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STATE STANDARDS FOR LOCAL POLICE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING

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What qualifications, knowledges, and skills would you like the policeman who protects the area where your family lives to have? Would you like him to be of good moral character and free of serious criminal record? Would you like him to be free from temperamental or mental defects which might affect his performance of duty? Would you like him to be able to protect the lives and property of you and your neighbors in a way that will not infringe upon the civil rights of others? Would you like him to perform his protective duties with an understanding built upon adequate knowledge of human nature and sociological concepts? Would you like him to be able to adopt the proper approach with a manic depressive to prevent his suicide from a building top? Would you like him to be able to control and disperse an unruly group of juveniles without extreme use of force and without causing them to have a life-time police record? Would you like him to be able to recognize, arrest, and obtain a conviction on a sex pervert who had molested your neighbor's child? Would you like him to be able to investigate a traffic accident, preserving evidence for your possible later use in civil litigation?

Can the police officer who is protecting your home and family right now, meet these requirements, which represent only a small part of the qualifications needed by a modern professional police officer? Unfortunately, if you live in many areas of our country, the answer to this question is *no*.

Although standards in American police recruitment and training have improved considerably in the past 100 years, and especially during the last decade, progress has not been uniform and much still needs to be done to raise standards in every one of the fifty States of the Union.

Until very recently, the practice in every state has been to follow a philosophy of local autonomy or "home rule" and to rely on each county, city, village, or township to establish its own rules for recruitment; and to provide, or more often not to provide, training for its police officers. One should not be surprised to discover that this philosophy has resulted in progress that has been "spotty" rather than uniform throughout the nation, *or even throughout any one state*.

During the past few years, there has been developing a realization on the part of many persons, including police officials and legislators, that this *laissez-faire* attitude is working to the detriment of not only the emerging police profession but also the citizens themselves. It is becoming increasingly obvious that higher standards must be developed and means found to encourage local police agencies to adopt these standards.

Since the United States is a republic of sovereign states, it is logical that standards should be developed and adopted at the state rather than the national level of government. This is what is beginning to occur; but, as could have been anticipated, no uniform pattern has developed. It is obvious, however, that standards of training are receiving more attention than are standards of selection or recruitment.

One of the first and most easily accomplished acts in setting training standards is the establishment of *central or regional schools* to which police officers throughout a state can be sent for recruit or refresher training. Among the states which appear as of now to have progressed this far and no farther are: Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, and Utah. Often this centralized training is provided by, or in cooperation with, a state college or university. Tuition for officers is provided by some states, but in most all

states the local police agency must bear the cost of the officer's salary while he is attending school.

Oklahoma has adopted a rather unusual method of raising money for police training. Unclaimed property coming into possession of sheriffs may be sold after one year and the monies collected deposited in the Sheriff's Training Fund to be used to help reimburse law enforcement officers for actual expenses of travel, subsistence, and fees at the Southwestern Center for Law Enforcement Education, located at the University of Oklahoma.

In states having centralized training schools, local police administrators are free to choose whether or not they will send their officers for training. In practice, *many do not*.

In 1959, the Legislature of the State of New York took a long step forward by the creation of a Municipal Police Training Council, with authority to establish minimum training standards to be required of all police recruits prior to completion of their probationary period of employment. The council was given authority to recommend to the Governor rules and regulations with respect to the approval or revocation of police training schools based on minimum courses of study, attendance requirements, equipment and facilities, and minimum qualifications for instructors.

Today no police recruit in the State of New York may achieve permanent status without first successfully passing an authorized minimum course of study in a school approved by the council. Although the present number of required course hours is low, the legislature has stated that it is their intention that all municipalities should be encouraged to maintain standards of police training which are higher than the standards recommended by the council and adopted by the Governor.

The reasoning of the New York Legislature which resulted in this *mandated training* can probably best be presented by quoting from the introductory sections of the Act itself.

"The legislature hereby finds and declares that:

- (a) The state, from among its sovereign powers, has *delegated* police authority to local government units;
- (b) The primary responsibility for the day-to-day enforcement of the law throughout the state rests upon local police forces;
- (c) Effective law enforcement today involves a

knowledge of the highly specialized techniques of crime prevention and crime detection and of the principles of modern police science;

- (d) Law enforcement officers throughout the state are actively promoting police training and have developed a structure of police training programs which is being constantly improved and expanded by local effort;
- (e) Law enforcement officers would be aided in their efforts to promote police training, and the utilization of the present structure of police training programs, if the state required basic training as a condition of permanent appointment to a local police force; and
- (f) The state has a responsibility to help insure effective law enforcement by establishing minimum basic training requirements for local police, and also by encouraging advanced in-service training programs."

It must be observed that as progressive as the New York Act is, it does not mention standards of recruitment.

1959 was a memorable year for police standards. In this same year, across the continent from New York, the California Legislature established a Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training.

But state-sponsored police training programs for local police officers is by no means new in California. California has had some form of state-sponsored police training program for its local police officers for over 25 years. A program supervised by the Bureau of Industrial Education, State Department of Education, has functioned for more than 25 years to provide instruction and training to police officers of California.

College-level programs consisting of regularly scheduled degree courses of instruction and specialized institutes have been greatly accelerated during the past few years. Police science and administration courses are now offered at two Universities, five State Colleges, and thirty-three Junior Colleges in California.

It was in 1959, however, that the California Legislature took its most recent step to improve and expand the statewide program. In that year it established the Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training. In one way the California Act does not go as far as does the New York Act; it does not make mandatory the minimum training

of police recruits, but rather encourages their training through subvention or grants-in-aid. In other ways, however, the California Act goes considerably further than does the New York Act. Under the California Act, local jurisdictions are, for the first time in any state, partially compensated for their police training costs. Also, this act establishes, for the first time in any state, *minimum recruit or selection standards*. It should be observed, however, that local autonomy is preserved; that minimum recruit standards, like minimum training standards, are not mandatory but are rather encouraged through grants-in-aid. Money with which to provide grants-in-aid is obtained by a five per cent penalty assessed on all non-traffic fines. This money is used to reimburse cities and counties for one half of their police training costs, including salaries, providing they meet minimum selection standards and providing, also, that the training curriculum and facilities are approved by the commission.

A further interesting development, which may materially affect the growing professionalization of the police service, is the California Commission's current interest in the possibility of certificates in addition to the basic police certificate awarded for completion of an approved recruit training course. Under consideration are an Intermediate and an Advanced Certificate, each of which would be based on some combination of education and experience. The uses to which local departments could put these certificates are stimulating to contemplate. An intermediate certificate, for instance, might be made a prerequisite to taking an examination for sergeant or lieutenant, and an advanced certificate, a prerequisite to an examination for captain or chief.

Today in California 12 million persons in 187 jurisdictions are served by police and sheriff's departments meeting the Commission's standards, while 3 million persons in 242 jurisdictions are still served by police and sheriff's departments which maintain standards lower than those established by the commission.

The California technique for establishing statewide standards is heavily structured and financed, yet allows voluntary participation by the individual law enforcement agency. The New York technique provides no financial and but little other assistance to local police agencies, but forces or mandates compliance with minimum

training standards. It will be very interesting to observe which of these two techniques will prove the more successful.

So far, in two states where interested groups are working for state standards, Michigan and Texas, the California technique is being advocated, while in New Jersey a modification of the New York plan has been proposed. Among other states considering state standards of recruitment and training at this time are: Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maine, Massachusetts, and Nevada.

But as satisfactory as the progress in some of these states may seem, *none of them*, including California and New York, have done more than help lay the groundwork for the progress that must be made in the years that lie ahead.

Home rule is a concept dear to the hearts of American citizens—but not so dear as to encourage us to leave the selection and training of our school teachers, physicians, dentists, nurses, lawyers, veterinarians, barbers, beauticians, private detectives, and a host of other professions and occupations, to the separate determination of each county board and city council.

It is a strange kind of reasoning indeed that requires minimum competency on the part of those who would cut our hair, beautify our faces, or prepare our bodies for burial, but denies a similar level of competency to those who are to be charged with the protection of our lives, liberty, and property.

In the traditional professions such as medicine, law, and teaching, there is a recognized body of information which the candidate must master before he will be allowed to practice. Next, the candidate must be issued a license or certificate based on standards of competency. Only after he has been certified as being competent is he free to accept employment or establish a practice anywhere in the state.

The police service is rapidly approaching professional status. Increasing urbanization, sociological conflicts, and ever increasing crime and delinquency rates demand police officers with knowledges and skills possessed by professional people in many categories of learning. Policemen are not creating this new profession; it is being thrust upon them and, unfortunately, they are not yet prepared to meet its challenge.

Police departments seldom employ policemen as such. They employ the best available men and then try to make policemen of them. We are in a

growing profession without a reservoir of professional people from whose ranks we can recruit. *This is a burden borne by no other professional discipline.* The legal department in a governmental jurisdiction is not required to recruit from the ranks of truck drivers, mechanics, salesmen, clerks, and other honorable but nonprofessional ranks, for its lawyers. The head of the engineering department is not required to recruit from among unskilled persons with no prior engineering training or knowledge. The school board does not recruit unskilled persons as teachers and then attempt to train them on the job. Why then should police administrators be required to draw upon untrained and unprepared persons and attempt to mold them into professional law enforcement officers?

In the traditional professions, educational in-

stitutions train prospective recruits to an approved scientific, technical, and professional competence. Applicants are then examined as to their competency by an agency of the state government and, if their competency is sufficiently high, it is attested or certified to by the state agency and a certificate or license granted. This certificate or license is a public declaration of the applicant's ability and preparation to render professional service. Its purpose is the safety and welfare of the public they are to serve.

We must awaken to the needs of a new era of policing. It must be realized that the state standards for local police recruitment and training towards which we are making such slow and painful progress today are but stepping stones to state examining and licensing requirements of tomorrow.