

1,000 new cops not tested for emotional stability

DURING a two-year period from 1971 thru 1972 the Chicago Police Department was without a program to test police recruits for sadistic tendencies or emotional instability.

As a result of what insiders describe as political demands to dismantle psychological testing in the department, more than 1,000 policemen hired then were never screened.

A five-month Tribune investigation has documented how a cross section of Chicago's citizens have been victims of police brutality and how the department has responded with half-hearted and often inadequate investigations.

Department officials appear to be even less concerned about stopping police brutality before it starts—thru comprehensive psychological screening of police candidates.

Nearly three years ago, the department systematically dismantled its own widely acclaimed psychological testing program—one used as a model for programs now used in major cities across the country.

THE DEPARTMENT never announced or acknowledged its dismantlement.

Col. John Bucher, police personnel director under the late Supt. O. W. Wilson, saw the screening program he and Wilson had worked to create disappear before he left the department in 1972.

"By 1971 it was completely discontinued," Bucher said.

There are 13,751 policemen in Chicago, the vast majority of whom serve the city with honor. But some emotionally unstable men have abused the citizens they are sworn to protect. A five-month Tribune investigation of police brutality has shown that the Police Department has failed to screen police applicants adequately for psychological disorders. This report was compiled by reporter Emmett George and the Pulitzer

"There were no tests for emotional stability for the next two years."

For the next two years, Police Department officials lied to the public, assuring anyone who asked that the department was using the best testing in the nation.

Supt. James B. Conlisk Jr., for instance, told a gathering of Chicago civic leaders on May 3, 1972, that "existing proced-



POLICE BRUTALITY

Prize-winning team of chief investigator George Bliss, Pamela Zekman, and William Mullen.

ures in the screening and selection of Chicago police recruits are more comprehensive than those developed anywhere in the country."

JUST TWO MONTHS later, a federal team reported that, in contrast to that of nearly all major police departments, Chicago's "present selection process includes no method for screening out persons with serious emotional problems."

The federal team urged Chicago officials to look to Detroit, where impressive research was under way by a University of Chicago team.

The Detroit research, in fact, was being done to adapt a program devised by the team for the Chicago Police Department.

The program had been perfected in Chicago by the university team in 1970, after four years' work, but the Police Department refused to use it.

"They didn't want something they couldn't control," one former police official said of the department's refusal.

"If your system is loaded with patronage, then you don't want psychiatric tests that say who you can hire and who you can't."

AFTER it had limped along without any testing for emotional stability for two years, public and governmental pressure forced the department to resume the testing early this year.

Instead of turning to the University of Chicago, the depart-

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Model program dismantled

1,000 new cops not tested for violence

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ment went to Daniel Howard Associates, Inc. Police officials admit the firm had no experience in the highly specialized field of police screening.

Deputy Supt. Patrick Needham said the firm was chosen because of previous work it had done for the department. That included making paper flow studies, designing report forms, and doing computer programming.

"They convinced us in terms of previous work that they could do the job," Needham said.

The Howard firm is now doing the same costly research started and completed by the university team, according to insiders.

In effect, one former department official said, the Chicago Police Department is right back where it started when Wilson took over the department.

ONE of Wilson's priorities when he came to Chicago in 1960 to "reform" the department was to develop psychological screening for police recruits. Wilson was convinced, Col. Bucher said, that police work attracted men prone to brutality and psychological disorders.

"The only alternative," Bucher said, "is to put a man on the street and see how he does. But then you don't find out anything until the damage is done."

The 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement underscored the importance of such a screening program when it concluded, "one incompetent officer can trigger a riot, permanently damage the reputation of a citizen, or alienate a community against a police department."

After seven years of struggling to develop a program, Wilson retired, leaving the department a system of testing that would be praised in a 1970 report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police [I. A. C. P.] for its advanced use of sophisticated testing.

Even while the I. A. C. P. was issuing its praise, how-

ever, Wilson's program was secretly being dismantled by Conlisk's administration.

THE PROGRAM that I. A. C. P. praised was the end result of a series of political compromises that the reform superintendent had been forced to accept.

They included, according to sources, dealing with a City-Hall-controlled Civil Service Commission that held lists of eligible patrolman captive until it got its way.

"Aldermen and others began making suggestions that perhaps it was the psychologists that needed psychological testing," said a member of the first team of psychologists hired by Wilson.

That team's first testing effort recommended that 33 percent of the candidates approved by the Civil Service Commission be rejected for psychological reasons.

"It became perfectly obvious that reform had gone too far for some people," said the psychologist, "and that the superintendent [Wilson] would not be allowed to conduct the kind of program he wanted."

Wilson's determination to continue psychological screening was reinforced with studies by the leader of that team, Dr. Arnold Abrams.

Dr. Abrams said one study showed that police work "attracts three times as many persons with marked pathology than one would expect by chance."

"There is something about the job that magnetizes that kind of person," he said. "The uniform is a perfect umbrella for covering pathology. What better excuse can you have for assaulting people than doing it in the name of the law?"

IN WILSON'S second attempt at screening, the commission agreed to allow psychologists to give tests when applicants took their civil service exam. The agreement was short-lived.

"There were one or two hundred candidates who were listed as unfit because of their scores on the psychological tests," one top Wilson aide re-

called. "An entire year went by and the commission did nothing."

What happened, he said, is that the Civil Service Commission failed to post the test results, and in spite of a pressing need for new recruits, no policemen could be hired. Instead the Civil Service Commission dropped the psychological testing "like a hot potato."

Wilson had to compromise again. This time he put into effect a long-term, three-pronged program.

First, in 1964, the commission agreed to allow Gilmore Spencer's Management Psychologist's Inc., to administer tests as long as Wilson did not use the results as the only reason for rejecting candidates, according to an official involved in the negotiations.

Under the agreement, Spencer's firm would merely group candidates who did badly on the tests as questionable or poor risks.

The firm spent the next five years doing research on the men tested to prove their examinations were accurate indications of future police performance.

SECOND, WILSON hired two full-time psychologists to give more psychological tests and to interview candidates who had passed the Civil Service examinations.

The psychologists sent men they considered emotionally unstable to the department's three-man psychiatric advisory board. The board had the final say on candidates.

Finally, Wilson's most ambitious effort was to establish an entirely new basis for finding men who would become successful policemen. He wanted a program that would utilize validated batteries of tests to measure a man's psychological, emotional, and mental fitness for police work.

Wilson wanted to get away from the traditional civil service set of standards that measured a man's ability to read and write, his height, and his weight.

His ideas excited the imagination of the University of Chicago's Industrial Relations Center, and together they went to the federal government and

won \$80,000 in grants to devise the testing system that later won so much praise.

WILSON WENT ahead on all three fronts despite continued sniping by the Civil Service Commission, which continued to accept some of the candidates Wilson's staff had termed poor risks.

When Wilson retired in 1967, the program he had put into effect was gaining an international reputation.

By late 1969, the University of Chicago team and Spencer's firm had completed and validated their research. Their testing standards were so advanced that they would meet the requirements set out by the United States Supreme Court decision on employment testing programs handed down two years later.

The accomplishment was of such magnitude that the study team, the police, and Civil Service officials took it to Washington to show it off at the 1969 American Psychological Association convention.

Dr. Charles Pounian, personal director of the Chicago Civil Service Commission, personally chaired a convention symposium at which "the Chicago program" was introduced.

It drew nationwide praise.

THE PRAISE was still ringing in Dr. Pounian's ears a few months later when he canceled plans to use "the Chicago program" in Chicago.

All of a sudden, the Police Department was no longer interested. Its cooperation had stopped completely by 1970, said John Furcon, the university's project director.

"The real disappointment to us," Furcon said, "was that in the face of very strong research results, the endorsement by the I. A. C. P., and the positive reception by the department's personnel staff, the department didn't use the tests. They never explained to us why they withdrew their support."

Shortly after the university team departed, the department terminated Spencer's testing services without explanation, two years before the contract was to run out.

"It was clear we weren't wanted," Spencer said.

By January, 1971 the department did not even have a staff psychologist.

The destruction of every psychological testing project started by Wilson was now complete.

CHARGES. THAT Wilson's programs were "systematically dismantled" were first made last July by the Law Enforcement Study Group, a coalition of community groups and the Northwestern University Center for Urban Affairs.

Police officials denied their charges, but refused to talk to the coalition while it compiled its research and after it issued its report.

Deputy Needham, director of police administrative services, insisted that the testing did not stop during 1971 and 1972, but was merely transferred to the training division. There, he said, a full complement of tests was given by qualified personnel.

However, records he supplied to Tribune reporters substantiated the coalition's charges. They showed:

- The last department psychological test left in January, 1971.

- The test battery was cut in half, leaving only tests that measured mental ability.

- The remaining tests were scored by unqualified police personnel whose interpretations determined which applicants needed evaluation by the psychiatric advisory board.

"IT MAY NOT have had the strength of psychological reviews at that time, but it had staff with some degree in psychology scoring them," Needham said when faced with his own records. "Or at least they had a minor in psychology. Despite this, Needham still refused a direct answer to the charge that the Wilson program was dismantled. Instead he said:

"The psychological resources engaged by the department are superior than the ones previously used. We're doing more now than when the I. A. C. P. praised the program."

NEEDHAM said police candidates are screened psychologically before they ever enter the police academy. This procedure indicates the department's sincere belief in the

importance of psychological screening and its desire not to waste money training men who would be rejected later as emotionally unsuitable, he said.

Yet his own files showed that of the 39 candidates for which the Howard firm recommended psychiatric review this year, 20 were already probationary policemen before their cases were reviewed.

The Howard firm has proven its effectiveness, Needham said, because it has been screening out 3 to 5 percent of each group of candidates it tests.

Those figures, compared to the numbers screened out under four different programs during the O. W. Wilson years, are minuscule. They screened out 12 to 33 percent.

Both Needham and Dr. Pounian insist that the Howard firm's testing program is superior to the Wilson system that was praised so highly by the I. A. C. P.

DR. POUNIAN angrily denied the political considerations played a role in the elimination of the University of Chicago program.

"I can only give a one word answer for that," he said. "Crab."

He said that the university's program did not include psychological or intelligence testing or measure any of the basic elements that make good policemen.

"There is considerable disagreement as to whether this is a good exam," he said of the university's program, the one he once endorsed.

If there is considerable disagreement about the tests, 14 Illinois municipalities outside Chicago and the Detroit Police Department don't know it. They began using adaptations of the university test battery this year.

Inspector Richard Coretti, personnel examiner for the Detroit department, said the tests contain everything Pounian claims they lack — and more.

"We are very happy with the test package and the high quality of resources and enlightened ability the Chicago people brought to us," he said.

Tomorrow: Innocent suspects and brutality.