

INTRODUCTION TO SPECIAL POLICE ISSUE

EUGENE EIDENBERG *University of Minnesota*

In this issue of the *Law and Society Review* we have collected seven original pieces to examine areas of consequence in law enforcement policy. While these articles are not necessarily prescriptive in their approach, all of them do touch on major facets of current dispute and concern in law enforcement.

Bordua and Tiff's article and Hahn's piece contribute to our understanding of police-citizen contacts and how we ought to go about finding out what happens when police and citizen interact. Beyond this question is the critical policy issue of how a society structures its law enforcement process to permit police decisions to be positively influenced by the needs of the community in which they work. The rhetoric of "community control" has not been particularly enlightening, and the issue remains both important and badly misunderstood. Without research data that illuminate real attitudes of "communities" toward police, and vice versa, we will not begin to understand where there are reinforcing attitudes and where the real differences rest. In the absence of such data, citizen and police approach each other with suspicion and anxiety born in large measure of an ignorance of the mutual self interest that ought to guide both attitudes and behavior, but which so often does not.

Levine offers what will no doubt be a controversial prescription for affecting police behavior. This article represents an important attempt to use social science research (in the area of operant conditioning) to advocate policy alternatives in the law enforcement area. It is not extreme to observe that most law enforcement policy in the United States is the product of serious prejudice regarding what the police are and ought to be doing in our society rather than being the product of an analysis of what the police in fact do and are capable of. Levine's piece, while not definitive, is suggestive and it offers a look at what some possibilities might be in changing reward and incentive systems for law enforcement personnel.

Nationally, the United States has embarked on an important experiment with the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe

Streets Act of 1968. The goal of the law has been to control and prevent crime through support of state and local programs that may or may not have the desired result. A potentially important creation of this law has been the establishment of the National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice. The Institute holds the promise of someday doing for the criminal justice system what NIH and NIMH have done in the medical research area. There can be no doubt that there is a desperate need for a research and evaluation arm of the action programs founded by LEAA around the country. John Gardiner, of the Institute's staff, reports in his article on developing models useful in research in law enforcement and criminal justice.

Journalists are starting to note that one of the more significant developments in law enforcement in the last decade has been the emergence of strong police unions. The issue is broad in its implications, i.e., who controls the police? Who makes law enforcement policy? Are the police becoming a powerful and independent political force in the major cities of the country? One of the few scholars with a sustained interest in these issues is Hervey Juris, a student of labor organizations in general and of police unions in particular.

One can't think for very long about the role of the police without thinking about the environment in which they work. The socio-psychological issue is: how deep is our society's commitment to and support for its legal system, and how much tolerance is there within that commitment for criminal behavior. John Conklin's article addresses these questions and in so doing expands the perspective from which we can analyze the police. It is fundamentally true that the police respond in large measure to their view of what society will permit, tolerate, or explicitly demand.

Private police activity is an almost totally unexamined sector of law enforcement in the United States. Ellery Queen and the Thin Man remain the source of most American's views of private policing. But Scott and McPherson show us in their piece that both conceptually and empirically it is important to understand where private policing stands vis-a-vis the mission of the municipal law enforcement agency. More and more Americans are turning to private answers to their felt security needs. One can only speculate what the implications are for large scale use of private security arrangements for people of means inside cities with large poor, nonwhite populations already in a state of tension with the tax-supported police.