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POLICE AND HUMAN RELATIONS IN MANAGEMENT

JOHN P. KENNY

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Police administration is changing. The complexity of urban life with its increasing populations, increases in crime, increasing traffic problems, and increased demands on the tax dollar limiting the amount available for police services has caused chiefs of police to seek means of providing more effective and efficient service with limited personnel. In addition, police departments are no longer strictly law enforcement agencies but by evolution have become service agencies supplying a multitude of services to the people. New techniques in police work are being developed and applied; better public relation programs are in evidence, and better personnel is being sought by improved recruitment and selection methods and a greater emphasis on training. Less concern, however, has been evidenced in bettering the management practices employed within departments. Experience in industry and in public agencies, particularly in the military, other than the police, indicate that agency efficiency and effectiveness may be increased by introduction of a human relations approach to management within an agency.

Since the police are placed in an authoritarian position by powers given them in law, it seems only natural that they have evolved as agencies accepting characteristics of authority and control for application to their own organizations. Acceptance of the military approach to management has led to a "command and obey" approach to supervision and control. Study of the science of human relations in public administration indicates other methods of supervision may be more effective even in military situations. More important seems to be the effect of relationships developed in small informal groups.¹ Many management factors influence the development of relationships in the small informal groups. It will be the purpose of this paper to discuss some of them and how they may be used in management of a police department.

A human relations approach to management implies treatment of workers by supervisors with respect and understanding instead of dominating by fear and threats. Industry has accepted this approach over the past few decades realizing increased output, better satisfied workers, and better employer-workers relations.² It would

¹ Morton Grodzins, "Public Administration and the Science of Human Relations," *Public Administration Review*, Vol. XI, No. 2, Spring 1951, p. 88.

² Parker, W. E., and Kleemeier, R. W., *Human Relations in Supervision*, New York, McGraw-Hill, 1951, p. 3.

seem that application of the human relations approach within a police agency would result in more effective police service through increased efforts of the individual officers, the hypothesis being that a satisfied worker will extend himself to do a better job.

The trend in the human relations field has been toward more democratic action within an agency. It has been found that participation of workers at all levels of the hierarchy in policy and decision making will increase an organization's effectiveness and that, as in government, men are best ruled by democratic methods.³ Adoption of democratic procedures in the police service does not imply relinquishing of command and control concepts necessary for effective organization; rather, on the presumption that all officers can make significant contributions toward better policies and procedures if they are heard and their knowledge and experiences are pooled, better police work will result.

Every officer in a department, from the chief of police to the new recruit, should participate if a human relations program is to be effective.⁴ Of necessity, the chief must take the lead. The policies, programs, and examples which he initiates become the guides for action by all other officers. His respect for and understanding of the problems of the officers becomes a means by which they may be solved, higher morale, mutual respect, and faith resulting.

Through the command group, lieutenants and above in rank, the chief disseminates throughout the department his policies and ideas for application. It is that group which in essence holds control over a department. Initiation of a human relations program must be through them, with their full support and understanding obtained. They are the link between the sergeants and the chief; they train and assist the sergeants in all operations and give up some of their authority so the sergeants may have freedom to act.⁵ It is these officers in the department who can make or break a human relations program.

The police sergeant is probably the key to success of any police human relations program, the same as he is considered to be in getting the police job accomplished. It is he who conveys policies, procedures, and assignments from above to the policemen; he who informs the command group of accomplishments, setbacks, problems, and grievances of the policemen; he who is the link between the policemen and command group above. It is his responsibility to develop a wholesome and loyal attitude in the policemen toward their job, themselves, and toward other officers in the department. Instilling of job satisfaction in the patrolmen becomes his responsibility. If changes are to be made in departmental practices or procedures, it is the sergeant's job to change the policemen's attitudes and to condition them for the changes.

Success of a human relations program comes through its understanding. The elements or concepts are not complex. Most are commonplace and merely require recognition and an understanding of why they affect the work of people in a department.

In order to do their best jobs, supervisors must know men. One of the first and

³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁴ Piffner, John M., *The Supervision of Personnel—Human Relations in the Management of Men*, Prentice Hall, New York, 1951, Chapter XIV.

⁵ Parker and Kleemeier, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

most obvious things is to learn that people are different, that each policeman is different one from the other, have different aptitudes, backgrounds, likes and dislikes, and different personalities. These differences should be recognized and used to the advantage of the department. Advantage comes from assigning officers who can get along with juveniles to the juvenile unit, and officers who are good investigators to the detective division, as examples.

It has been generally accepted that the "driver type" supervisor cannot easily get work done effectively and efficiently. A good supervisor knows men as individuals, intimately and well. He has an understanding of their lives both within and without the organization and uses this knowledge to an advantage in supervising men under him. No officer has one personality on the job and one at home.⁶

Fundamentally, people differ because of heredity and environment. There is some question as to how much a person's inherited qualities can be changed. It has, however, been generally accepted that environmental aspects of human personality can be changed through appropriate training. If a supervisor is to be effective, he should understand which traits of a person can be changed and which probably cannot. An understanding of these factors makes possible a better approach to the problems of officers at all levels, and conditions operations of a department and the training program it is to use. It should be pointed out here, however, that all supervisors cannot be expected to be diagnosticians, but through training there can be developed in them an understanding of some of the basic reasons of why people differ in order that they may be more effective.

Because people's present way of life is predicated upon environment and inherited factors, change must come slowly if at all. An officer comes to the police service with certain beliefs and attitudes toward the job as well as toward other things in life. It is these beliefs and attitudes which must be recognized and dealt with in order to assimilate a person into the police service. A supervisor can do much in changing these belief systems and attitudes if he approaches the job properly. If the sergeant and other ranking officers understand the behavior of people in general; know officers; work through persuasion and a facing of the facts rather than through fear and threats; work through any natural or indigenous leader of the organization; plant ideas and let them grow; and know people's feelings and sentiments, there is a much better chance that change can be accomplished.⁷

In the police service, there are several factors which affect cooperation between divisions and units and coordination of all units in a department for effective accomplishment of work. In some departments the detective unit becomes enveloped in an atmosphere of "cloak and dagger" work, insulated from other division. Detectives adopt superior attitudes toward their work, giving the impression that only they as specialists can perform their jobs. They seek little help from other officers, nor do they give any in return. Other policemen in the department resent the detectives' attitudes, and work of the department suffers. A similar situation may develop in relationships between motorcycle traffic personnel and policemen in other units. Motorcycle officers usually draw additional pay, wear distinctive uniforms, and

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁷ Pffner, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

develop a high "esprit de corp" because of these differences. The result is usually decreased over-all effectiveness of police work. If the command group of the department understands these differences in thinking, it is much easier to accomplish change and to develop cooperation and coordination among the different groups.⁸

People universally resist change in policies and procedures of the agency in which they work, and policemen are no exceptions. Change in a report form, general change in shift assignments, or a major change, such as from two-man to one-man patrol cars, are basis for considerable resistances and discontent. The resistance and discontent should be anticipated and provided for in advance. Adequate advance information of the contemplated changes should be given; a full explanation of reasons for the contemplated change provided. Officers should be interested in and stimulated to participate in the changes, and they should be assured that there is no threat to their own personal security.⁹ Participation of all officers in planning can diminish ill effects of change.

There are two settings for human relations in management of a police agency, the formal and informal or social organization. Formal organization of a police department refers to departmental structure and its use in carrying out the police function. There is no question but that sound organization facilitates effective direction, coordination, and control to achieve the police purpose. However, the formal organization in and of itself usually does not accomplish the job. The existing social system must also be considered. This social system may be partly formal and partly informal, and it may be good or bad for the agency, but it nevertheless exists.¹⁰

INFORMAL ORGANIZATION¹¹

In the informal or social organization there are both healthy and unhealthy aspects. The unhealthy aspects manifest themselves in such diverse elements as rivalry among officers of the same rank which creates tension, cliques of officers, dissatisfied officers, and informal leaders. The healthy aspects are exemplified by team work which increases effectiveness, a social situation which makes people happy at work, and cooperation which gets the job done when formal organizations fail.¹² Numerous examples are available in almost any organization of both the healthy and unhealthy aspects. It is not clear just how much or how little informal organization is needed to maintain a police agency or any agency in good health. Informal organization may help in getting the job done, if formal organization is faulty; on the other hand it may be necessary where the social needs of the employee are not satisfied on the job or where the formal organization in and of itself may be good but the methods of application are not satisfactory.

In a police agency informal organization manifests itself in many situations. Disregard for policemen's off duty time, demands for excessive hours of overtime without pay, or constant pressure from supervisors may result in the development of a

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, (See Chapter VIII for a comprehensive discussion of informal organization.)

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 129.

patrolmen's club or some other type of organization to resist inequitable practices. Perhaps a more serious manifestation is inefficient or sloppy work caused by improper supervision or poor organization. For example, officers may fail to make reports on minor cases, make inadequate reports on major cases, and do as little routine patrol as possible if they feel they receive no credit for a job after it is completed.¹³

Another universal aspect of informal organization is the struggle for power. In a police department this is as true as in any type of agency. It is generally accepted in our society that success comes via the promotion route on a job. Officers of lower rank vie for favored positions or jockey for recognition in order to achieve promotion. This creates a competitive spirit, and if senior officers show favoritism, the results may be serious.

Another common phenomenon is the development of cliques. A clique may not be subversive in nature nor underground in its operation, but if the proper atmosphere does not prevail, it may become so. In fact often there are healthy cliques leading to increased productivity and output of work. An example of a healthy clique in a police organization is three or four officers assigned to contiguous beats working out a comprehensive informal cover plan for apprehending burglars, window peepers, or other criminals who are operating in their areas. Such cliques may develop with complete disregard for established rules and regulations but nevertheless produce excellent work.

A supervisor may become the key figure in controlling or directing the informal organization activities. To be an effective supervisor one must understand how people group together naturally in order that he may weld his group into a natural working team. All supervisors, from the sergeant up, should try to achieve a unity of feeling among policemen under their commands in order to do better the police job. Good supervision is the key to achieving team work.

Another important factor in human relations is status. Status refers to the position of the individual as it is expressed by attitudes, opinions, and regards of the members of the group to which one belongs. It may be achieved formally by promotion or informally by becoming an informal leader. In a police department it manifests itself by such diverse elements as seniority, graduation from uniform into a plain clothes detail, by obtaining assignment to the motorcycle squad, or even by being the officer to whom other officers come with problems. And of course, the stars, bars, and stripes signifying different police positions are important status symbols for the police.

Solutions vary, but some examples include calling all officers of a lower rank policemen, making assignments from the patrolman or sergeant ranks to the detective division on a non-permanent basis, and by allotting no extra pay for motorcycle traffic duty, making that assignment less desirable. In the main, the status problem may be coped with by understanding that people need recognition and prestige to be motivated to do a better job. A word of praise, an additional day off, or something similar, provided when an officer makes a good arrest or does an outstanding piece of work may suffice. In other cases it may require additional recognition.

¹³ G. Douglas Gourley, "Police Discipline," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, Vol. 41, No. 1, May-June 1950, p. 92.

COMMUNICATIONS

It has generally been agreed by top management in industry that an informed work force and the public are the best guarantees for understanding and preserving of our varied way of life.¹⁴ Good communication may be accomplished by management informing workers, through accurate reports, solicitation of suggestions, use of bulletins, and other media. It should also make available complete information on the departmental personnel program. The personnel program is of perhaps greater concern to the average officer than is usually suspected.

The chief of police may insure an informed work force by preparation of an accurate and complete departmental manual, showing duties, assignments, functions, and responsibilities of the various units and even the various officers within the department. The manual should be kept up to date with changes and new procedure which may be initiated. A regular bulletin from the chief's office is also an effective tool for communication. In this bulletin the chief can inform the officers of general changes which are contemplated or are being made, inserting a few articles on individual officer accomplishments, give a picture of the departmental work, and in general, use it as a departmental organ for informing the work forces of the activities of the department. This latter was recently done by a small department in Southern California increasing the morale and interest of the officers considerably.

If changes in departmental procedure are anticipated, it is well that the officers are informed well in advance. It is tragic for the officers to hear from any other source than the chief's office or the department that the changes are being contemplated. To insure acceptance of the change, the chief should work through the immediate supervisors, and especially, if changes are to affect the officers in the field, the sergeant should be utilized as the key man for interpretation. The sergeant should also be the key man to quell rumors and to avoid development of inaccurate information circulation. He should give out to the officers accurate information on what is being contemplated.

On the other hand, a channel should be developed for use of the officers in transmitting information from their position to the top, if necessary. Officers need as direct a line as possible. They can either work through the chain of command, with a procedure in effect to assure that their complaints or suggestions will reach the proper authority; or, if this has broken down, perhaps it may be advisable to establish some line which will by-pass the chain of command. To insure participation of officers at the lower level, top management must assume responsibility for having no secrets and for keeping the officers completely informed. In essence, good faith should be established on both sides.

Every department has its share of officers in the hierarchy who dam or block information from below. As indicated earlier, this should be avoided at all costs. There is a tendency of some supervisors to sift information deliberately, keeping that information from above which might affect their positions. Middle and top supervisors should be aware of this sifting and avoid it wherever possible. Middle supervisors

¹⁴ Pffifner, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

should also avoid sifting information and not passing down to the officer at the lower level information which he should have.¹⁵

In communications, one thing to avoid is that which has in the past been termed the "open door policy." This does not mean that the chief of police and the higher officers should not be approachable: they should. There is, however, a natural apprehension of authority, pressure of the top executive type atmosphere, preoccupation of management with its own quirks which make the open door approach not too satisfactory for the worker. An officer will hesitate to go into the chief's office even though the door may be open and the chief there. First, he will be ill at ease because of the boss complex he may have; also, he may have a certain fear of disturbing some important work which the chief of police may be doing. It is much better to provide a system which fosters a free interchange of ideas through an appropriate medium, even to having regular hours set aside for individual office conferences.

A development of a system which fosters free interchange of ideas may counteract the grapevine or rumor medium of transmission of bad information. The "grapevine" is a universal phenomenon.¹⁶ It may be used for good purposes, but more often it is used with bad effects. Facts will discourage any bad effect which rumors of situations may cause. In essence, communication is really the key to successful human relations. Communication which develops a mutual faith between the supervisors and the workers is the most effective.

SUMMARY

Acceptance of the democratic approach to human relations in police work must come. Advancements in the technological and scientific ways of police work, in the techniques of administration, and in an understanding of the criminal mind is not enough. Police work is more than work with criminals or apprehending them, or administering an organization. Police work is a public service. To be effective and to meet the needs of the public, an efficient organization must be developed, an organization staffed with personnel who have an understanding of the human problem, but more important, have an understanding of their own problems and cope with them adequately before trying to solve the problems of people who are in trouble. The human relations approach to organization and management of a police department is a must, and the sooner it is accepted and applied, the quicker police service will reach the status it deserves, that of a recognized profession.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 156.