

Summer 1964

## The Police Service--A Key to Community Quality

W. H. Parker

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.law.northwestern.edu/jclc>

 Part of the [Criminal Law Commons](#), [Criminology Commons](#), and the [Criminology and Criminal Justice Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

W. H. Parker, The Police Service--A Key to Community Quality, 55 J. Crim. L. Criminology & Police Sci. 273 (1964)

This Criminology is brought to you for free and open access by Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology by an authorized editor of Northwestern University School of Law Scholarly Commons.

# POLICE SCIENCE

---

## THE POLICE SERVICE—A KEY TO COMMUNITY QUALITY

W. H. PARKER

W. H. Parker has served as Chief of Police, Los Angeles, California, since 1950, and during this period of time has made a nation wide reputation as one of our progressive police administrators. We are again pleased to be able to present a paper of Chief Parker, this one based upon an address delivered at the 44th Annual Meeting of the Illinois State Chamber of Commerce at Chicago on October 4, 1962.—EDITOR.

After thirty-five years of service as a municipal police officer, with twelve of those years spent as Chief of Police of the nation's third largest city, the writer has developed some definitive views concerning law enforcement. Reluctantly he has been forced to the conclusion that the treatment afforded the police by the American people is unduly hypercritical based upon reactions that are primarily subjective. These attitudes spring from emotional responses that endanger the security of the community, state and nation. The purpose of this statement is not to defend or excuse the criminal or other improper actions of police officers but to fix the basic responsibility for the weaknesses in community law enforcement.

There must be some underlying reason for the inability of the police service to attract qualified young men in sufficient numbers. Many local police forces engage in nation-wide recruiting, but the dearth of a sufficient number of police recruits continues to plague the police administrator. In this day of emphasis upon educational opportunities a high school diploma is not an unreasonable requirement as a condition of employment in the police service. Good physical health is certainly a necessity, and good moral character is indispensable. The Los Angeles Police Department requires the approval of a competent psychiatrist for it is a serious mistake to give a badge and a gun to an individual without balance in mind and temperament. Furthermore, only ten percent of the candidates examined by the psychiatrist are found unqualified.

The pay and perquisites offered are equivalent to those afforded in other occupations no less demanding in qualifications than the police service. What then are the depressing factors that stamp

the police job as undesirable? Some of the handicaps are physical hazards, unusual hours of duty, lack of promise of great financial reward, and limited advancement. The greatest single deterrent to police recruiting, however, is one of status resulting from public attitude toward the police. To those engaged in law enforcement this general lack of public appreciation is without justification and tends to separate the police into an introspective group with a deep sense of frustration.

The genesis of this problem, its vital effect upon society and remedial measures constitute the thesis of this paper.

To fully appreciate public attitudes toward the police we must revert in history to the extraction of the Magna Charta from King John of England on the plains of Runnymede in the year 1215 A.D. This decisive action by the English people resulted from monarchical oppression which created a deep-rooted and lasting fear of governmental power and authority. These fears were further strengthened by the events which led to the American Revolution and are inscribed in the Declaration of Independence. While the success of the Revolution destroyed the influence of kings over the affairs of our people, the haunting fear of governmental oppression and tyranny is deeply ingrained in each succeeding generation.

In reality, government is an abstract thing except for contact with its human representatives. The person who serves as the visible symbol of the disciplinary capacity of government is the police officer. His badge and uniform tend to transform him from another human being into an austere agent of authority. The lethal weapon visibly affixed to his person gives to him the appearance of an oppressor, and the conjured relationship of

persecutor and martyr is easily and frequently developed.

The fallacy of this situation is our failure to fully comprehend the true role of government under our constitutional system with its balance of power and effective limitations of executive authority. In view of our representative form of government casting the police officer in the role of an agent of tyranny is an unjustified propaganda piece frequently used to counteract effective law enforcement. Oppressive police establishments are not created by democratic governments. They are the fashioned tools of tyrants and dictators organized after attaining power and designed to ensure retention of power.

In contra-distinction to the inevitable concentration of police authority under despotic control, there is no national police force in the United States. The policing of our nation is in the hands of local police forces that depend for their financial support upon, and are generally controlled by, locally elected municipal officials. The contention that this type of fractured and diffused law enforcement imposes an imminent threat of enveloping tyranny is patently absurd. Domination of the local police by a venal political machine to which the local electorate has relinquished control can be devastating to any community. Abdication of the responsibilities of citizenship is the antithesis of the democratic process and constitutes submission to, rather than the imposition of, dictatorial authority. Where communities have permitted these conditions to exist criticism of the police, as justified as it may be, is merely an attack upon the symptom rather than the disease. The remedy will come only with the uprooting of the corrupt political machine.

Another important historical experience that helped to mold the lack of public respect for the police service was our legislative experiment in prohibiting the manufacture, sale, or transportation of intoxicating liquors. By virtue of the Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution we mandated the government to enforce the prohibition and then proceeded publicly to flaunt the law throughout the land. The police were swept into the vortex of this demoralizing conflict. On one hand they had sworn to enforce the law but were not infrequently punished for doing so. Bribery was encouraged and countenanced. Lack of adequate prosecution following arrests created an atmosphere of futility. Many of

our so-called law-abiding citizens insisted on the police winking at liquor law infractions and despised them for doing so.

During this shameful era any existing respect for our police was largely destroyed. This lack of respect has been passed along like a family heirloom as has the fear of governmental oppression expressed in the Magna Charta.

A further complication has been added in the form of a world-wide revolt against constituted authority; a rebellion that has continued to expand since the cessation of hostilities in World War II. To this factor must be attributed the current chaotic conditions throughout the world. Conditions that are almost unbelievable considering that but seventeen years have passed since we participated in the greatest of all military victories dedicated to the establishment of world-wide peace, tranquillity, and brotherhood. In this growing world-wide disorder, again it is the police who constitute the living symbol of authority, and thus it is they who become the targets of rebellious assaults.

There are two perilous and inherent dangers in the continuation of this unsatisfactory relationship between the police and the community. One involves the deterioration of our internal security and the other affects our national survival.

We are living in an era where there is unprecedented emphasis upon so-called "civil rights". This phrase is often used in unbalanced connotation that actually pits individual physical expression against the very social order that constitutes the fountainhead of all personal liberties. Altogether too frequently this emphasis finds expression in the protection of guilty criminals from the appropriate administration of criminal justice. If the total effect of tilting the scales of justice in favor of the transgressor was limited to the freeing of the guilty criminal the result would be less disastrous. The real tragedy lies in the growing menace to the security of the law-abiding segments of the population as the criminal predator remains at large and contributes to the rise in criminal incidence.

In commenting upon this imbalance J. Edgar Hoover, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, recently stated, "We in America emphasize the great value of liberty and the importance of sympathy for the accused. The law-abiding citizen is entitled to more consideration on the part of our courts. The basic purpose of the criminal law is to protect society, not the criminal. As an eminent Justice of the United States Supreme

Court observed, "The necessity of public protection against crime is being submerged by an overflow of sentimentality." "

Some of the most treasured words contained in the Declaration of Independence are, "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are *life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.*"

Later, in the Preamble to the Constitution of the United States, our founding fathers said, "... insure domestic tranquillity, provide for the *common* defense, promote the *general* welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity. . . ."

It is indisputable that it was the intention of the creators of these great documents that government possess the solemn responsibility of providing for the defense and general welfare of all of the people; of securing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for every one of us, not just those of us who may be accused of crime. Yet, an examination of the recent decisions of our courts and the products of our legislative mills in the field of the criminal law compels the conclusion that the energies expended in the judicial and legislative fields are creating evergrowing protection for our parasitic and predatory elements.

It is consequently left to the police to give life and meaning to "fulfillment of the promise" regarding the enjoyment of "civil rights" by the law-abiding members of the community. Viewed in this perspective the existence and performance of the police becomes a vital concern to each of us.

The loss of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness is final and conclusive to the dead victim of the assassin's bludgeon. There is no opportunity provided in which to seek remedy through judicial decree or legislative fiat. All that remains is the mourning of the surviving friends and relatives and the legal gymnastics practiced by the killer as he seeks to avoid the consequences of his act. The phrase "Let the dead Past bury its dead" assumes reality as the criminal's victim is soon forgotten, and the misdirected sympathies of the confused sentimentalists are heaped upon the executioner.

It is upon the police officer through his omnipresence in the community that you must rely for the immediate and effective protection of your constitutional guarantees. The degree of that protection will depend upon his ability to repress the

criminal. Therefore, his efficiency and effectiveness should be one of your most serious concerns.

The growing trends in criminal successes and criminal participation is cause for alarm. The war between society and its criminal elements is registering continued success for the forces of evil. The results are reflected in the report entitled *Crime in the United States*, issued by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and embracing the statistics for the year 1961. The report summarizes an increase in crime.

The average American has become as inured to the incidence of crime as he has to the death toll on our streets and highways. He has begun to accept each as the essential hazards of a progressive society.

It is always the other fellow involved in these calamities so why be concerned. In this respect we emulate the psalmist when he said, "A thousand shall fall beside thee and ten thousand at thy right hand: but it shall not come nigh thee."

Yet it is this very attitude that has caused the decline and fall of previous civilizations. It has been aptly stated that the past is prologue, and that history enables us to interpret the present and predict the future. Therefore, intelligent expression must be based upon a scrutiny of history. What does such a search reveal in relation to the lawlessness now prevalent in the United States? Our historical research has been conducted for us by contemporary Oxford historian Charles Reith who has compiled his findings in a book appropriately entitled *The Blind Eye of History*. Within its pages he attempts to trace the police function in all of the great nations and civilizations of the past. In addition to identifying the police function, he has assessed its influence upon the ultimate disposition of each social order. It is his confirmed conclusion that every governmental organization in history that failed to enforce its rules collapsed, and that disobedience to law constituted a prime factor in its destruction. Thus, the continued and growing disobedience to law in the United States imperils the very life of this bastion of freedom.

In this unwelcome contest with the Soviet power we cannot afford the luxury of any imperiling weaknesses if we are to prevent domination of the world by these enslaving forces. President Kennedy emphasized this phase of the international threat to our freedom when he said, "If we are to prevail in the cold war the self-discipline of the free mind must match the iron discipline of the mailed fist."

It is doubtful if many Americans comprehended the full import of this statement despite its stern and accurate prophesy.

It is generally recognized that the Soviet bloc constitutes our enemy. We also recognize that the totalitarian rule represented by this entente maintains discipline by means of ruthless force or fear. While this type of discipline is repugnant to free men, it is possessed of demonstrated effectiveness. The continuing spread of the iron and bamboo curtains gives mute evidence of this. Technological development, under communist direction, of potential weapons of devastating destruction impresses upon us the seriousness of the threat cultured under the iron discipline of the mailed fist.

If we are to match the Russian level of discipline, how is it to be accomplished? We are a self-governing society. Ours is a government of the people, by the people, and for the people. We do not countenance despotic rule. We promulgate our own regulations through our elected representatives in the local, state, and national legislative bodies. Our elections are not rigged affairs with a single place for a yes or no vote. Our elections are competitive, and the decisions are made by the majority of those who *choose* to vote.

As a self-governing people we are presumed to possess the ability to control our individual behavior in conformity with the regulations we have promulgated to ensure the security and welfare of our society. These regulations are known as laws, and we all realize it is our solemn obligation to obey these laws: but do we? To the extent we ignore this obligation, we provide a gap between the self-discipline required for our survival and the actual level of our behavior.

A shallow and unrealistic reaction to the disturbing increase in criminal incidence would be to criticize the police for failing to stem the tide. The plain, unadulterated facts are that the police, individually and collectively, are working more diligently and more intelligently than ever before in their history. The police are fighting a losing battle by reason of the progressive dilution of authority and a social crime product in excess of their repressive ability. Two factors are present in this situation that we cannot afford to ignore. Under present conditions we have no right to expect any increase in the competency or caliber of the police recruits of the future; and, local governments have consistently demonstrated an un-

willingness to assume any substantial increase in policing costs.

The ultimate solution to the criminal erosion of our social order does not lie in larger police establishments but in a substantial reduction in the incidence of crime. This cannot be accomplished, however, in the face of progressive dilution of police authority; continued organized assaults upon the symbols of authority; progressive diminution of respect for authority; and an appalling lack of demonstrated organized support of effective, efficient and professional law enforcement.

It appears that society is guilty of a fraud upon itself. Actually, the people do not want all of the laws enforced, but only selectively and sufficiently to maintain a "reasonable" balance. Furthermore, in severely limiting the powers of the police it is anticipated that the police will ignore these legal limitations when the immediate public welfare appears to demand police lawlessness.

This pragmatic approach to this vital social problem has reaped a bumper crop of crime. This "tongue in cheek" attitude toward criminal depravities has fertilized the criminal field until its nourished deprecations threaten to make a mockery of the word "security" and destroy any reasonable protection against criminal attack. We must stop playing this form of "russian roulette" and face up to the problem with serious objectivity and resolution.

The international tensions of our time, which have intensified despite the war to end all wars, serve to disrupt the placidity of human existence and to develop neurotic behavior. In searching for the key to world peace it has been proposed that we espouse a world-wide rule of law under which man can live in peace and harmony with his brother. There is great merit in this premise. The lack of a competent court in which to settle the many Cuban violations of American rights illustrates the need for an international tribunal to provide peaceful settlement of conflicts between nations if wars are to be avoided.

Would it not seem more appropriate, however, that we demonstrate the internal ability to conform to our own laws before we can hope to be effective in convincing other nations of the necessity for world-wide law obedience? Our international enemies constantly call attention to our publicized lawlessness in belittling Western culture. In East Germany one of the propaganda slogans used to ridicule us reads, "The West are gangsters

and racketeers". The propaganda material used to support this charge need not be invented. Our films, press stories, periodicals, and published crime statistics give substance to the lie. These factors bear great weight among the undecided of the world as we attempt to attract them to our way of life.

Jenkin Lloyd Jones, editor of the *Tulsa Tribune*, on October 16, 1961 in an address to the members of the Inland Press Association at their Chicago meeting entitled "Who is Tampering with the Soul of America? The Stomach-Turning Point," vividly underscored the moral decay and lack of discipline in American society. In so doing he pointed out the growing crime trend and the lack of public concern or willingness to explain it away. He concluded his stirring talk by challenging the press to arouse the people to what is happening and to set a course that would lead to a moral regeneration.

If there is to be a renaissance of morality and personal ethics, how is it to come about and where will it begin? In these days of centralization of power, we are inclined to look to the Nation's capital for the answers to all problems. This is a basic error that demands correction. The real strength of America lies in its individual communities, and it is at this level that the battle of survival will be won or lost. The health and strength of the Nation is nothing more or less than the collective health and strength of its villages, towns, and cities. As mechanization and improved agricultural techniques drive more and more people into the cities, the urban centers assume greater significance in shaping the behavior patterns of the entire United States. The growth in population complicates the urban problem. The population of this country has doubled in one generation, and this phenomenal population explosion will repeat itself in the life of the generation to follow. Behavioral trends are commanding more and more serious attention in assessing the Nation's future.

Early this year my attention was attracted to a group of scholars who are conducting a study of the American character at the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions located on a mountain top near Santa Barbara, California. The Center is under the direction of Doctor Robert Maynard Hutchins, the former President of the University of Chicago, and is financed by the Fund for the Republic. It was a genuine surprise to receive an invitation from Doctor Hutchins to meet with this group for a presentation of the police viewpoint.

I had been openly critical of the Fund for its liberal leanings, and it was difficult for me to believe that the concepts of a conservative police administrator would be of any real interest to its staff. Perhaps their research in the current character of America was destroying some of their former concepts. It was worth exploring.

By mutual arrangement I journeyed to Santa Barbara and met with the group. They listened patiently for more than an hour as I propounded a critical evaluation of today's social order. This was followed by questions which were germane and courteous.

Later, I was asked to participate in a taped interview to be used as the basis for a pamphlet to be published by the Fund. This was accomplished and the pamphlet, labeled simply "The Police", has been distributed throughout the United States as one of several such interviews dealing with the American character.

This entire experience has caused me to wonder if the ultra-liberal of yesterday, with his easy answers to man's problems, has not moved toward conservatism with the passage of time. This supposition finds support in the following statement appearing in a recently published report of the President of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions: "*The Center is learning that law and government must be invoked if the common good is to be achieved.*" This profound pronouncement can well serve as the battle cry in the campaign to strengthen America's discipline.

It is becoming readily apparent that the removal of restraint and the dilution of personal responsibility has not strengthened society, but in fact has weakened the social order. With an apparent lack of national purpose and a weakening of patriotic fervor, is the American character one that we do not wish to recognize, or is it too complex and varied to submit to easy description?

Trial, tribulation, challenge, vicissitude, and discipline provide the tempering process that gives to man strength of character. Material wealth tends toward indolence and indolence begets indulgence. This spirit of indulgence expresses itself in a soft attitude toward the wrongdoer. Perhaps today America is really a divided camp with each side struggling for supremacy. Perhaps there are two distinct categories of character each of which must be separately defined and delineated.

Is the American character represented by those employees who steal a billion dollars per year from

their employers or is the true American character best represented by a John Glenn, who as a guinea pig in space, is thoroughly dedicated to the welfare of his Nation and his God.

The time has come for the John Glenns of America to band together in the communities of our Nation for the avowed purpose of restoring the level of discipline to that required for our survival. First, we must insist that social conflicts be resolved in an atmosphere of law and order. To this end we must restore confidence in law enforcement by building and maintaining efficient police services dedicated to the welfare of all of the people. It is the police service that mirrors the community and is verily the key to the quality of the community.

The people of the United States have elected to police themselves through relatively small police forces maintained by individual communities rather than entrust this responsibility to larger forces covering greater areas. There are 1,762 municipalities in the United States of more than 10,000 population and each, with few exceptions maintains its own police department. In coping with the modern criminal many of these forces are put to great disadvantage. If it were not for the voluntary cooperation prevailing among the Nation's police forces the system would collapse. Police successes are largely achieved despite political boundaries and not because of them. Although suffering under a myriad of morale-destroying handicaps the police of the land have performed rather well due primarily to their own dedication and with a remarkable lack of public support. It is this realization that must be a condition precedent to the improvement of the local force.

Before there can be any substantial improvement, any existing political manipulation of the police force must be eliminated. As our urban areas grow and expand, many lessons can be learned from our largest cities.

Unfortunately, the political ambitions of persons and cliques have resulted in serious damage to police effectiveness in the majority of our great population centers. This situation is graphically illustrated by New York columnist Richard Starnes in discussing the holdup murder of two New York detectives. In part he said, ". . . New York is no more wicked than other big cities, but circumstances have conspired to make it a particularly difficult one to police. The act of minority-manipulation by political bosses has reached a dazzling

polish here, and if some congress of the down-trodden complains that the cops are mistreating them, the cops traditionally lose the argument. La Guardia took the sticks away from the police force, and his successors took away their self-respect. It is only recently that New York has learned it must back up its policemen if it is not to revert to the jungle and meantime, a generation has grown up which has no respect for the law, and little respect for the men who enforce it."

Again emphasizing the importance of social trends in urban areas, seventy percent of our total population is now urban as against sixty-four percent only ten years ago. Before too long, eighty to eighty-five percent of the population will be living in towns of more than 2,500 and away from the open country. The United States population is now 184 million and should reach 214 million by the end of this decade. In fifty years we will equal India's population of 400 million.

The same disastrous situation described by Richard Starnes as existing in New York City has been, or is being, reproduced in the majority of our large population centers because of the selfish and shortsighted political considerations that haunt the halls of local governments. The amplified peril that this situation presents to the inhabitants of our urban centers is reflected in a critique by William C. Baggs of my utterances contained in the Fund for the Republic pamphlet, *The Police*. He said: "Any study of crime, and of better law enforcement demanded by an increasing crime rate, must include reference to our cities. Lord Byron said, 'The hum of the human cities' was a torture to him. The hum is a horrid cacophony now. Our grandfathers must have guessed that we were becoming a nation of cities. Havelock Ellis reminded them that the larger the cities grow, the more irresistible becomes the attraction exerted upon the children of the country, somewhat like the lure of 'birds fascinated by the lighthouse'. Yet, as the people moved into the cities, they did little to learn how to live in the cities. Only to survive. In this, a serious investigator might find a cause for much of the crime in the United States today. Chief Parker suggests this, and the reader can almost feel a shiver in the Chief's thyroid as he envisions Los Angeles at the end of the century with twenty million humans in it.

"The Police Chief of Los Angeles has discussed a central trouble, involving the anonymity of citizenship to be found in the big cities, the social

despondency of the people in the slums, and the whole environment that stokes serious and petty crimes. Until man conquers this dismal environment, the big cities are likely to continue as the incubators of crime. The most optimistic of realists, however, cannot believe man is going to float above this environment or re-make it in our generation."

Between the lines of this sage observation by Mr. Baggs I read the emphasis upon the vital necessity of a more definite, widespread, and continuous invoking of law and government throughout the land. This cannot be achieved in the absence of an adequate law enforcement apparatus.

The lack of appreciation of the hazard in neglecting the creation and maintenance of competent, effective police forces is reflected in the fact that we place this task in the hands of a twenty-one year old boy with possibly a high school education and perhaps a few weeks of police training. We then expect this immature and ill-equipped individual to resolve the conflicts of humanity that defy solution. The experienced police administrator realizes that police efficiency demands advanced training and additional education. Yet, the neglect of this phase of education in our institutions of higher learning is indicative of the failure of society to appreciate its law enforcement problem. Only California appears to be meeting its obligation in providing facilities for the advanced education of our police personnel. In that state there are forty-one colleges and universities conducting police science degree programs. In descending order, New York has six; Arizona and Florida three each; Connecticut, District of Columbia, New Mexico, Texas, Washington, Indiana, Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts one each; and the remaining thirty-eight states have none at all.

California has also created a Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training that receives a five percent assessment fee on all fines levied in the criminal courts except for traffic and fish and game violations. This money, less administrative costs, is used to partially reimburse cities and counties for peace officer training provided the recipients have legislatively agreed to meet required standards in both recruitment and training. This is a specie of grants-in-aid assistance. At present, 241 jurisdictions representing eighty-six percent of the state's population are actively participating in the program. This program might well command the attention of the remainder of the Nation.

In summation, we can conclude that the character of a given community will rise no higher than the quality of its law enforcement. Inadequate law enforcement policies and agencies jeopardize the internal and external security of the United States. The moral and physical strength of the United States has its roots in the communities of the country.

As a vital contribution to a rebirth of morality and strengthening of character it is the solemn responsibility of community leaders to up-grade and support local law enforcement.

To accomplish this the police status must be improved by raising police standards, providing for advanced education of a formal nature, preventing improper political control and manipulation of police agencies, and providing continued community-wide support and recognition of police performance and accomplishment.

This is for you to accomplish and accomplish it you must; for, if the common good is to be achieved, law and government must be invoked. Should America go down soon it would be too early—we have much to teach the world.