ADMINISTRATION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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TOWARD
A REDEFINITION
OF THE
POLICE
FUNCTION

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Americans have always followed the activities of their police with great interest. Police officers are called upon to deal with the unusual in human behavior—with departures from the norm. What they do has news value, as reflected in the extensive coverage given by mass media to police activities in comparison with other functions of local government. And what they do has great entertainment value, as reflected in the number of novels, comic strips, motion pictures, and television programs that are built around the police.

Intense as this interest has been, it has also been highly selective. It has, for the most part, been limited to those aspects of police work that relate to the solution of major crimes, to the suppression of organized vice activities, to the handling of the unusual emergency situations that receive police attention, and, out of a sense of curiosity, to police activity involving neighbors. It has rarely extended to the much more routine phases of the law enforcement function—tasks that occupy most of a police officer's time and that pose the more difficult and complex problems involved in the policing of a free society.

Developments in the civil rights field during the past several years have served, in a variety of ways, to change this situation. Court decisions relating to the rights of individuals accused of having committed a crime, for example, have given
rise to a widespread debate that has, in turn, served to ac-
quaint the public with important aspects of the legal process
by which the police are required to handle alleged offenders—
a process which received little attention in the past.

Demonstrations, such as those staged in behalf of the in-
tegration of public facilities or in support of open-occupancy
laws, have drawn public attention to the peculiar and deli-
cate role of the police in protecting the rights of minority
groups when subjected to overt acts of hostility on the part
of the majority. And outbreaks of violence, such as occurred
in Watts, Newark, and Detroit, have focused public attention
upon the role of the police in suppressing mass disorder and
have increased public interest in police practices and policies
that, it is claimed by some, contribute to the conditions that
give rise to riots.

Paralleling these developments has been a new wave of
anxiety regarding the crime problem. This has led, among
other things, to the creation of the President’s Commission
on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, which
recently completed its exhaustive studies. The Commission
devoted a substantial portion of its total resources and effort
to an examination of the status and needs of law enforce-
ment in this country. Its findings, in turn, have given rise
to public discussion of police needs and problems and have
stimulated state and local governments to initiate similar
inquiries.

The Rush Toward Action Programs

A natural consequence of this sudden increase in interest
in the functioning of the police has been a whole series of
proposals that are intended to strengthen the capacity of law
enforcement agencies to meet the demands being made upon
them. Offered by commissions, legislators, governmental of-
ficials, citizen groups, and, of course, the police themselves,
they range from the very specific and carefully formulated
recommendations of the President’s Commission, on the one
hand, to the sweeping appeal of the John Birch Society, on
the other, to “support your local police.” The proposals provide for such varied objectives as a liberal arts education for police officers and advanced training in riot control. Included among the more frequently cited suggestions are those which would raise police salaries, increase the number of police officers, construct training facilities, and establish minimum standards for police personnel.

Evaluating the feasibility of any one of these proposals is made difficult by the fact that we are so lacking in our knowledge of what it is that the police do in our society and so ambivalent over the nature of their role. There have been few serious efforts to gain insight into the function performed by the police—the degree to which it differs from one jurisdiction to another and the various factors and pressures that contribute toward its definition. That we should have such little understanding is somewhat surprising when one reflects upon the importance of the police function in a free society and when one considers the tremendous resources that are devoted to law enforcement. Absent such an understanding, many of the recommendations currently receiving the most enthusiastic public support are based on nothing more than a stereotype notion of both the nature of police work and the character of the problems with which the police are confronted.

There is, for example, a noticeable tendency to place increased reliance upon laboratories as a means for dealing more effectively with the crime problem. It is true that much greater use can be made of the scientific analysis of physical evidence as a means for solving crimes, but it is widely recognized within police circles that only a very small percentage of the total police function is affected by developments in this area. Much of the support for crime labs, it seems, stems from a “Dick Tracy” concept of policing.

In his “State of the Union” message, President Johnson indicated his intention to seek financial support to increase the size and number of “task forces”—units that are commonly assigned to policing areas having a high incidence of crime. This proposal reflects the widely held notion that the
hiring and assignment of additional police officers is the primary means by which to reduce crime. Aside from the fact that there is no firmly established basis for anticipating such results, the specific proposal of the President might well produce some unanticipated side effects. What little we do know about the traditional patterns for patrolling high crime rate areas in large cities suggests that, unless there is a significant change in police functioning, the mere addition of more men is likely to increase existing hostilities and, as a result, substantially increase the potential for massive disorder.

In similar fashion, the other common proposals for strengthening police operations point to the need for gaining a better understanding of what it is that we expect and want the police to do and what the effect of the proposals is likely to be upon implementation. If training is to be increased and made more effective, there is need for considerable work in defining the tasks and in identifying the situations which police officers are likely to encounter. If a college education is to be required of a patrolman, consideration must be given to the manner in which he is to be utilized—lest we increase the already high level of frustration that patrolmen experience. If recruiting efforts are to be intensified, standards must be more accurately related to expectations. It makes little sense, for example, to place the highest priority upon physical prowess if the most demanding aspect of the police function calls for intelligence and social acumen.

Some Generalizations Regarding the Police Task

As one turns to explore the police function, one quickly finds that the principal and most valuable source of information is the police officer—the officer having years of experience at the operating level and, to a somewhat lesser extent, the officer who has carried some administrative responsibilities. But a combination of factors constrains these men from conveying their wealth of understanding into the public forum. Much of what he sees and does, the average officer feels, is defined by the nature of the public's interest in the
police as being of minor consequence. More inhibiting, however, is the fact that the officer is a member of a semimilitary organization that places a value on secrecy and that discourages free expression by subordinates.

Frequent contact with the experienced officer and five years of administrative responsibility in a police agency have led me to conclude that there are several generalizations that can be drawn regarding the police function that are helpful in any further analyses that might take place.

1. **Solving crimes and apprehending criminals constitute but a small percentage of the total activity of a police force.**

A St. Louis County police officer was recently quoted in an article in *The National Observer* as stating: “I thought of police work as a life full of adventure and daily heroic deeds. It turned out to be mostly settling family fights, answering complaint calls about loud parties, dogs running loose, and that sort of thing.” This characterization of police work coincides with the impression received by many individuals who have taken the opportunity to accompany a police officer on a night’s tour of duty—even in an area of a large city having a high crime rate. Persons taking advantage of such an opportunity almost invariably report that the officer considered the night unusually “slow” and apologized for the lack of “action.” But the consistency of the reported experiences suggests that what the observer saw is probably more typical of the manner in which the officer spends his time than he is prepared to recognize.

Police activity unrelated to the solving of crimes and the apprehension of criminals falls into four major categories: (a) the provision of social services; (b) the suppression of nuisances; (c) the control of motor vehicle traffic; and (d) the provision of a wide range of miscellaneous emergency-type services.

*Provision of Social Services:* It is estimated that police officers assigned to the congested areas of large cities devote
as much as sixty per cent of their time to the handling of domestic disturbances. While the domestic dispute is basically a social rather than a criminal problem, citizens turn to the police for intervention because of the likelihood of physical harm. Unlike the social agency, the police have the capacity to respond to a call within minutes at any time of day or night, seven days a week, and are generally recognized as having the physical ability and authority to intervene.

In a small percentage of these cases, when injury has been inflicted, police involvement takes the form of a traditional investigation and prosecution. In the vast majority of such cases, however, the skill that is required more closely approximates that of a social worker. Because the handling of domestic disturbances is not normally thought of by the police as being among their more important functions, there has been little effort, despite the time which such cases consume, to develop a uniform response. The action taken, therefore, is largely dependent upon the interest and initiative of the investigating officer. He may undertake to mediate the dispute. He may simply order the husband to leave the home for the evening. Or he may dismiss any concern for the matter once he establishes that a crime has not been committed.

From the standpoint of volume, domestic disturbances dominate the category of police activity that requires the knowledge and training of a social worker. Somewhat similar are the requests which the police receive for dealing with the problems of the mentally ill, the senile, the chronic inebriate, the runaway child, the neglectful parent, and the truant.

Suppression of Nuisances: In the congested areas of large cities, where actions of one group of citizens are more likely to affect others, the police are very frequently called upon to “keep the peace.” Requests for service most frequently take the form of complaints regarding such matters as loud parties, loud radios, trespassing, and the blocking of sidewalks and driveways.
The authority of a police officer to act in such situations is not always clear. When there is general agreement, between the police and the citizens involved, that the situation complained against does have the potential for constituting a nuisance, the appearance of a uniformed officer on the scene is usually sufficient, in itself, to persuade the parties to reduce the noise or to disperse a gathering. More complex is the situation, such as the congregating of individuals on a street corner, that tends to be defined as a nuisance per se in the minds of police officers, even though there may be no complainants and there may be no apparent interference with the peace of the community. Police intervention in such situations is likely, under some circumstances and in some areas, to be offensive to the individuals affected.

Like the domestic disturbance, situations of this kind are generally considered, by the operating police officer, to be of minor importance. The nature of the police response is rarely subjected to review or examination. And yet, it is increasingly apparent that the attitude of a minority community toward the police is largely molded by their impressions as to whether police action in such situations is fair or indiscriminate.

Police handling of nuisances offers an excellent example of the wide range of circumstances in which the police invoke some element of authority without actually making an arrest. While this may seem common and obvious, a failure to recognize such situations has led some to place heavier dependence than is justified upon judicial review as a means for controlling the exercise of police authority, when, in fact, most of the situations in which police authority is exercised do not come before a judge for trial.

Control of Motor Vehicle Traffic: The percentage of police resources devoted to the enforcement of traffic laws, the direction of traffic, and the investigation of traffic accidents varies significantly in this country from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. Some state police agencies are established exclu-
sively for the purpose of controlling traffic, while, in large cities, responsibilities relating to traffic control tend to become integrated into the total police function to the point that it is difficult to even estimate the amount of time they consume. It can be argued that a substantial percentage of the enforcement function in large cities is absorbed without sacrificing other functions, since it is relatively easy for a police officer to enforce traffic laws while engaged in routine patrol. Indeed, some police officials are of the view that traffic enforcement duties actually add to the overall effectiveness of a police officer's patrol efforts, since it enables him to make use of his recognized responsibility to enforce traffic laws as a means for investigating drivers suspected of having stolen the vehicles in their possession or having used their vehicle in the commission of a crime.

On the other hand, responsibilities relating to the direction of traffic and to the investigation of accidents tend to be much more time-consuming and disruptive. The latter is especially apparent when poor weather conditions cause a rash of accidents—a situation that has the potential for tying up an entire police force.

More significant than the demands on time, however, is the fact that increases in traffic control responsibilities have served to redefine the clientele with whom the police most frequently come in contact. This has far-reaching implications for both the police and the public. Traffic violators, unlike criminal offenders, represent a cross section of the community. From the police standpoint—and especially from the standpoint of the officer accustomed to dealing with criminal matters—the absence of a clear line between the "good guys and the bad guys" and the absence of the "evil" element that attaches to most criminal offenses make traffic enforcement an uncomfortable area in which to function. From the citizens' standpoint, the contact which they have with a police officer as a traffic violator may be their only contact with a law enforcement agency. As a result, it has a major influence on their attitude toward the police and
usually serves as the basis for their reaction to other aspects of police functioning.

_Provision of Miscellaneous Emergency-type Services:_ It is to the police that most citizens turn when they require emergency transportation to a hospital, when they are locked out of their homes, when their child is lost, or when a cat must be removed from a tree. In congested areas inhabited by the poor, the police are often called upon to care for the ill, to deliver babies, and to force a landlord to provide required heat.

The primary reason such requests are directed to law enforcement agencies is apparently because the police are the only agency of local government available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, that has manpower available and dispersed in such a way as to make it possible for them to respond.

To the extent that the police have been concerned with the nature of their function, it is interesting to note that their concern has related almost entirely to these miscellaneous services—with the avowed objective of divesting themselves of continuing responsibility for them. Appealing as this may be from the police standpoint, there is no readily identifiable alternative by which needs of such an unpredictable and intermittent kind can be economically and efficiently met by municipal governments.

2. _Police have relatively little potential for preventing crime and outbreaks of violence._

From the very beginnings of the police service in England, emphasis was placed upon the role of the police in preventing crime. Indeed, Sir Charles Rowan, the first commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, in speaking of prevention, said: "To this great end every effort of the police is to be directed. The security of person and property, the preservation of the public tranquility and all the other objects of a Police Establishment will thus be better effected than by the de-
tection and punishment of the offender after he has succeeded in committing the crime. . . .” The degree to which Rowan and others were dedicated to this “principle of prevention” is reflected in the apparent opposition that they voiced to the appointment of the first individuals who were to devote all of their efforts to detection—the prototype of our modern-day detective.

In the intervening years, prevention as a principle of policing, in the sense in which it was first developed, has come to have little influence on the organization, staffing, and operations of our police forces. Modern police agencies are primarily geared to catching criminals. Prevention, as the term is used today, has come to characterize some of the activities in which the police are engaged, such as their patrol efforts, their work with juveniles, and their efforts to educate the public on conditions in one's home, car, or business that accommodate burglars and thieves. Within the total context of the police function, these activities, aimed at preventing crime, must compete with the more dominant concern for solving crime and apprehending criminals. In practical terms, this means competition for police manpower and for the budget dollar. The end result is that the preventive function tends to receive attention only when personnel are not otherwise occupied.

Despite the relatively small percentage of total police resources that go directly into preventive programs, police administrators in this country have continued to characterize prevention as one of their primary responsibilities—if not their most important one. Such a contention is an appealing one, for it has a positive ring to it, drawing public attention away from the somewhat negative image of the police as being exclusively oriented toward the catching and punishment of wrongdoers. The position has created a double-edged sword for the police, however, since it has encouraged the public to hold the police responsible for that crime which does occur. The number of reported crimes in a community, for example, are often taken as an indication of police ef-
ficiency. An upward trend in the crime rate is viewed as indicative of a failure in police operations. And, in similar fashion, the occurrence of an especially vicious crime is often followed by a public indictment of the police for having failed to prevent it.

All of these claims, on the part of both the police and the public, tend to ignore what is obvious to those who have been involved in the provision of police services: the capacity of the police to prevent crime is, indeed, very limited.

The primary method that the police must depend on for preventing crime implements the very elementary concept that a person contemplating a criminal act will not commit it if he can be convinced that he will be identified or apprehended in the process. As a result, most police efforts have been directed at making their presence felt to the maximum degree—as reflected in their use of conspicuously painted cars and their increased use of motorized patrol which, in contrast with foot patrol, has the potential for creating an impression of police omnipresence. There have been no serious efforts to measure the effectiveness of patrol as a crime-prevention method. It is clear, however, that whatever impact it has is limited to certain types of crimes that occur on the streets. A patrolling police officer, for example, is not likely to deter crimes of passion or to interfere with the carefully planned offenses of the professional criminal—most of which occur within private premises.

A dramatic and much heralded experiment conducted some years ago in New York City proved the obvious—that the saturation of an area with police officers will reduce crime. It did not examine the influence upon the crime rate outside the saturated area, nor did the experiment include any effort to determine whether the residents of the area were well prepared to tolerate such an intense degree of surveillance on a continuing basis and whether the taxpayers of the community at large were prepared to underwrite the cost of the required manpower. Police patrolling, as a preventive
technique, is inherently limited in its effectiveness by all of these considerations.

An underlying assumption of patrol activities is that the offender fears the consequences of apprehension. The effectiveness of patrol, therefore, as a crime-prevention technique, is largely influenced by the reputation which the criminal justice system of a jurisdiction establishes as to its handling of given types of offenders and especially as to the sentence imposed upon an offender found to be guilty.

Another factor, often ignored, is that there is no firm legal basis for police work aimed at preventing crime. Most police authority over an individual usually begins when a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that the individual committed a crime. Police cannot, for example, simply in the interest of preventing crime, search cars, explore private premises, or detain an individual.

All of these considerations force recognition of the limited capacity of the police to perform in a preventive role and—more basically—force a renewed awareness that, while the police may reduce the opportunity for the commission of a crime, their efforts do not begin to affect the deep-rooted causes of crime. Obviously this realization may be, somewhat the same error that has been made in looking to the police for the prevention of crime is now being repeated with regard to the police role in preventing the outbreak of racial violence. It is true that the police can do much to lessen the likelihood of violence by assuring that their practices in the policing of the minority community are fair and proper and by promoting a dialogue that facilitates the filing of complaints. But even with the best programs in this area, the police, alone, cannot prevent riots. If civil disorder is to be avoided, communities must deal with the prejudices and bigotry that give rise to discrimination in employment, housing, and education.

Police efforts to prevent crime and to prevent outbreaks of violence, if they are to be meaningful, must be more realistically defined. Continuation of the existing approach
that places demands and expectations upon the police that are impossible of achievement is disruptive of any serious efforts to improve the police service.

3. Individual officers are required to exercise broad discretion in the fulfillment of their police responsibilities.

The police are commonly viewed as a ministerial agency having no discretion in the exercise of their authority. While this view is occasionally reinforced by a court decision, there is a growing body of literature that cites the degree to which the police are, in fact, required to exercise discretion—such as in deciding which laws to enforce, in selecting from among available techniques for investigating crime, in deciding whom to arrest, and in determining how to process a criminal offender. Broad and oftentimes ambiguous statutes defining their powers and the limited resources made available to them are the major factors among several that require the police to assume a discretionary role.

In practical terms, the necessity for exercising discretion is reflected, for example, in the need for a police administrator to decide how much of his resources are to be devoted to traffic enforcement, as distinct from criminal investigations; in the decision of a police officer to arrest a disorderly group or order the members to “move on”; and in the determination of a juvenile officer to release a child to his parents rather than take him before the juvenile court. However the police officer acts, his decision is likely to have a major impact on the individual involved. Americans tend to be sensitive to any exercise of police authority—even if it does not result in an arrest and prosecution.

Most such decisions, in the absence of adequate legislative guidelines or administrative policies, are left to the discretion of individual officers. Confronted each day by frequently recurring situations, they either develop their own informal criteria for disposing of matters coming to their attention—depending heavily upon their imagination and resourcefulness—or they employ informal criteria which have, over a period of years, developed within the agency of which they
are a part. The individual officer succeeds, to an amazing degree, in muddling his way through: disputes are resolved; dangerous persons are disarmed; people not in control of their capacities are protected; and many individuals are spared what, under some circumstances, would appear to be undue harshness of the criminal process. The results, however, are sometimes less satisfactory—primarily because the criteria that are employed emerge largely in response to a variety of pressures to which the police are exposed and which are, therefore, not carefully developed. For example, the high volume of work which an officer must handle dictates a desire to take shortcuts in the processing of minor incidents. The personal conveniences of the officer—in making a court appearance, in completing reports, or in working beyond a scheduled tour of duty—become important determinants of how a case is handled. The high value attached to solving crime becomes a dominant consideration—often to the exclusion of other, more important values. And such indefensible criteria as the status or characteristics of the complainant, the victim, or the offender are often found to be among the most seriously weighted factors, since an officer, left to function on his own, understandably tends to respond to a given situation on the basis of his personal norms regarding individual or group conduct. The criticism commonly directed against police agencies regarding the exercise of police authority most frequently relates to discretionary actions rather than the clearly illegal use of police powers.

The Need for Research and Public Discussion

My purpose in making these three broad generalizations regarding the nature of police work (i.e., the noncriminal aspects of much of police activity, the limited role of the police in preventing crime, and the fact that the police are required to exercise discretion) is threefold: (1) to call attention to the significant difference between the actual functioning of the police and the widely-held notions regarding
the character of police operations; (2) to illustrate some of
the major problems and issues that are raised by actual police
functioning; and (3) to point up the need for addressing
these problems and, more broadly, for clarifying our think-
ing regarding the police role in our society as a prerequisite
to undertaking specific programs intended to strengthen and
improve our law enforcement agencies.

Clarification calls, initially, for establishing more facts.
Many of the matters on which I have generalized and spec-
ulated ought to be explored more carefully and in greater
detail through specially developed research programs. A be-
going must be made, for example, towards attempting to
measure the value of police efforts to prevent crime so that
some judgment can be made as to the extent to which a
community ought to invest in this aspect of the police func-
tion. There are many opportunities for conducting controlled
experiments in an effort to measure the effectiveness of dif-
ferent approaches to the policing of a community.

Clarification also calls for subjecting current police prac-
tices and the major issues relating to them to public dis-
cussion.

If, for example, the police are to continue to handle the
wide range of social problems that presently come to their
attention, what should their response be? Should the choice
be left to individual officers, or should there be some uniform
agency-wide policy? If there is to be a policy, should the
policy limit the police to taking action only if it is determined
that a crime has been committed? Or should the police ob-
jective be to resolve the problem, such as a domestic dispute,
in some manner? Should the officers go further and refer the
parties involved to community resources that may be of
some assistance to them? And if the choice is the latter,
should there be any follow-up on the case by the police?

If the police are to be held responsible for the prevention
of crime, how can their role be realistically defined? And if
this is done, what do the police need in manpower and legal
authority to equip themselves to meet their defined role
adequately? Should the need for the police to exercise discretion be recognized by the legislature? How should it be controlled?

Directions for Change

If I were at this time, without the benefit of research and public discussion, called upon to suggest the major paths for development of the police field in the years ahead, I would settle upon two major objectives.

The first would be the development within the police field of a stronger and more basic commitment to the values that must attach to the police function under democratic government. In a society that places so high a value on freedom and individual rights, we must insist that police officers, who are authorized to interfere with these rights, not only understand them, but that they and the agencies of which they are a part have a basic commitment to championing them above all other considerations as they are called upon to exercise their authority. This means, at the operating level, that, however isolated is the contact between an officer and an alleged offender, the officer would, on his own volition, be dominated in his choice of action by a desire to exercise proper concern for the rights of the offender. The police of this country must come to be viewed, foremost, as the guarantors of constitutionally granted rights and, only secondarily, as the catchers of criminals. Among the benefits that would flow from such an orientation would be a greater willingness to give to the police the authority and discretion which are needed if their effectiveness in the prevention and solution of crime is to be increased.

My second objective would be the development within the police field of a desire to meet more effectively the variety of social problems of a noncriminal nature that come to police attention. It is apparent that many social problems, such as family discord, mental illness, or inadequate housing, will continue to come to the surface in a way which brings them, initially, to police attention. Police intervention at so critical
a moment can have the effect of aggravating an already difficult situation, or it can constitute the first step, in collaboration with other community resources, toward solving the underlying problems. It can have a direct effect upon the incidence of crime by preventing an assault from occurring, or it can have a more long-range effect by strengthening the stability of the family unit. It follows that the devotion of more attention by police administrators to such problems has the potential for increasing substantially both the efficiency and effectiveness of the police response. Greater police involvement in this area also has the potential for diluting the harshness that often characterizes the police as enforcers of the law—casting the police in a more helpful, supportive, and positive role in the community.

*Effecting Change*

There are, in this country, a large number of extremely capable, intelligent, and conscientious police officers who have the drive, the basic conviction, and the desire necessary to move the police toward these stated objectives. But such officers are clearly in a minority and they are, for the most part, rendered impotent in their influence upon the quality of law enforcement by a value system dominating the police field that is diametrically opposed to the kinds of movement suggested here.

Police officers are generally committed to a hard-line in support of law and order. They are in favor of strong punitive actions against offenders, restraints on persons engaging in activities likely to provoke others, and the strengthening of their authority to investigate crime. They are suspect of anything that smacks of permissiveness and have little patience for those would argue, for example, that crime is a product of the environment. This overall approach aligns the police against such varied groups as the Supreme Court, civil rights leaders, social workers, and academicians—all of whom are viewed as being anti-police.

The difficulty with this approach is that it reflects a gross
oversimplification of some of the underlying problems. The common police posture, for example, indicates a failure to comprehend the complicated factors that give rise to criminal activity. It reflects a failure to understand the dynamics of a changing society in which there is a continuing drive to achieve greater equality. It reflects a failure to understand the role of dissent. And it reflects a failure to comprehend the direct relationship between the necessity of guaranteeing the rights of an individual accused of a crime and the kinds of ambiguous statements regarding our basic freedoms that are contained in Fourth of July talks—which readily win police support.

The police value system, however, does not exist in isolation. It has been created by—and is continually reinforced by—the community. This is largely by design. We have always had, in this country, a strong commitment to local control of law enforcement. The perpetuation of thousands of small, inefficient police agencies and the continuous opposition to strengthening or increasing national and state agencies mirror this commitment. Police chiefs are generally responsible to public officials who are themselves subject to election. Recruitment is often restricted to local residents so as to assure, among other things, that the community is policed by individuals likely to respond to local peculiarities and demands. And currently, we are witnessing the launching of a wide range of programs designed to improve police-community relations in which the emphasis is placed upon attempting to identify the police with the community and make them more responsive to the needs of the community.

All of these techniques have, together, been very successful in achieving their proclaimed objective. The views and policies of most police administrators, in my opinion, accurately reflect the views of the community. And, to the extent that liberals may criticize such views and policies as overly conservative, superficial and, at worst, stupid, it is my guess that they might just as well direct their criticism against the total community of which the police are but a microcosm.
Considering the degree to which we attempt to make the police answerable and accountable to the community, it seems somewhat inconsistent to ask that the police take the leadership role in effecting a change in the character of the police function. The police chief who attempts to implement a court decision with meaning, who takes positive action to protect the rights of a minority group to demonstrate, or who attempts to work with a juvenile gang in a constructive way is very likely to find himself at odds with the majority of the community he serves. To urge a chief to exercise a role of leadership in these areas is to urge, in some jurisdictions, that he adopt a suicidal path. Unless unusual circumstances exist, he does not operate from a sufficiently strong base to exert such leadership, nor is the community accustomed to looking to their police chief for guidance in matters of social reform.

All of these considerations point to the need for a more widespread recognition that a change in the nature of the police function in this country requires a change in the nature of the demand made upon the police by the public. If a community wants a police force that is dedicated to fairness, it must select a police leader whose concept of the police function places the high value on fairness that was suggested earlier in this paper. In like fashion, if a community wants a police force to collaborate with private and governmental agencies in an effort to deal with the community’s social problems, it must elicit the kind of interest and concern from their police administrator that will make it clear that the community places a positive value on such involvement by the police.

In practical terms, such influence can take several forms. It can be in the form of support for a police leader at critical times when, for example, he acts to protect the right of a minority-group citizen to reside in a segregated neighborhood—or when he acts to protect the rights of a person accused of a crime that has angered the community. It can be in the form of restraint from making demands upon the
police that result, for example, in their picking up large numbers of individuals, in dragnet fashion, for questioning in connection with the investigation of a serious crime. And, finally, influence can be brought to bear in the form of assistance to the less articulate segments of the community who are most frequently the subjects of police action, by aiding them in making their requests for proper police service known. This process for effecting change is obviously slow and cumbersome. It lacks the attraction inherent in current proposals for increasing the size of task forces, providing riot training, and establishing crime laboratories. Slow and cumbersome as it may be, however, it appears to be the only process by which we can achieve the kind of fundamental change in our concept of policing that will result in the police becoming more responsive to the peculiar needs of a democratic society.