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Contents

"To serve and protect": learning from police history

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Over the last three decades, American police departments have pursued a strategy of policing that narrowed their goals to "crime fighting," relied heavily on cars and radios to create a sense of police omnipresence, and found its justification in politically neutral professional competence. The traditional tasks of the constable—maintaining public order, regulating economic activity, and providing emergency services—have been deemphasized, and those of the professional "crime fighter" have increased. Joe Friday's polite but frosty professionalism ("Just the facts, Ma'am") is a perfect expression of the modern image.

In many ways, this strategy has been remarkably successful. Thirty years ago, the idea that the police could arrive at a crime scene anywhere in a large city in less than five minutes would have been idle dreaming, yet we now have that capability. Similarly, the idea that the police would have moved out from under the shadow of political influence and flagrant abuses of individual rights would also have seemed unrealistic, yet most people now think of the police as much more honest and professional than in the past. In fact, in many ways the current strategy of policing is the apotheosis of a reform spirit that has guided police executives for over eighty years.

It is ironic, then, that precisely at the moment of its greatest

triumph, the limits of this strategy have also become apparent. The concrete experience of citizens exposed to this strategy of policing is different from what the reformers had imagined. Officers stare suspiciously at the community from automobiles, career through city streets with sirens wailing, and arrive at a "crime scene" to comfort the victim of an offense that occurred twenty minutes earlier. They reject citizen requests for simple assistance so that they can get back "in service"—that is, back to the business of staring at the community from their cars. No wonder so many citizens find the police unresponsive. Officers treat problems which citizens take seriously—unsafe parks, loud neighbors—as unimportant. And when a group of citizens wants to talk about current police policies and procedures, they are met by a "community relations specialist" or, at best, a precinct patrol commander, neither of whom can respond to their problems without calling headquarters.

This situation would not be so bad if the police were succeeding in their crime-fighting role. But the fact of the matter is that they are not. Crime rates continue to increase, and the chance that a violent crime among strangers will be solved to the satisfaction of the police (let alone the prosecutors and the courts) is still less than 20 percent. The reason for this poor performance, research now tells us, is that the police get less help than they need from victims and witnesses in the community.

How has this peculiar situation come about? How is it that the one public body that promises "to serve and protect" today seems incapable of doing either satisfactorily? And how might police procedures be reformed to allow officers to control crime effectively *and* give citizens the kind of service they need to feel safe and comfortable in their communities? A useful way to begin answering these questions is to review the history of American policing and note some of the paths abandoned along the way. While much of this history is well known to some, what is less well understood is how the pursuit of a professionalized, politically neutral police force—narrowly focused on "serious crime" and relying on new technologies—eventually weakened the bonds between private citizens and the police, and shifted the burdens of enforcement to a public agency that could not succeed by itself.

Private and public policing

It is easy to forget that publicly-supported police agencies were only recently created in the United States. Throughout the colonial

period and up until the mid-nineteenth century, everyday policing was performed by night watchmen who also lit lamps, reported fires, managed runaway animals, and stood ready to help in family emergencies. Their role as "crime fighters" was restricted to raising a general alarm whenever they saw criminal misconduct—an event that must have been rare, given the small numbers of watchmen and the haphazard methods of patrol. Apprehension of the fleeing felons then depended on vigorous pursuit by private citizens. The investigation of past criminal offenses also depended on private initiative. When sufficient evidence was gathered, a victim could enlist the aid of a constable to regain his property or make an arrest, but the constable would ordinarily rely on the victim to locate the suspect.[1]

By the 1840s, this informal arrangement became insufficient to deal with the increasing lawlessness of American cities, so city governments began experimenting with new forms of policing. The most important model for these changes was England, which was also debating about and experimenting with new forms of policing. The old English system, which had served as the model for the American, also placed heavy reliance on private individuals for crime prevention, apprehension, and investigation; beyond that, there was only a loose network of publicly supported watchmen, constables, and courts. Publicly supported policing was, however, supplemented by commercial "thief catching" firms, the "Bow Street Runners" being the most famous. These firms depended on informants and undercover operations, as well as more traditional investigative techniques. While these methods seemed to give commercial firms a competitive advantage in solving crime, the potential for corruption and abuses was quite high. (Some of their success seems to have depended on arranging for the crimes to occur in the first place!)[2]

Despite the traditional authority of the constables, and the vitality and ingenuity of private commercial policing, the English forces of public order tottered before the social challenges of the 1830s. As in the United States, the problem lay in the growing cities, where authorities not only had to cope with street crime, but also with riots, demonstrations, and increasing assaults on public decency (i.e., drunkenness and "juvenile delinquency"). And the street lights still had to be lit.

Much as the American "crime wave" and riots of the 1960s led to the creation of federal commissions and independent research centers to study the prevention of crime, the English social dis-

turbances of the early-nineteenth century led to a fundamental re-evaluation of policing. Jeremy Bentham and Patrick Colquhoun proposed a form of "preventative policing" and drafted legislation mandating the regular supervision of known criminals, people in "dangerous" occupations (e.g., minstrels), and even specific ethnic groups (e.g., Jews).[3] The English also looked across the Channel at the "continental model" of policing based on informants and covert surveillance rather than overt patrols.[4]

In the end, neither "detective policing," as suggested by the Bow Street Runners and the French, nor "preventative policing," as conceived by Colquhoun, was adopted as a strategy for English policing in the mid-1800s. Instead, Parliament chose a model of policing based on the success of the Thames River Police. Originally established as an experiment funded privately by insurance companies to reduce property losses, the Thames River Police were so successful that they became the first police organization in England to be financed entirely by public revenues. Publicly-supported policing was then mandated throughout England in 1829 by the Metropolitan Police Act, and the Metropolitan Police began patrolling the streets of London shortly thereafter.[5]

The British approach to policing consolidated older traditions. The strategy was still based on overt, reactive patrol, and the patrol force, armed only with concealed truncheons, was trained to be civil in confronting citizens. The only major changes were that the patrol force became larger, trained, and were deployed more carefully, and were organized in chains of command that would allow operations in large units as well as small. Investigation was still privately supported, and no use of informants or covert police was explicitly sanctioned to gather prior information about crimes.

The transformation of British policing in the early-nineteenth century had a tremendous impact on American thinking and practice. New York City established a municipal police force based on the British model in 1845, followed quickly by Boston and Philadelphia; by 1855, cities as far west as Milwaukee had police departments. As in England, these departments consisted of overt, reactive patrol forces capable of operating in large or small units. And because the forces were accessible to citizens at all hours, they retained their constabulary functions, providing emergency service as well as controlling crime and maintaining public order.

The establishment of publicly-supported police departments patrolling city streets was clearly a major event shaping the institutional development of police departments. Indeed, current strategies

of policing are the direct descendants of these innovations. As important as these events were, however, the innovations of the mid-1800s were a less decisive resolution of basic issues in the design of police strategies than is often supposed.

The reforms did not mean, for example, that the responsibility for crime control had passed irrevocably from private to public hands. Private police forces, in the form of railroad police, "Pinkertons," and private detectives, played a major role in controlling crime and disorder well into the twentieth century. And though these private police forces were less prominent through the 1960s, they are now reappearing in the form of commercial security guards and volunteer citizen block-watches. (And the police remain dependent, as they always have been, on the willingness of citizens to alert them to crime and aid them in the identification, apprehension, and conviction of suspects.)

Nor did the American reforms of the mid-1800s focus the attention of the police exclusively on crime, demonstrations, and riots. The scope of police responsibilities remained very broad: They were responsible for discouraging lesser forms of public disorder (e.g., drunkenness, vandalism, obscenities, harassment, lewdness), for regulating economic activity (e.g., enforcing traffic laws, coping with unlicensed peddlers, inspecting facilities), and for handling everyday medical and social emergencies (e.g., traffic accidents, fires, lost children).

Similarly, although the adopted strategy seemed to emphasize overt, reactive patrols, other strategies did not entirely disappear. By the late 1800s, most metropolitan police departments had developed detective divisions as well as patrol divisions. These units not only conducted investigations of past crimes at public expense (a major change from the earliest traditions), but also began using informants and covert methods that allowed them to prevent future crimes, as well as solve past ones.[6] And while no explicit authorization was given for "preventative policing" as it existed on the Continent, the police were able to use their authority to enforce public order and regulate commerce to accomplish the same purpose.

Perhaps the most significant question left unresolved by the innovations of the 1850s, however, was the basis of the new institution's legitimacy. What gave the new police force the right to interfere in private matters? Were they to be considered agents of the state, allies of current political figures, neutral instruments of the law, or specialized as professionals? In England, the police

were able to draw on the traditional authority of the crown and explicit parliamentary authorization, and even so the legitimacy of the police was suspect. (Upper class people reportedly whipped the police as they passed in carriages, and the press commented favorably whenever· a policeman was killed in a crowd.)[7] In the United States, the police had even less on which to rely. Local political support would always be fickle in a democratically-spirited country ever skeptical of authority and claims to "expertise," so it should come as no surprise that the new police forces would be suspect and considered potentially dangerous.

From constable to crime fighter

The tension between the need to maintain order in a growing country and the inherent distrust of authority profoundly shaped the development of the American police between 1870 to 1970. The first phase began immediately when the new municipal police forces became allied with local politicians. In the words of Robert Fogelson, police departments in the 1800s became "adjuncts to the political machine," and a major source of jobs and upward mobility for newly-arrived immigrants.[8] Their duties ran from maintaining public order, economic regulation, and crime and riot control, to providing lodging and soup kitchens for vagrants. Of course, since their legitimacy rested on local political support, rather than an abstract notion of full and impartial enforcement of the laws, their enforcement efforts were far from even-handed. By accommodating differences among ethnic neighborhoods and the purposes of local politicians, the police were more a central cog than a mere adjunct of the big city machines.

By the end of the 1800s the police became a favorite target of reformers in the Progressive movement, who despised both the established power of the political machines and the "disorder" that characterized those parts of the cities where police had stopped enforcing vice laws. Ending the "corruption" of the police became a central feature of the Progressive program, as was the transfer of social welfare functions from the police to the new social work professionals. The Progressive conception of the police was one radically different from the practices which had developed over the previous century, and consisted of several significant departures: The police were to become a highly disciplined, paramilitary organization independent of local political parties; to ensure that independence, the force would be organized along functional rather

than geographic lines; personnel procedures would be strictly meritocratic rather than political; and police duties would be limited to the strict enforcement of existing laws.

The first wave of reform did not succeed completely, mainly due to Prohibition. Popular opposition to the liquor control laws was so widespread that "equal enforcement of the laws" was out of the question, and "corruption" reappeared to accommodate the unwillingness of responsible citizens to comply with the law. This experience taught a significant new lesson to the reformers: Not all laws command equal respect, so only those laws that are widely supported should be enforced. (Later, this idea was expanded to cover so-called "victimless" crimes.)

This "lesson," whatever its flaws and whatever its unforeseen consequences, laid the basis for the next phase of American policing, in which the police became primarily concerned with serious crime: murder, assault, robbery, rape, burglary, and theft. "Victimless" crimes, disorderliness, economic regulation, and social services became less important after the 1930s because, it was argued, police activity in these aroused citizen opposition, encouraged unequal enforcement, and spawned corruption. The clean, bureaucratic model of policing put forward by the reformers could be sustained only if the scope of police responsibility was narrowed to "crime fighting."

Several other developments reinforced the notion of police officer as "crime fighter." One was the improvement of communication and transportation technologies. With cars, telephones, and radios, all of which became widely available to the police in the 1940s and 1950s, it seemed that an omnipresent patrol force could be created.[9] Moreover, the new technology complemented the objective of creating centralized, tightly disciplined police organizations. The second influence was the development of the Uniform Crime Reports which publish rates of homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft for every city in the country. These data inevitably became important indicators of police performance, and encouraged police administrators to focus on these crimes as the most important targets of police work.

The net result of these recent developments—cars, radios, and statistics—has been a new reform strategy that resembles the old in its commitment to equal enforcement of the laws and its emphasis on a disciplined police bureaucracy, but differs in that it focuses narrowly on property crimes and violent crimes rather than

the enforcement of all laws—especially those regarding public order and economic regulation. To a great extent, the professionalized "crime fighting" strategy of policing that emerged after World War II is the current dominant police strategy. Its explicit goal is the control of crime, not maintaining public order or providing constabulary services. It depends on even-handed, non-intrusive enforcement of the laws, but only those laws with widespread public support. Its basic mode of operation includes motorized patrol, rapid responses to calls for service, and retrospective investigation of offenses, not high-profile foot patrol or "preventative policing."

The consequences of reform

By now, the goal of "professionalizing" police forces—of making them conform to the reform strategy—has become an orthodoxy. Police executives, experts on policing, the police themselves, even mayors and legal philosophers, are all eager to trade constables and cops on the beat for professional crime fighters—to transform their "street corner politicians" into Joe Fridays and then into SWAT teams. The irony is that this orthodoxy has become powerful in shaping police aspirations and practices at about the same time that embarrassing weaknesses are beginning to appear.

It is now clear, for example, that there is a limit to the deployment of police resources (squad cars, rapid-response police teams, investigators) beyond which the rate of violent crime is very insensitive. The most recent research convincingly establishes three points. First, neither crime nor fear of crime are importantly affected by major changes in the number of officers patrolling in marked cars.[10] Apparently, within broad ranges, neither criminals nor citizens can tell whether an area is heavily or superficially patrolled when the patrolling is done in cars. Second, rapid responses to calls for service do not dramatically increase the apprehension of criminals.[11] The reason is that citizens do not call the police until long after a crime has been completed, and the attacker has fled the scene. Given these delays, even instantaneous police responses would do little good. Third, police investigators are unable to solve crimes without major assistance from victims and witnesses.[12] Indeed, unless they can identify the offender, chances are overwhelming that the crime will not be solved. On the other hand, if citizens can identify the offender, it is difficult to see what modern detectives add to what the local constables used to do. And,

at any rate, the capacity of the police to solve crimes—particularly those involving violence among strangers—remains shockingly low. Fewer than 20 percent of robberies are solved, and an even smaller fraction of burglaries.[13] All this suggests that the orthodox police strategy provides neither general deterrence, nor successful apprehension of individual offenders.

Besides running up against limits to professionalized crime fighting, it is now clear that contemporary police strategies ignore a large number of tasks which the police have traditionally performed. There are no streetlamps to light anymore, but there are a large number of constabulary functions—maintaining order in public places (parks, buses, subway platforms), resolving marital disputes, disciplining non-criminal but harmful juvenile behavior, preventing public drug and alcohol use—which no other public organizations have taken up since they were abandoned by the police. These jobs simply are not done, and what is worse, they have come to be seen as illegitimate functions of *any* public body or private citizen. The role of modern legal philosophy is very important here, for it has been most responsible for making many of these once implicitly-sanctioned practices explicitly illegal for the police, and without that implicit support individual private citizens have become unwilling to take matters into their own hands.

The bitter irony of this development is that it is probably these constabulary functions, properly performed, that make people feel safer in their neighborhoods than a drop in the "crime rate" as measured in the Uniform Crime Reports. Seeing a cop on the beat, allowing one's children to play unsupervised in the park, not being offered drugs on the street, taking the bus or subway late at night without being approached by vagrants—all these things probably make citizens feel safer than a drop in average police response time from five to three minutes. The sort of infringements on public order we are describing are often "unlawful," but they are not serious crime. As a result, the police neglect these offenses and escape the charge of discriminatory enforcement. Yet such offenses may matter more to citizen security than relatively rare "crime" as the police now define it.

Perhaps the most significant and least obvious limitation of the current police orthodoxy is the loss of a political base for police organizations. This is obscure largely because the current orthodoxy claims an opposite virtue: Once freed from corrupting political influence, the police become legitimate, neutral instruments of the law. Yet the weakness of politically neutral police depart-

ments was evident in the mid-1960s when local police confronted the peaceful civil rights movement, large-scale student demonstrations, inner-city riots, and political terrorist groups. These activities challenged orthodox police strategy—since none is ordinary "crime"—and the police simply could not respond effectively. Zealously pursuing ordinary street crime, they were accused of exacerbating rather than controlling riots. Dealing with terrorism required proactive policing, and the police found themselves without local political allies in conducting these operations. The strategy of professionalized crime fighting simply could not deal effectively with the political attack on city governance in the 1960s; and rather than fundamentally rethink their strategy, local forces made lame gestures toward improving "police-community relations"—a phrase that only highlights the false distinction at the heart of modern policing.

There is a common element in each of these areas of weakness: an insufficient link between the aspirations and interests of local communities, and the operations of the police. In professionalizing crime fighting, the "volunteers," citizens on whom so much used to depend, have been removed from the fight. The effect has not been increased security, but impotence in apprehending offenders, widespread fear triggered by disorder, and a sense that things must really be bad if police departments with all their capabilities cannot seem to cope with the problem.

Reforming the reforms

If there is anything to be learned from the relatively short history of the American police it is that, whatever the real benefits of professionalization (e.g., reduced corruption, due process, serious police training), the reforms have ignored, even attacked, some features that once made the police powerful institutions in maintaining a sense of community security. Of course, it would be hopelessly romantic to think that modern police could immediately reclaim an intimate relationship with well defined communities in today's cities, or resume their broad social functions. And, indeed, there is much in the modern conception and operations of police departments that is worth preserving.

But still, within bounds, it may now be possible for imaginative police executives and those who supervise their operations to make changes that could reclaim some of the old virtues while sacrificing little of value in the modern reforms. We offer ideas in four dis-

tinct areas: police dealings with private self-defense efforts; scope of police responsibility; police deployment; and the organizational structure of the force. In each case, the proposals are designed to link the police more surely to the communities in which they now operate.

Private and public enforcement. Private citizens inevitably play an important role in controlling crime. By limiting their exposure to risk, investing in locks and guns, banding together to patrol their own streets, or financing a private security force, private citizens affect the overall level of crime, and the distribution of the benefits and burdens of policing. Police strategists should encourage those private mobilizations, provide guidance and technical assistance, and position the police as back-ups to private efforts.

To a degree, of course, police forces now do this. They pass out police whistles, urge people to mark their property so that it can be more easily identified when stolen, help to organize block watches, and set up emergency call systems tied to rapid responses to calls to service. Yet, apart from responding to calls for service, one has the feeling that the police do not really take such activities seriously; and when the private efforts become powerful, the police often attack them as a danger to liberty (though their greater concern might well be the economic security that comes from monopolizing crime control efforts).

Nowhere is this ambivalence more obvious than in the general response to the growth of the Guardian Angels, a private paramilitary group that began in New York City and spread across the country. Many consider the Guardian Angels a useful auxiliary patrol force that reminds private citizens of their public responsibilities, and dignifies the young men and women who join; opponents (often including the police) see the Angels as vigilantes threatening the rights of citizens with undisciplined enforcement. Neither view is quite appropriate. Those who welcome the Angels as a novelty forget that private policing was the only form of policing for centuries, and that the creation of a public police force was conceived as a great reform.

Those who think of the Angels as dangerous vigilantes forget the value of private crime-control efforts, and the crucial difference between vigilantes and responsible citizens playing their traditional role in crime control. The Guardian Angels limit their functions to deterrence and, occasionally, apprehension; they neither judge guilt nor mete out punishment. And the Angels do not take offense or intervene easily; they respond only to serious crimes that they ob-

serve. In so doing, they assume nothing more than the rights and responsibilities of good democratic citizens. It is somewhat ironic that the appearance of several thousand Guardian Angels attracts such great public interest and worry, when the emergence of a *commercial* private security force numbering in the millions has attracted almost no notice at all.

In sum, the Guardian Angels serve as a reminder that, while private policing entails some risks, it remains a useful part of overall crime control efforts. Each increase in public policing may be offset by some reduction in private policing, and it is not uncommon for citizens to refuse involvement, saying, "Let the police do it, they get paid for it." But if the public is made to understand that public policing *complements* private efforts, private individuals will take more public responsibility. They will call the police when they see offenses, agree to act as witnesses, and even intervene themselves precisely because public police are available to support them. To the extent possible, the local police must encourage, rather than resist, these private efforts.

The scope of police responsibility. If the police are going to ask for more help from their communities, it seems likely that they will have to produce more of what communities want. As we have seen, police agencies have narrowed their purposes to combatting serious crime. This narrowing is applauded by a general citizenry that thinks "serious crime" is what it fears, by legal philosophers who think the enduring social interest in non-intrusive and fair policing can best be served by focusing attention on a few serious and visible crimes, by professional police administrators who want to allocate scarce resources to the most urgent areas, and by the police themselves who prefer the imagery of "combating bad guys" to the more complex, mundane tasks. This is a strategic error. The error comes not in emphasizing the importance of controlling violent crime—no one looking at U.S. crime statistics could possibly propose not taking violent crime seriously—but rather in imagining that effective control can be gained simply by complaining about court decisions that "handcuff" the police. More effective control of violent crime depends on an increased willingness on the part of communities to help the police identify and prosecute offenders, but the police miss many opportunities to establish closer relationships with the community, relationships that would encourage such assistance.

Take, for example, the current police response to victims of violent crime. When a violent crime occurs, the police dispatch a

patrol car. The officer takes a statement from the victim and identifies witnesses; occasionally an arrest is made at the scene. The officer disappears, and the case is turned over to a detective who may, or may not, interview the victim. The offender is taken to court and often released on bail. The terrified victim may well be intimidated by the offender, yet when he or she calls the police, the call is given a low priority. Neither the arresting officer nor the detective is likely to hear of, or allay, the victim's fear. Surely there is more that can be done by the police to reassure victims: They could be given a name and number of another to call, and the police might even arrange to visit periodically, in unusual cases, or to stake out the home of the victim. Note that the *police* should do this, not some social work agency. Police involvement is important, not only because they have a plausible capacity to protect, but also because they can simultaneously earn credit with the community and strengthen their case against the offender.

In a similar vein, the police could take more seriously their responsibilities to maintain public order. If, as an accumulating body of evidence suggests, it is public disorder and incivility—not violent crime—that increases fear, and if the police wish to reassure citizens, they must maintain public order—in parks, on busy street corners, at bus stops—as well as fight crime. Similarly, commercial regulation such as traffic and parking control, which is now performed mechanically, should be explicitly organized to support local commerce. Finally, police departments should *welcome* their role in providing emergency services—coping with traffic accidents, fires, health emergencies, domestic disputes, etc. Officers will inevitably perform these services, so they might as well incorporate them in their mission, perform them well, and get credit for them. After all, it is an important and popular function which the police typically do well.

Deployment and organization

Deployment. Current police deployment strategy is based heavily on overt, reactive patrol: About 60 percent of the resources of most police departments are committed to patrol, and most of that to uniformed officers riding the streets in clearly marked cars. In addition, most police departments devote 10 percent of the resources to a detective unit engaged in retrospective investigations of criminal offenses. The rest of the resources are devoted to other tasks such as vice squads, juvenile units, narcotics division, and so on.[14]

This strategy is consistent with a focus on serious crime and a strong interest in evenhanded, non-intrusive policing. The capacity of patrol to thwart crimes through general deterrence, and their capacity to respond quickly to calls for service, are assumed to control crime; when deterrence fails and the police force arrives too late to catch the offender, the detectives take over to solve the crime. The enforcement effort is even-handed because patrol surveillance is general, and because anyone, for the price of a phone call, can claim services. And modern policing is non-intrusive in that intensive investigation begins only after a crime has been committed and focuses narrowly on the solution of that crime. Thus, the decision made in the mid-1800s to make public policing a patrol and detective activity, rather than a system of preventive policing, carries on until today: The police skim the surface of social life.

Given the success of this deployment in protecting important social values, it is not surprising that it has been widely utilized. Still, this deployment has internal contradictions as a crime-fighting strategy, to say nothing of the limitations as a device to draw the community into a closer relationship with the police. One basic contradiction has already been noted: In the vast, anonymous cities of today, this deployment apparently fails to deter crime or apprehend offenders. A second difficulty is that once an overt patrol force is made available to citizens at the price of a phone call, officers will be involved in much more than crime fighting. The commitment to "accessibility" then conspires to defeat the narrow focus on crime fighting: We end up with police forces that invite more citizens' requests than can be handled, then frustrate them by failing to take some calls seriously, and finally fail to control crime.

It is now time for police executives to reconsider their deployment strategies. The enormous investment in telephones, radios, and cars that now allow the police to respond to crime calls in under five minutes (often with more than one car) has bought little crime control, no greater sense of security, and has prevented the police from taking order maintenance and service functions seriously. To the extent that victim services, order maintenance, and a general community presence are valuable not only in themselves, but also as devices for strengthening crime control and building the police as a popular community institution, it is crucial that police executives get some of their officers out of cars and away from dispatchers at least some of the time. Some recent evidence suggests

that foot patrol *does* promote a sense of security, and also reduces calls for service. Apparently cops on the beat can deal effectively with many citizen complaints.[15]

For "crime fighting," other tactics may be appropriate and effective. Special decoys or stake-outs targeted at muggers and robbers may be more effective in controlling such offenses than random patrol. Similarly, if current evidence about the large number of offenses committed by a small number of offenders turns out to be correct, it may make sense for the police to develop intelligence systems for "street crimes" similar to those used in combatting organized crime and narcotics traffic. It is even possible that expanded use of informants would be possible. Obviously these methods are more intrusive and proactive than the current deployment, but they may be tolerable if they prove to be effective, and if they enjoy the support of local communities.

Departmental organization. Most police departments are currently organized along functional lines: There is a patrol division, a narcotics bureau, a youth division and so on. This structure is consistent with many reform ambitions: It allows for convenient reallocation of resources across the city to respond to changing circumstances; it promotes the development of specialized expertise; and, most importantly, it strengthens the control police chiefs have over their subordinates. The alternative scheme is to organize along geographic lines, giving area commanders responsibility for all police operations within a given geographic area. This geographic organization would also make the police department policy-making and operations more accessible to citizens in the community because the area commander would have both the interest and the capacity to respond to local requests.

Geographic organization was the traditional form attacked by the reformers because precinct-level politicians had become too powerful and had bent the police to their corrupt purposes. It was preferable, the reformers thought, to organize in a way that moved power towards the chief (and those who influenced him) rather than leave it in the hands of precinct captains vulnerable to local political machines. The functional organization served these purposes; but there was a price to be paid. Local community groups such as PTA's, merchants associations, block associations, churches, and individual citizens frightened by crimes—all no longer organized in political machines—now have no one to turn to in the local precinct. There is the precinct commander, but his direct authority typically extends only to the patrol division, and he feels more

responsible to those "downtown" than the citizens of the community. There may also be a "community relations officer," but his authority usually extends nowhere. It is no wonder, then, that citizens who have interests and problems different from those of the city as a whole feel abandoned by the police. If police executives wish to cultivate stronger political support from local neighborhoods, they should consider a more geographic division of responsibilities, shifting more power to local precinct commanders, or even to lower levels in the department such as lieutenants or sergeants who could serve as lenders for "team policing" units. Again, the point is that the police must become more visible and active in neighborhood affairs.

A post-Dragnet era?

Police strategies do not exist in a vacuum. They are shaped by important legal, political, and attitudinal factors, as well as by local resources and capabilities, all factors which now sustain the modern conception of policing. So there may be little leeway for modern police executives. But the modern conception of policing *is* in serious trouble, and a review of the nature of that trouble against the background of the American history of policing gives a clear direction to police forces that wish to improve their performance as crime fighters *and* public servants.

The two fundamental features of a new police strategy must be these: that the role of private citizens in the control of crime and maintenance of public order be established and encouraged, not derided and thwarted, and that the police become more active, accessible participants in community affairs. The police will have to do little to encourage citizens to participate in community policing, for Americans are well practiced at undertaking private, voluntary efforts; all they need to know is that the police force welcomes and supports such activity. Being more visible and accessible is slightly more difficult, but hiring more "community relations" specialists is surely *not* the answer. Instead, the police must get out of their cars, and spend more time in public spaces such as parks and plazas, confronting and assisting citizens with their private troubles. This is mundane, prosaic work but it probably beats driving around in cars waiting for a radio call. Citizens would surely feel safer and, perhaps, might even be safer.

ENDNOTES

[1] See T.A. Critchley, *A History of Police in England and Wales*, (London: Constable and Company, Ltd., 1967).

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[3] Radzinowicz, Vol. 2, pp. 271-273.

[4] Radzinowicz, Vol. 3 (1956), p. 539.

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