

# PRODUCTIVITY

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## IMPROVING POLICE PRODUCTIVITY

more for your  
law enforcement  
dollar

A  
BRIEF  
FOR  
ELECTED  
OFFICIALS

## WHY THE CONCERN WITH POLICE PRODUCTIVITY?

Police protection is one of the most costly items in the budget of every local government. For example:

- To man one more round-the-clock walking beat or post means adding five patrolmen to the force at a cost of approximately \$80,000 a year.
- To place an officer in a police car with a partner 24 hours a day may exceed \$175,000 a year in costs to the community.
- Among the many valued services provided by the police, crime-related activities may comprise as little as 6 percent of patrol time.

Does one more round-the-clock patrolman give you \$80,000 worth of added protection? Will you get \$175,000 worth of additional service by adding one patrol car? How much time do *your* officers spend on activities of highest importance to the community?

In 1971 the Nation's public police forces cost the taxpayers \$6.2 billion. That was a 20 percent rise over 1970. And with wage increases and growing costs of equipment, supplies, and services you can expect that figure—and your share of it—to rise even more.

In spite of these accelerating costs of operating police departments, your citizens expect you, as elected officials, to find ways to reduce crime and to provide more police protection. Yet those same people resist paying higher taxes. This involves you, therefore, in two inseparable matters of greatest concern to your citizens: their safety and the spending of their money.

The traditional way to improve protection



The contents of this pamphlet are based on the findings and recommendations of the National Commission on Productivity's Advisory Group on Productivity in Law Enforcement, a panel of distinguished police officials, academic authorities, and representatives of national organizations.

against crime is to spend more money on police, and citizens are often willing to support this. But it may mean fewer tax dollars available to meet other needs.

Recently, however, local governing bodies throughout the country have been discovering that they can provide better police services with the money they already have. They are doing so by increasing the *productivity* of the police force. This means simply that they are finding ways to provide more protection and more services for each hard-to-come-by tax dollar they spend.

Next to education, law enforcement accounts for the largest number of local government employees. The police could well be the costliest category in *your* budget. That is why it is so important to seek every possible means to increase the productivity of your police force. When a police department learns how to do a better job with the people and equipment it already has, the results are both a more effective police force and less pressure on the tax rate.

## ASSESSING POLICE PRODUCTIVITY

The big problem, of course, is knowing whether the police are really doing the job. It is commonly assumed that police are supposed to prevent crime. But you may have experienced the frustration of trying to relate the operations of the police department to reported changes in crime rates. Often it is difficult to determine the effect of police activities on the patterns of criminal incidence.

Everyone knows that many factors affect the crime rate aside from what the police do.

Among these are the proportion of low-income families in the community, the ratio of youths to the total population, the number of unemployed, the population density, and the effectiveness of courts and correctional programs. Other important factors that affect the usefulness of crime statistics are the methods by which they are collected and recorded and the consistency with which they are interpreted. Any of these factors, or several of them taken together, may have more to do with changes in crime rates than anything the police department may or may not do.

But if you can't determine how good the police department is just by looking at the overall crime rate in your jurisdiction, then —

### HOW CAN YOU TELL?

There is no foolproof method. But there are some key questions you can ask. The answers you get will be indicators of how well your police department is doing those things *you* have decided are important. The answers may spotlight potential problem areas or matters that definitely need improvement. Analysis of these indicators will help you determine what kind of a job your department is doing.

By and large, those departments that measure up well in their answers to these questions are likely to have a better record of fighting crime and inspiring public confidence than those that don't. Even where you can't be sure of the effect of a given activity you feel is important, you can at least make sure that it is performed efficiently.

This pamphlet suggests ways you can assess whether you are getting good value in protection and service for your tax dollars. *Its purpose is not to express a judgment about the priorities that you and your police department*

*should establish. Rather, it offers some practical ways to determine if your priorities are being met.*

There is no substitute for detailed and careful consideration of police statistics and operations—analyzed with experienced, professional judgment. But the questions suggested below are useful for taking an overall look. All of them deal with matters of concern to any professional police manager. He will probably have detailed information on them readily available. These indicators will give you a better picture than you can get by relying exclusively on crime statistics.

## THE KEY QUESTIONS

### **1. How many policemen in your department perform tasks that could be done cheaper or better by a civilian?**

In the past virtually all of the positions in police departments were filled by uniformed, sworn personnel. But today's policeman is too highly trained and too expensive to be doing tasks that could be performed by a less skilled, less expensive person. It is inefficient, for example, to have a policeman acting as a chauffeur, working a switchboard, or collecting money from parking meters, when you could get others to do these jobs for three-fourths the cost.

On the other hand, there are many specialties for which an officer is not trained, and in which a civilian professional could perform more efficiently and effectively. Patrolmen should not have to type reports when a professional stenographer could do the job in half the time. Computer experts, management analysts, equipment specialists, and the like, usually are well

worth their cost in time saved or better service delivered. You can improve morale, and give your force more muscle, by freeing your officers to work as policemen.

### **2. How much time do police spend on noncrime activities?**

Some people are surprised to learn that policemen spend most of their time on activities that have nothing to do with crime. In one department, the men spend as little as 6 percent of their time on crime-related calls. In another they spend 38 percent. Some activities, such as court duty and rescue, are of course expected of a policeman. But there may be ways to reduce the amount of time he spends on these things. Some departments report that their policemen check to see if there is soap in public lavatories, chase dogs, cut the lawns of vacationing residents so burglars won't know the house is unoccupied, or lower store-front awnings to keep the sun out.

### **3. In response to demands for more police protection, do you simply add more patrolmen to the force or do you try to increase police capability?**

When you increase the size of the force by 10 percent, do you get a corresponding increase in police protection and service? Most departments don't. Why not?

Keep in mind that to put one man on the street 24 hours a day you have to add five to the force to cover the three shifts, weekends, holidays, vacations, and sick days. That means an expenditure of as much as \$80,000 to add one manned post to the available street force. Are you getting an \$80,000 return for that one additional man on duty?

Adding or subtracting a few patrolmen

would probably make no appreciable difference in the effectiveness of the department or the crime rate. Unless you are prepared to increase the number of policemen dramatically, there may be smarter ways to use that additional money.

If you can't see that the patrolmen you are thinking of adding will make a real difference, then maybe you shouldn't add them. The money might be better spent in upgrading your people or their equipment or redesigning their tactical use.

Experiments now underway suggest that traditional "random" patrol, where radio cars cruise the streets looking for criminal or suspicious activity, may not be the most effective way to deter crime. Other promising approaches are more specific and concentrate on

anticipating crime. To take a simple example, high crime targets are "hardened" by putting better locks on frequently burglarized buildings in an effort to prevent property crimes.

Some departments have also had great success assigning special tactical units in civilian clothes to high crime areas. Often the units use decoys, such as a patrolman dressed as an old woman carrying a handbag, with other officers waiting inconspicuously for a mugger to attack. Such units have been extremely effective in apprehending criminals and getting them convicted. (Catching a criminal in the act is about the best way to insure a conviction.) They also have been credited with creating uncertainty in the minds of potential criminals. Instead of citizens worrying that every person on a dark street might be a criminal, criminals now have to worry about whether the pedestrian they are thinking about mugging might be a cop.

Of course, such units have to be operated with discretion and care. But so do most police operations that are effective.

#### **4. What hours of the day are calls for police service heaviest? Is that when most of your policemen are on duty?**

Calls for help are rarely spread evenly throughout the day. In many places they are concentrated around 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., when people come home from work and find their homes burglarized, and from 9 p.m. to 12 p.m., when most violent crimes occur. And yet some police departments do not schedule duty assignments to strengthen the force at the times of heaviest demand.



#### **5. Where are the high crime areas of your city? Is there any change in patterns? Is your force flexible enough to concentrate its men in those areas at peak crime times?**

Everyone knows, or thinks he knows, where the high crime areas are. But often the force is not distributed to cover these areas adequately. Moreover, the patterns are not static; they shift. And yet few police departments have the flexibility to be able to shift with them.

Without adding men to your force, you can significantly improve its ability to respond by tailoring their assignments to put them where and when the heaviest action is likely to occur.

#### **6. How long does it take to respond to an emergency call?**

Quick response to emergency calls can be crucial to apprehending criminals, to giving the public confidence, and to deterring crime. Your department can no doubt tell you how long it normally takes to respond to an emergency call. They should also be able to break down that response time into its three essential components: dispatching time, queuing time (i.e., how long the dispatcher must wait before a car is available for assignment), and travel time.

Many factors determine total response time. For example:

- Dispatching time stretches from receipt of a call for help to the moment the dispatcher is ready to assign a unit. The quality of equipment and people in the communications center usually determines dispatching speed.
- Queuing time is affected by establishment of priorities (emergency calls first, all oth-

ers "stacked"). Other important factors are vehicle maintenance and shift scheduling.

- Travel time can be cut if vehicles are positioned near likely crime locations.

It is not enough to know what your department's response time is now. You should examine the trend. Is your department improving its response time, or is response time slipping for some reason?

There are two important points that must be kept in mind when looking at response time:

First, quick response is more important to some kinds of calls than to others. Giving a lower priority to nonemergency calls, for example, can free men and vehicles for quicker response to emergency calls. The net result could be an overall increase in response time, but a decrease in *emergency* response time. It is important, however, that the public be informed of the department's policy for responding to different types of calls.

Second, improving response time can be expensive. Beyond a certain point, the cost of cutting response time by a few seconds may outweigh the benefit of the quicker response.

#### **7. Does your department expect maximum performance from its personnel by decentralizing authority, responsibility, and accountability?**

Many departments underutilize their people because they underrate them. You may be surprised how capable the people in your department *could* be, and how little is usually asked of them in the way of assuming responsibility. You can get more action out of lower-ranking officers, and free your more senior officers for other management duties, by decentralizing authority and holding lower-level personnel accountable for performance. You also might

discover that, as a result, subordinate personnel will find their jobs more rewarding.

For example, one department made patrolmen responding to crime calls completely responsible for investigating them. Previously, a patrolman had done only a superficial investigation at the scene of the crime, knowing he would hand the investigation over to a detective. But when it became his complete responsibility, the patrolman did a more thorough investigation *from the outset*. As a result, case closures increased 80 percent.

**8. Does your department assign people according to their abilities and preferences?**

Today's better educated police officer costs more to recruit, train, and retain on the force. Police managers cannot afford to misassign people. They must use the talents and capabilities of people intelligently. Furthermore, people usually do better work when they are doing something that interests them.

How does this translate into practical terms for police operations? You may have a top-notch patrolman who, because he is so good, is promoted to sergeant, a position for which he may be altogether ill-suited. Many good patrolmen would prefer to stay patrolmen because

they enjoy the work and do a good job. Yet the scheme of things may compel them to accept a promotion, for better pay, higher prestige, and greater respect from their fellow officers.

Capable, mature patrolmen who know the street are both the backbone and the front line of the police. It might make sense to keep the seasoned and effective officer on patrol and reward him with the higher pay and the respect he deserves.

**9. Does your department train personnel for the real problems they will confront?**

More than 80 percent of a policeman's training, in most departments, is crime-related. Yet the typical officer probably spends less than 20 percent of his time on such activities. The rest he spends in a variety of duties — rescue operations, automobile accidents, family disputes, neighborhood fights, court appearances, and departmental requirements like reading and writing reports. But he gets very little training to help him do these other jobs efficiently.

Police departments throughout the country report that most officers have difficulty in making the psychological adjustment when they are promoted from the ranks to a position of leadership. Most departments provide no training to help men make that transition. Very few have management development programs of any kind.

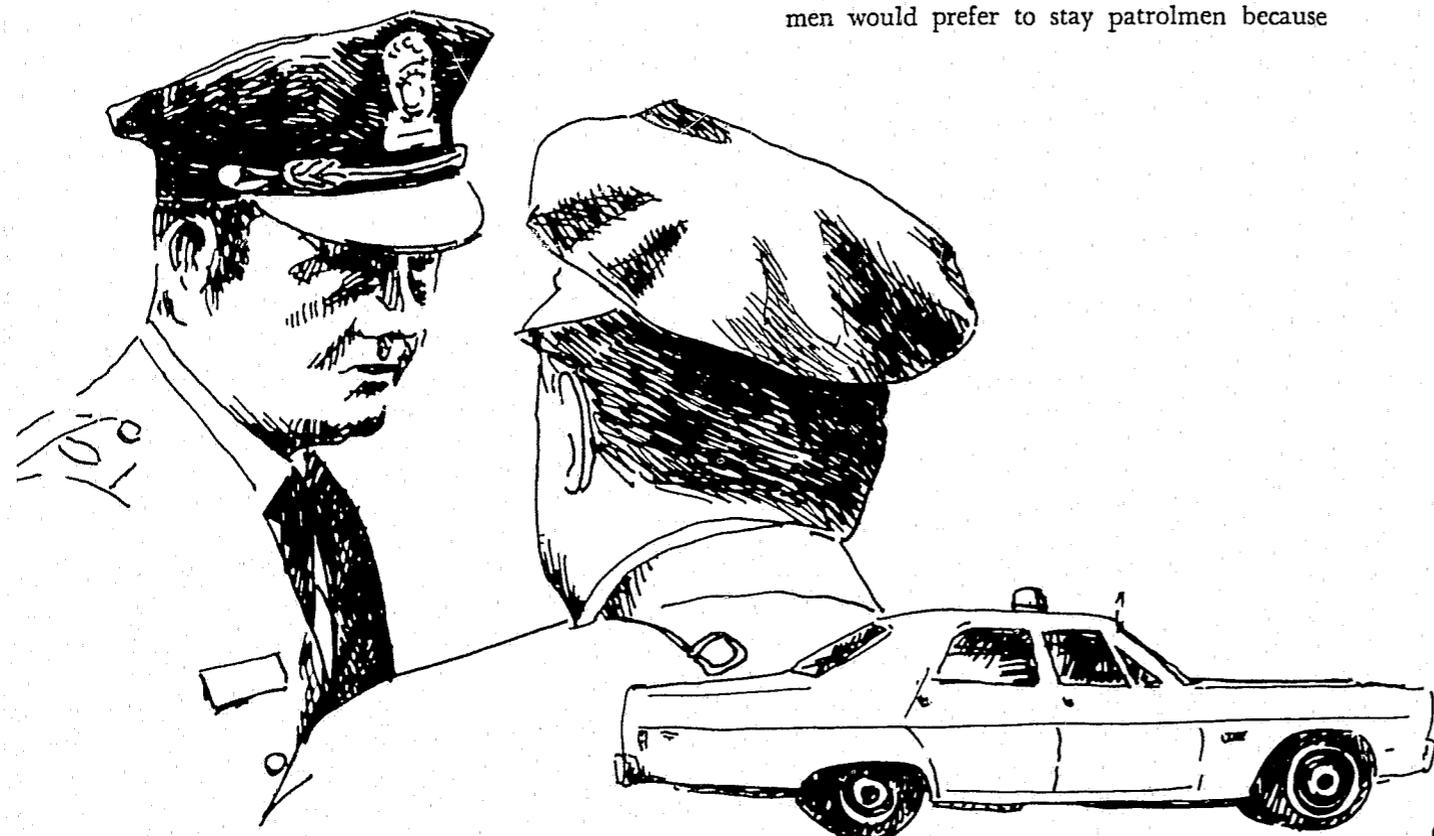
You can be reasonably sure that your department does not spend too much money on training. It is quite possible though that it is being spent on the wrong things. That money is an important investment in the future effec-

tiveness of the force. Will you get the return you want on that investment?

**10. What are your department's greatest equipment costs? Is the best use made of existing and available equipment?**

Police departments are labor-intensive. They depend almost exclusively on people to do the job. But many kinds of equipment can supplement or reduce human effort, save money, or increase effectiveness.

For most police departments, the cost of motor vehicles is their highest recurring expense. Yet many departments do not have adequate vehicle maintenance capability. Proper



purchasing and maintenance programs can save money. One department saves in two ways by buying automobiles in a standard factory color and then not repainting them when they are sold. Proper vehicle maintenance can also reduce the downtime that keeps men and vehicles off the streets.

Some types of vehicles, of course, are cheaper than others. Scooters are not only cheaper than motorcycles and cars, but more maneuverable, and therefore better for some kinds of patrol use.

Communication needs can often be better served with newer equipment or improvements to existing equipment. Portable radio units carried by officers can be useful for both normal and emergency operations. They may even eliminate the need for vehicle radio units. Portable units that plug into automobiles can eliminate vehicle downtime when the radio needs servicing.

Computers simplify dispatching operations by collecting and stacking calls according to location and priority. Priority, of course, is determined by a trained operator who follows established department procedures. Computers can also give patrol units the shortest route to the scene of a crime or an instant report on other incidents that have occurred in the area in the past 48 hours.

Computers can be used to analyze crime data and to assist in deployment of vehicles and men to cover places where crimes are more likely to occur.

In procuring equipment, realistic assessment must be made of its cost in relation to the expected benefit.

### ***11. Are experienced men brought in from outside your department to serve in key staff positions?***

The tradition in police departments throughout the country is to move men up through the ranks. There is nothing wrong with this practice, in general, because it provides for continuity and for the promotion of men who know the ropes. But if your department is staffed exclusively with people promoted from within, it could very well be a sign of stagnation.

Bringing in new men to operational positions can cause disruption, but there should be less resistance to hiring good people for staff assignments, people who can bring new ideas and fresh perspective to the department.

If experienced people are not being brought in, your department may not be getting enough exposure to fresh ideas and new developments in police operations.

### ***12. Does your department have an easy time recruiting new patrolmen, or do you have to beat the bushes to find warm bodies?***

Some departments have a pool of highly eligible candidates waiting to become policemen; others have a serious problem attracting good people to the force. Either condition can, of course, result from many factors. But difficulty in recruiting good people may suggest low morale, a poor image of the department, or perhaps a weak recruiting program. Whatever the reason, if you are having trouble recruiting, the people you eventually do hire are probably not the highest quality. You might want to find out why.

## **WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?**

How do you get started in doing something about police productivity? The obvious place to begin is with the professional, the police chief.

***Ask your department for the information suggested above.***

How does it stack up:

1. In the light of your own experience?
2. In view of changes that are taking place over time? (How many men are now performing patrol duties as compared to last year? What are the trends?)
3. In comparison with similar information from comparable police departments?

*Until you have this information, you really have no good basis to judge whether you're getting the best police service for the tax money you are spending.* Most police departments have the information. Sometimes it is recorded a different way, but simply putting it in the form described above can suggest some new ways of thinking about police operations. Your department ought to have the capability to collect and analyze important information on an ongoing basis, and to develop specific action steps for improvement. It is the responsibility of top management in your local government to assure that the police department has such a capability.

The answers to the key questions will give you a general idea of your police department's performance. But you may wish to look further. With little additional effort, the department can also provide information of the following types. Careful analysis of it can direct your department toward the kind of high impact/low cost police service taxpayers are looking for:

### ***For the Apprehension of Criminals***

- The number of all arrests made by the patrol division that survive a first judicial screening as a proportion of all arrests made by that division.
- The number of arrests that survive a first judicial screening per patrol man-year (taking into account all personnel assigned to the patrol division).
- The number of arrests that result in conviction as a proportion of those that survive a first judicial screening. (Obviously, other factors within the criminal justice system also influence the conviction rate.)

### ***For Crime Deterrence***

- Victimization rates (victims of crimes as determined by scientifically selected random samples of the entire population).
- Judicious use of crime statistics for specific districts of the jurisdiction over specified periods of time.

### ***For Non-Crime Services***

- Number of non-crime calls for service satisfactorily responded to per number of man-hours used in such responses.

### ***For Management of People***

- Number of man-days lost during the year per employee for illness, disciplinary action, and injury.
- Personnel turnover per total department manpower.
- Total personnel with improved on-the-job performance after training per number of trainees.

*Your department should have well-established channels for finding out what is going*

on in other police departments and for trying out the good ideas. A great deal of innovation is taking place in departments all over the country—advances that improve police service or reduce costs. Yet many departments do not take advantage of these developments. Perhaps they genuinely believe they are now doing the best job possible. Or perhaps they feel that adoption of new techniques would reflect unfavorably on their past performance.

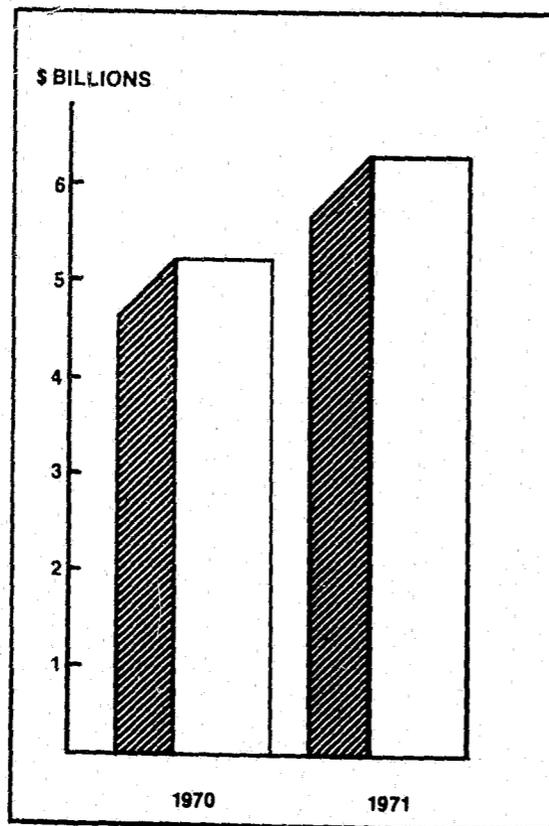
These good ideas will not find their way to your department automatically. Many demonstration projects are never widely adopted even though their success is well known. Police departments often contend that a new technique is not applicable to their situation. True, no two places are exactly alike. And, in fact, the differences may be substantial enough to make adaptation or direct transfer of techniques difficult. But many ideas could be used with slight modifications to fit local situations.

Channels for seeking new ideas should be actively used. For example, your department should be adequately funded to send personnel to training sessions and conferences. It should maintain active membership in professional associations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police and, perhaps as well, in more general management-oriented organizations like the American Society for Public Administration. It should subscribe to key publications like *The Police Chief* and *Crime Control Digest*. And it should develop special programs that encourage dialogue with other comparable departments.

Your government should have the technical capability to understand and assist with the productivity analysis of the police department. Management analysts, whether housed in the office of the mayor or city manager, the county executive, or the budget or planning office,

should have the professional capability to understand fully the operations of the police department. They should be aware of new techniques developed for improving the productivity of police departments. This staff capability, when added to your own direct contact with the police department, should provide the information and analysis you need to keep up to date and informed as to the progress being made by the department.

**COST OF PUBLIC POLICE FORCES IN THE U.S.**



## THE ONGOING TASK

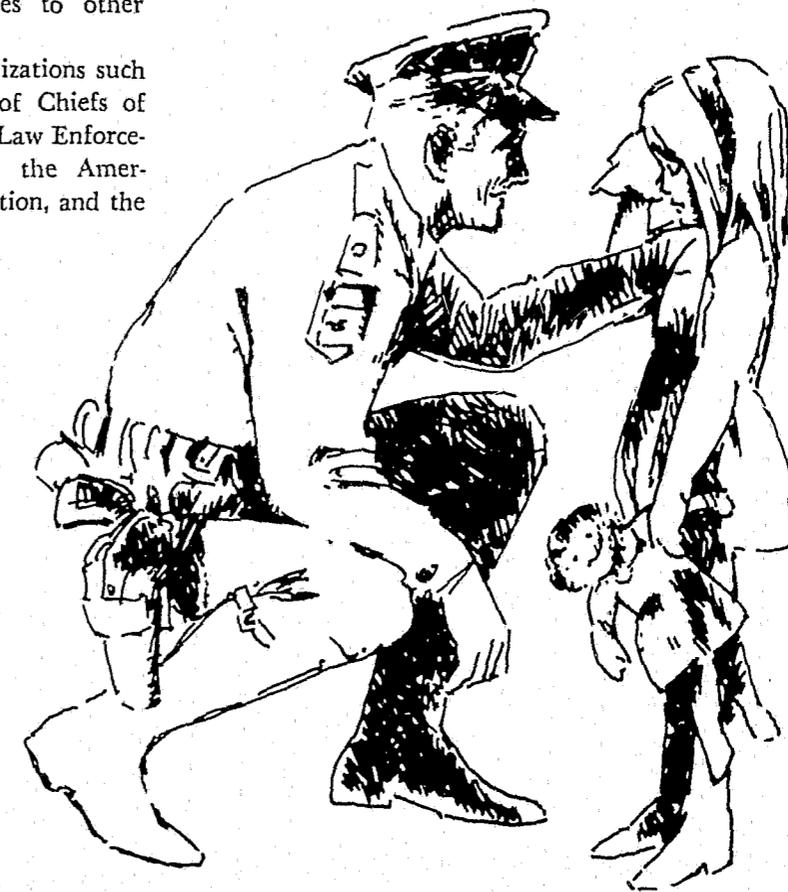
Improving police productivity will be an ongoing task, one that will require the continuing attention of responsible elected officials as well as professional police managers. Concepts and methods of measuring police effectiveness are still in their infancy. Some guidance, however, is available.

A valuable current document is *Opportunities for Improving Productivity in Police Services*, published by the National Commission on Productivity. This report, prepared by leading police practitioners from various parts of the country, suggests initial concepts, measurements, and practical ideas for improvement. It also contains references to other sources of assistance.

In addition, key national organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Foundation, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the American Society for Public Administration, and the

FBI, are interested in the development of productivity concepts, measures, and practices for police work. These organizations can provide guidance and assistance in the continuing effort to improve the quality and to control the costs of police services in the United States.

But nobody has the complete answer. The real impetus must come from you, the officials elected by the people who want better police service at reasonable cost.



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