No study has been made to give the answer to this question, but personal experience of the author indicates that the percentage who have left law enforcement is probably appreciable if not large. And support could probably also be mustered for the assertion that, of those who have remained in policing, many are dissatisfied because their special talents have not been well utilized.

If police organization must be patterned after the military, it would seem that policing would also adopt the military policy of direct commissioning of qualified persons to command and supervisory positions. But this has not been done. A graduate from an academic college law enforcement educational program starts out shaking doors right alongside high school graduates. It is true that the college man has a natural competitive advantage in the race to the top, but many departments will not let him even start running until he has been on the force for from three to five years. Experience is a great teacher, but a given type of experience can only teach so much. Shaking a door is an art mastered in much less than three

or five years. Much of the routine activity of a patrolman on a municipal police force is no more complicated and no more interesting than shaking doors. Is it not small wonder that college trained men leave for greener fields? Or that they get into trouble from sheer boredom if they do stay?

This is no plea to make fresh college graduates chiefs of police. College cannot make policemen—but it can turn out police candidates who have the potential to fill intermediate supervisory and command positions in policing with relatively short indoctrination and orientation periods, certainly much shorter than is the rule today. College education should not replace experience as a criterion for advancement, but it might be made equal to some number of years of experience so that the graduate could at least start the race for promotion within a reasonable time after graduation. Nor should policing abandon promotion based on innate intelligence matured by experience despite lack of formal education. Sheer necessity would require that this route be left open for the foreseeable future, not to mention its obvious merit. Our colleges and universities cannot begin to fill the need with present resources.

Another requirement of typical police organization today which limits utilization of professionally trained personnel is that of residence. Regardless of how much better qualified he might be than any other applicant, many police administrators cannot consider a college man because he is not a resident of the community or has not been for some specified period of years. This resident requirement is a hangover from the depression era when police and all other governmental positions were looked on as a form of relief for the needy. With government having become big business as it has today, this is too expensive a practice to continue. Tax money must get the greatest possible

return on the dollar. This means the best qualified persons must fill police as well as other governmental positions, regardless of the accident of their place of birth.

When the college trained policeman does take his place on the force, he finds that he may be doing any one of a number of tasks only remotely connected with true policing. If he is not, certainly others who are also called policemen will be. Many of these tasks are menial in nature. This makes it impossible to develop pride in being a policeman. It also limits job satisfaction. Chances are that his specialized education is utilized only rarely. He finds that he can handle the assignments given to him with very little effort, and that he could have done just as well prior to going to college. He finds no challenge, low compensation, and poor chance for advancement in police work. Small wonder that he strays, either from his assigned duties or to a completely different utilization of his college investment.

#### CONCLUSION

Police management today faces a crisis. An ever increasing supply of brainpower is available but—“Applicants for police positions who have an I.Q. above 125 should not be considered.” This is true in many American police organizations. Fortunately, there are exceptions. There are police agencies which have made the changes in organization necessary to utilize effectively the best brainpower available, and which have begun to identify those duties which are true police tasks. The relatively small number of persons being trained for policing on an academic basis by our colleges and universities are going largely to these agencies. Is your department one of these? If not, what are you doing about the crisis you face?