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Review of “Upgrading the American Police,” By Charles B. Saunders, Jr.

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set of goals. These goals, in a broad sense, include protection of the individual in our society from personal and property loss at the hands of any other individual who has been through the criminal justice system. Further, that system should stop young offenders at the time of their earliest encounter with the justice system from beginning a life sentence "on the installment plan."

CHARLES MANN*

UPGRADING THE AMERICAN POLICE. By Charles B. Saunders, Jr.¹ Washington: The Brookings Institution, 1970. Pp. 172. \$5.95.

It has become increasingly fashionable in recent years for everyone from wild-eyed militants to grim-faced conservatives, from the President's commissions to neighborhood commissions, from learned political scientists to anyone with an "axe to grind" to offer comments and criticisms on what are the problems facing the criminal justice system in the United States, and particularly the field of Law Enforcement as it relates to the "cop on the beat". No matter what the true intention may be: political, revolutionary, patriotic, self-serving, it is generally accepted by knowledgeable citizens and sometimes, though grudgingly, the police themselves that Law Enforcement has been remiss in initiating programs necessary to upgrade the police. Scholars for half a century have recognized the crucial need for improving the quality of the police. An attempt was made to raise the quality of police agencies in the early 1900's, particularly by August Vollmer, Chief of Police, Berkeley, California, who almost single-handedly was applying new principles of organization and professionalism in the police field. It was not until crime in the streets became a selling point for politicians, recent Supreme Court decisions became a matter of controversy, the total ills of present society raised their ugly heads and with the drastically overdue awakening within the Law Enforcement field, that it became apparent to the average citizen of our country that the state of the art of police work was antiquated, under-staffed, under-educated, under-trained, and under-budgeted.

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The subject of problems in police work has become a salable item and great numbers have researched, written and rushed into print volumes describing the problems and how they can be solved, somewhat similar to the rush on books relating to the Kennedys and their clan. Mr. Saunders' book cannot be considered as a shocking new interpretation of the problems, but he approaches the subject in a clear, unsensational, unbiased view of what truly ails the police system.

Writings on this subject for the past half century have almost unanimously agreed that the greatest problem facing the police is the matter of personnel. *Upgrading the American Police* points out that the lack of personnel development in the police can be laid to many situations; the attitude of the citizen toward the police officer, the political strangle-hold on too many law enforcement organizations, and the theory of "it takes a thief to catch a thief". Therein lies a great problem; the stereotyping of the police officer as a "crook catcher" when really a very small part of his daily task involves apprehending criminals. Professional parochialism, though, has to receive the highest condemnation for the problems presently facing our country because of the slow mental growth of law enforcement agencies.

For too long, and still existing in many aspects of our society, it has been far more expedient to praise the police rather than to explore the considerable deficiencies prevalent throughout our nation's law enforcement agencies. For political expediency or to cover their own inadequacies, particularly in the smaller local governments, police men and police departments are praised by community leaders for their gallant efforts in a dangerous and hazardous occupation, extolling that these dedicated men need trust, confidence, and support in performing their duties with some reference to proper equipment and facilities and adequate compensation. Such praise, however, diverts attention from the stubborn personnel deficiencies at the heart of the police problem. There is, however, no simple formula for resolving the law and order situation. More personnel, equipment, and higher salaries would help, but this would be a simplistic approach to solving the problem and would only aggravate the current economic burden.

Few from within or without the police profession have been willing to face the fact that though quantity may be lacking, the true problem is the quality of the personnel presently in the police profession. Police departments have given and are continuing to give, without accepted good personnel recruitment practices, a new officer a gun, a uniform, a

badge, and orders to go out and be a police officer. It is interesting to note that some departments issue a new officer a gun to strap to his side while refusing to give him a traffic violation citation book, conceding that he may not be knowledgeable enough to properly judge when to issue a citation.

The quality lacking within the police at the present time is brought about because of the misconception by most police of their own role in society, inadequate selection standards for new recruits and for promotion to a higher rank, variation in standards of conduct, inadequate leadership, poor salaries, poor working conditions, inadequate education and training, and a poor police image which deters highly qualified applicants from expressing any interest in becoming a police officer.

True educational programs for police officers are lacking, though there has been a sharp increase in police science curricula throughout colleges and universities. The vast majority of them are of a vocational nature rather than enlightening courses which will prepare the officer for society and the members of the society with which he will be required to deal. This growth of college programs for police has been so recent and rapid that the programs are still in their infancy; the kindest statement that can be made of most is that they are in a state of flux. It is hoped that a concerted effort will be made to bring about an accepted criterion for pre-service and in-service education and training of the policemen. It is important for the policeman to take courses in areas not exclusively oriented toward his vocation, if the desired broadening of his perspective is to take place.

Educated policemen will help considerably in the crisis presently facing all of us, but administrators and particularly politicians with their hands on the "purse strings" have to realize that emphasis must be placed on in-service training at all levels. This must include recruit, middle management and executive training. Roll call, semi-annual and special seminar training must be expanded. With the expansion of training must also come a higher quality of instruction emphasizing the complexities of the police job and that discretion, service and protection are an important part of a policeman's function. "Training will help you to know when a law has been violated and when to make an arrest. Education will help you to know why the offense was committed and what may flow from your action." (Attorney General Mitchell's address on August 7, 1970 to graduates of the District of Columbia Metropolitan Police Academy) In too many policemen's minds

everything is black and white (in more ways than one) without any realization of the vast grey area in between. Police administrators have not adequately conveyed the need for training to the politicians who approve the budgets, and to the public that provides the tax monies, allowing the concept to perpetuate that the policemen's task simply entails "riding around on his seat" all day in a high-powered patrol car.

The community must be convinced of the need and the police must indicate their willingness to improve their lot. When the community genuinely becomes anxious to support its police, it will also find that in most cases it will not have the means to do so, and therefore, federal financial assistance will have to play a more integral part on the local scene.

These are some of the problems facing the Law Enforcement field. Mr. Saunders' book minutely examines these areas of difficulty and arrives at a proposed program to improve the complete profession through the assistance of federal funding. His proposal is not simply related to riot guns, radios, riot tanks, etc., but deals with education, quality of instruction, encouragement of educational advancement for in-service personnel, expanding opportunities for qualified students, establishing training standards, implementation of standards, improvement of instruction and provisions for facilities. The crucial decision, though, lies in the re-ordering of priorities, a time for new initiative, and the current national concern for law and order. The growing need for fair and more effective law enforcement could generate a comprehensive effort to upgrade police manpower.

As pointed out, knowledgeable observers have insisted for a half century that any such effort must be based on higher standards of police education and training, but whether the politicians, the do-gooders, and the citizens who need the help the most will respond to the need remains highly uncertain. Only time will tell, but Mr. Saunders' book should help considerably the interested and dedicated people who wish to see that date arrive.

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