The Neighbourhood Policeman

** Mr C. H. Fogarty

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- ** Mr C. H. Fogarty, B.A., M.Phil., (Cantab.), M.A.I.E.S., First Grade Sergeant, Tasmania Police Force.)

When I first agreed to deliver this paper, I was accorded such parameters that I mistakenly believed the task would be a relatively simple one. Once I began however, I quickly realized the fallacy of that notion. Just where was I to start? What should I include? And more importantly, what should I omit? Deep down I thought that I should be taking advantage of the occasion to put forward some of the police views, because it is not often we have that opportunity. But somehow. and believe me it was difficult, I thought that tenor would not be quite right at a Seminar such as this, so I attempted to resist the idea. Please note that I said attempted! Therefore, if you perceive a bias on

part, it is unintended.

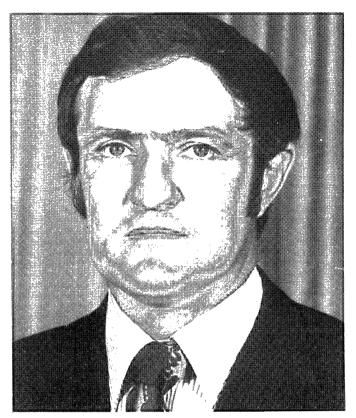
Let me begin now by reiterating what you obviously know, that is, that the role of the police in the community, and the role of the community especially related to the police function, is continually being examined and redefined. The focus of attention is on us more now than ever before. What you are not probably fully aware of is how we, the police and the public, are reacting to each other in light of that attention. I think it would be safe to say that the police have made a much more determined effort to be more responsive to the community. The question is, which community? You know and I know that "the community" is an elusive concept and not easy to identify. Therefore, if we believe we are being responsive to "the community", we may in fact only be responsive to the responsive part of the community, and that I see is a real danger.

The police have, in the past, relied on traditional public relation campaigns to build an image of themselves and improve the public's perception of them. It is a one way process of "selling" yourself. What now transpires is that many police departments, seeing the fallacy of such a single process, are concentrating on a concept called policecommunity relations. It is believed this concept, with an emphasis on two-way communication, can improve police-community relationships, facilitate an exchange of objective ideas, and encourage working together for mutual benefit. Unfortunately not all departments, not every faction of the community see public relations and community relations any differently. They believe they are synonymous. Activities should be concerned with projecting a favourable image, but in my opinion if they are so narrow, they miss the point because looking good does not necessarily imply being good, and whilst we would all dearly like our policemen to be loved by everyone, we know that can never be. But this should not deter us from trying to achieve that Utopian situation.

A successful police force must have the confidence of the community; that we already know. Yet the modern police officer walks a tightrope because he stands between the right of the community to be protected, and the right of the community to be free.

Is this not a contradiciton? When police actively protect interests, the public will react positively, and they will react equally negatively when police activity is seen as a nuisance or an intrusion on personal freedom. The police officer must, as well as maintaining order, dispense justice. For most people he becomes their only contact with the law. If he is seen in a favourable light, then the whole criminal justice system will probably be seen the same way. The policeman therefore faces paradox after paradox. He is damned if he does and he is damned if he does not. Today's police officer is frequently viewed by the community in terms that are as abstract as the police role. The policeman does not always enjoy the luxury of being an

individual or even a human being for that matter. He is viewed by



subjective impressions rather than objective reality and society may just now be beginning to recognise the contradictions and burdens it places on police. GEARY 1975: 31).

It is not unusual for antipathy against the police to arise in the community, especially when police do not measure up to the crime fighting image portrayed on the screen and by the media. All of us should know, but obviously do not know, that the police can not live up to that image because it is a fragmented and unrealistic one. Our problems are much more complex. Most believe and I daresay that even some of you do, that the proper role of the police is that of crime fighters. Indeed some police departments are organized solely along those lines. It may interest you to know that in fact some 80% of police time is not spent on crime related incidents at all, but on non-criminal and social service matters. Many of us are even loath to admit such a thing could occur, and this tends to make us bigotted, narrow minded or lacking in compassion. There is then a very urgent need for mutual understanding between the community and the police on what the police actually do, and what problems they face.

Some people argue that the police should not be involved in tasks that are essentially service orientated and not related to law enforcement, especially those that could be handled by someone else. We, the police, argue that these functions often help to build relationships and thereby enhance our primary role function of law enforcement. Some would like to see the police reorganized as either a social service agency or a crime control agency, whilst others see a compromise of the two. We should not separate them for obvious reasons. Take for instance an ordinary domestic situation. It may start out as basically a social problem but it is likely to develop into a situation requiring the prevention of the commission of an offence. How could another agency handle this? I am aware that in the United States, special units have been set up to experiment along these lines but the task has always reverted to a police function. In isolated areas, the police are often the only ones able to provide a social service, primarily because of economic limitations and the infeasibility of other agencies being employed full time. Even in the larger centres, the police still remain the only "after five" facility able or willing to assist in many instances. The two police functions of law enforcement and social service can not be dissociated. Care and control merge into one. What we do need is a reconciliation of police and other social welfare and community based agencies. The so called dilemma faced by agents of control as against agents of care is a false anti-thesis.

In smaller communities, police officers in their capacity as citizens as well as police officers, become involved in many community, church, recreation or civil activities. In larger communities policemen face a problem of establishing personal relationships with the community, mainly because they do not live where they serve. They are merely anonymous representatives of the law. To this end the police administrator faces a dilemma. He must satisfy the public's demand or expectation for visible evidence of a police presence to reduce crime, curtail disorder or simply to be part of the community, and he must organize and conduct his force as economically as possible. Mr K. H. Viney, our Assistant Commissioner of Police (Logistics), last year made mention of the fact that in the period 1960-1970, here in Tasmania, we closed most of our residential suburban police stations and centralized activities. (VINEY 1997: 10). Our reasons were mainly centred around the bureaucratic criteria of efficiency and economy. We may well ask now, did we do the right thing? One hopes the answer is yes, because if it is not then we may be forever left with the problem. Can anyone imagine a government reopening police stations simply because our feelings today are that the policeman should be back in the community? I do not think we can afford that luxury.

Unfortunately for us, politicians and others who hold the purse strings, like to see things in terms of cold hard facts. There seems to be this popular fable that money alone will solve social problems and this delusion is currently being applied to crime problems. We can perhaps measure the productivity of electronic information systems or sophisticated transport but we can not similarly measure the productivity of the policeman in the community. We could well say crime cost us \$20 million last year and we may relate the productivity of policemen to that, but remember, law enforcement only involves 20% of the policeman's time. How do you measure productivity or effectiveness of the other 80%? Police activities just can not be measured and evaluated without reference to the total criminal justice system and to the social milieu in which the activities take place. The effectiveness of police depends not only on their own operations but on the operations of the courts, prosecutors, correctional agencies, probation, social welfare and other community based organizations. Despite opinions, no tangible and truly effective means have been found to measure the efficiency of police with any degree of accuracy. (UNITED NATIONS 1975: 49). Statistics are invariably used but people with any insight at all are aware of statistical deficiencies, limitations and capacity of manipulation. So just where does it leave us?

In their belief that they are doing the right thing, the police generally appear to be moving away from the concept of preventive patrolling and towards more direct involvement with the public. And whilst it is essential that police should undertake certain activities which are outside their normal role, care must be taken to ensure that those activities do not extend too far into the area of responsibility of other agencies. I refer in particular to social welfare departments, Probation Service, the Courts, teachers and even parents. Often these people are not able to provide the service when needed, and some of them may not be as effective as many of us would want. Nevertheless, they all have a part to play. It becomes important to incidents, was the highly mobile motor car.

of others in relation to those boundaries. In the past our strategies, if you could call them that, have emerged in an incremental way without much cogitable consideration of each other, how we may control crime or how we can benefit the community generally. Our police-community relations main thrust is in working together in the community to anticipate and prevent problems and to do something constructive about problems before crises occur.

As I said before, the police administrator faces a dilemma in how he organizes his service. He may consider organizing it along quasimilitary lines with strict supervision and a strong centralized command structure which has the ability to deploy police to emergency situations as the need arises. Or he may consider that because so much time is spent on non-ciminal matters, or that a show of power may aggravate an otherwise perfectly normal controllable situation, or that increased supervision may lower morale and standards, he should organize along decentralized lines. The dilemma occurs because he is not so sure just which of the two models is the more successful. For instance the first may result in quicker response time to incidents, but may lead to less contact time, thereby losing or diminishing at least any worthwhile relationships likely to arise out of the contact. The second model may require more men because so much time is spent on each contact. If this was all he had to consider, the task would be difficult but not irresolvable. He also has to consider the effect changes to procedures may have on the men, and also a more contentious one of the community not knowing what it wants. Some people demand tough law and order, whilst others demand the police be subject to community control and closely integrated with it, whilst others demand both.

To test these two models, police forces in the United States, utilizing a concept derived by the Scottish Police in Aberdeen in 1948, devised a concept they call team policing, but which may be more familiarly known to you as neighbourhood team policing, unit beat policing, contact policing, sector policing or integrated community policing. As you can see there are many names, but for our own purposes, except for small adaptations, they mean basically

the same. I do not want anyone to take me to task on this issue, because each force considers its system to be different from others and of course, more efficient. I am not going to comment on whether one is better than the other, but simply to generalize. Therefore, by apologising, I hope to incur somewhat less wrath than I may have if I had not. In theory, team policing then:

"Combines the advantages of a substantial police presence in a neighbourhood, deployed to put the maximum number of officers on the street during times of greatest need and supervised so as to encourage the maximum use of information about the area and its citizens, with the advantages of a police style devoted to servicing complaints, helping citizens and establishing good relations." (WILSON 1973: xi).

This concept is not suggested to be the answer to the police problem, yet, despite its vagueness and uncertainty, it offers promise. Good police work needs an efficient operation and a responsiveness to the needs of the community. Team policing allegedly reconciles these sometimes conflicting aims.

What then is team policing and how does it differ from ordinary policing? Team policing organizes itself around neighbourhoods and combines the team concept with a neighbourhood concept. It attempts to:

"hold certain people responsible and accountable for the quality of police service and crime control; strengthen relationships between police and the community by concentrating team efforts in a single neighbourhood, and increase the crime informational flow from the public to the police." (UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE 1973: 1).

Team policing decentralizes police departments by breaking up large divisions of men into teams of 30-40 police officers. This will of course differ from place to place. Police are assigned to an area of responsibility and are required to get to know the neighbourhood, its people, and its problems. The modification to unit beat policing combines patrol and investigative personnel. It is based on the belief that mutual feelings of understanding and co-operation can enhance police effectiveness. It is seen as the best way to utilize resources, to lead to greater community involvement in the cause of crime control, and to foster greater police satisfaction. Teams become orientated to the community by establishing and emphasizing positive worthy relationships through formal and informal mechanisms. Police become involved in meetings with business personnel; participate on family and neighbourhood councils, councils on crime, committees and seminars. By recognizing previous shortcomings of police-community relations and the increasing social isolation of police from the community, team policing actively seeks to harmonize those in the community who have something to offer, and to reduce that isolation which makes crime control difficult.

There have been calls to bring back the policeman on the beat the foot policeman. I am not convinced that this is the answer. Today most people once old enough to drive, move about in a motor vehicle. Even the housewife, who once conducted her shopping at the local corner shops, now drives directly to a large shopping complex or supermarket car park, does all her shopping and drives directly home again. It applies also to liquor stores, drive-in banks, drive-in movies and so on. If we put men on the beat, whom would they talk to? As well as this, the boredom of the beat does nothing to motivate today's policeman. Four Corners last year featured a programme on a new concept of beat policing implemented by the Victorian Police called "Operation Crime Beat". The operation was regarded as being responsible for decreasing crime by 22% during the initial period. These are doubtful statistics considering only 39 men were involved in the scheme. It seems more likely that if there was any drop in crime rates, it arose when the media unwittingly gave it so much publicity during the initial period, that most of the public expected to see a policeman on each corner. Experts called it an illusion, and other State forces regarded it a waste of manpower and resources. The New South Wales Police called it an anachronism, the only effective means, they said, to respond to such diversity of incidents, was the higly mobile motor car.

Whilst the results of team policing have not been empirically verified, some evaluations have been made (CORDREY et al 1973; VICTORIA POLICE 1978; SHERMAN et al 1973; BROWN L. 1976; BLOCK et al 1973). But they suffer such methodological flaws that they must be considered otherwise than satisfactory. Their conclusions indicate the usefulness of the concept, and emphasize that misunderstanding between the police and the public is more likely to be minimized; police morale is more likely to improve; and so is crime control effectiveness. Others suggest it is useless, operationally and administratively. People want respect and efficient service, nothing more and nothing less. Police, the critics say, react to pressures and therefore are responsive to the more vocal aspects

of the community and the less articulate are left out. Police-community relations improvement is based on different judgements of how it is best achieved and it becomes in fact the powerful versus the powerless. (KELLY et al 1972.)

Here in Tasmania we have what can only be considered a hybrid team policing concept based on divisional responsibility. The difference lies in the intentions and objectives which emphasize community involvement to the extent I have discussed. We have two legs of the tripod — public relations and community service — but we do not have the planned purposeful community participation, the third leg. Most of us support the special units of public relations and crime prevention, but feel that whilst it is done by others, we need not do much ourselves. The Scottish Strathclyde Police at this time, have a very progressive scheme of community involvement. They have a Community Involvement Branch with a role of social crime prevention. The scheme aims at gaining the full support and confidence of the public through sound communication between the police, the public, and all other agencies at various levels. With other experts, police advise on adverse environmental and social factors which may influence delinquency. (PAYNE 1978: 34.)

If we bothered to look about us we would see many people with something to offer towards better police-community relations, and towards the control of crime. Police for instance, with their experience, can contribute much to the definition, diagnosis and resolution of the crime problem. So too can school teachers, social workers, probation officers, jurists and ordinary members of the public. If we are to devise crime prevention strategies, all interested people must be brought together in a co-operative, co-ordinated venture. The problem is far too complex for any one agency working alone. Crime control is not just the responsibility of the police; all of us in the community have a stake. We, the police often feel that strategies emphasize far too much the police responsibility. Strategies themselves tend to be public relation gimmicks and this tendency must be cast aside. The more people who can be induced to contribute, the more likely the real problem can be defined, and the more likely people will see it as their problem and share with others the responsibility od osomething about it. Providing more money for equipment and resources to better fight crime is a vain investment if the community can not be induced to become involved.

From my point of view, the operation of an Australian Crime Prevention Council is a commendable and worthy start, but we may well ask ourselves: Are we as effective as we could be? Are we simply window dressing? Do we know where we are going? There was once an ancient Hebrew Sage who, when asked "Why did God give us two eyes? Why didn't he give us one or three?" replied "We were given two eyes so as to have one with which to look out at the world around us, and the other to look inward at the world within us." (GEARY 1975: 38). It is good advice.

It is a sad fact that communication and co-operation between various authorities in this State - and I daresay the same thing applies in other States as well — is almost non-existent. Police on the whole have little or nothing to do with social workers and other like groups, except at times when conditions force an encounter. Neutrality, sometimes hostility and lack of co-operation is a reason why there is so little literature on the subject. Studies indicate that police consider social workers as "wishy washy" and as people with a less clearer conception of themselves than the police officer. (FINNEY 1972: 59). We the police see them almost as altruists and bleeding hearts. Our perceptions are negative, there is a lack of communication at both ends, and it is inevitably accompanied by mistrust and cynicism. Because police are essentially a social service there should be a natural bond between us, social workers, and all others who have an obligation to protect and care for mankind. Police efficiency depends on the nature and quality of society, its structures, organizations, relationships and values. If we live in an unstable, insecure and uncertain environment, forces of local circumstance impose intolerable strains on the policies of police and other agencies so that separatist policies, wasteful and ineffective in themselves, remain. A refusal or an inability to collaborate are sure routes to social crisis.

Up to this point I have not been overly kind to our previous efforts of crime control and police-community relations. Perhaps it is time I proposed some constructive ideas which I see could improve them. I am not advocating that the suggestions will solve all problems, because they will not. I am also not sure whether what I suggest will ever come to fruition because of the near impossibility of the task. But, I think we should look at them.

- Police Departments should implement well thought out, planned purposeful community-relation programmes. Therefore by necessity it becomes imperative to distinguish between public relations and community-relations. Image building should occur naturally when effective programmes are implemented.
- The programmes implemented by the police and other bodies, even the Crime Prevention Council, should be aimed at those

- people in the community who do not comprise the most vocal or powerful elements. We have to reach those who do not join groups, parents and friends, committees and the like.
- groups, parents and friends, committees and the like.

 3. We the police, need more assistance from the public to help us determine our role in society. This task should not be left to the police alone. How we are to get the public articulate enough to express police service expectations is another matter.
- 4. There needs to be community consensus on the dichotomy of protecting individual rights and enforcing the law. People, as well as criticising police, should come out and praise them more. This could be assisted by the media who instead of concentrating on crime news presentation, might publish many of the service functions performed by the police.
- functions performed by the police.

 5. We must remember "the community" comprises a number of communities. Therefore there can be no one community-relations formula suitable for them all. Programmes, when they are designed, must be tailored to the locality in question.
- 6. In the community we need public advisory groups that can advise the police on public opinion. The police are not equipped to determine all the trends and changes occurring in the community. However, care must be taken to ensure that the "powerless" have a means to participate and contribute, as well as the "powerful".
- 7. The police in the past have either been denied access to, or have been overlooked when community activities are discussed or planned. Many agencies have thought that the police would not be interested. In my opinion we are interested and we do have something to contribute.
- 8. We should concern ourselves more with the education of our children in the workings of the administration of criminal justice, our legal system, and law enforcement generally. The police are only too willing to assist educators in this area. With education must go understanding and this I see as the important aim.
- The police should not be blamed for many of our social problems

 drugs, crime, traffic they should not be considered police
 problems solely, but community problems.
- As citizens we do not normally like to make waves, nor do we like being involved in controversial or conflicting subjects. We should, it seems to me, consider our responsibilities and get involved.

In conclusion, I hope that I have not offended too many of you with what I have said. I have tried to be as objective as possible, but sometimes subjectivity can not be avoided. I believe all of us have to rethink about just what we should be doing. There is a need therefore, to critically evaluate some of our past strategies and learr from them.

Our success or otherwise will be measured by our ability to carefully avoid similar pitfalls in the future.

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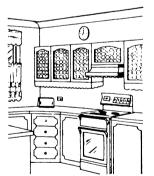
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