Police Work Threatens To Become Part-Time Job in New York City

Editor's note: The 1960s are bringing a potential crisis to bear on the nation's law enforcement. Police salaries lag behind outside pay. Police strength isn't keeping up with the population explosion. And police problems are multiplying dangerously as cities are bigger and older and life more hectic. Because New York is the nation's biggest city, its police are feeling the crisis first. In a series of three dispatches beginning today, a veteran New York reporter probes the problems of "New York's Finest." They may soon be the problems of Medford.

By EDWARD V. McCARTHY

New York —(UPI)— In the nation's biggest city, police work threatens to become a part-time job.

Why? Because policemen claim they can't rear a family and pay the rent on present police salaries.

So "moonlighting," the banned practice of holding a second job, has become a red-hot issue in New York. A major feud rages between the police commissioner and patrolmen.

Actually, so-called moonlighting is only one symptom of a disease threatening U.S. police forces in many cities.

The disease is hardening of the arteries, brought on in part at least by low pay, under-strength and the complexities of civilization.

Wrath Incurred

The term "moonlighter" has come to mean anyone who works for additional pay at any employment outside his hours at his regular job.

Policemen here have incurred the wrath of Police Commissioner Stephen P. Kennedy by trying to supplement their annual salary of $6,706 (this includes an annual $125 uniform allowance) by taking outside work while off-duty.

Kennedy is flatly against this practice, although in most major cities elsewhere (one of them in which the policemen are paid even more than in New York) moonlighting goes on with official blessing from the brass.

That is the core of the battle between Kennedy and the Patrolmen's Benevolent association, a non-union organization which represents the rank and file policemen.

But the trouble goes a lot deeper.

Takes Job Seriously

Stephen Patrick Kennedy, 53, is paid $25,000 a year to run an organization of nearly 24,000 men. He is responsible for overseeing the protection of the lives and property of almost eight million persons packed into 320 square miles.

He takes his job, and himself, seriously. He is a stern disciplinarian. He has little sympathy for the policeman who makes mistakes.

When Kennedy took over as commissioner in August, 1955, after rising through the ranks from patrolman to inspector, he told his men: "I did not take this job to win a popularity contest."

Today, he certainly could not win any such contest. Many of the cops vehemently hate him, but, for obvious reasons, these men will not be quoted for the record.

To close observers, there is some justice to both sides of the argument.

Kennedy's biggest problem seems to be that he will not bend, even slightly. He indulges in mass transfers of sergeants, a sore spot among the sergeants. He does not do it capriciously but to keep down petty rackets, the little "shakedowns" which can enrich a dishonest cop.

Every year, just before Christmas, many of the sergeants find themselves shifted to precincts far removed from the ones in which they have worked all year.

Obviously, in his new patrol area, the sergeant cannot go to a local businessman and hint – or demand – that he get a "Christmas gift."

Inevitably many honest sergeants are swept up in the transfers, and rightly feel their honesty has been questioned.

Another Sore Spot

Kennedy's insistence on running his department as a semi-military organization is another sore spot.

The PBA feels a patrolman brought up on charges should have some outside arbiter or agency to appeal to. As it stands, Kennedy is judge and jury and his word is final. And, the PBA insists, Kennedy is just as fallible as anyone else.

Some other, less publicized gripes are also near the heart of the matter.

Under previous police commissioners, a patrolman seeking a transfer to a precinct nearer his home, or a change from foot patrol to the softer berth of a radio patrol car, could arrange this through a local political club.

Under Kennedy, there is no such thing. No outside interference is permitted, up to and including Kennedy's own boss, Mayor Robert F. Wagner.

Wagner, despite occasional embarrassment over Kennedy's intractability, continues to back this "tough cop" 100 per cent.

Going On For Years

The practice of "moonlighting"–although always against department regulations – has been going on in the department for many years.

The situation came to a boiling point recently, however, when a patrolman was caught spending more time on an outside job than on his police beat – and doing it while he was officially on "sick leave."

The average cop on the beat agrees that firing this policeman was highly proper – but doesn't agree with its aftermath.

Kennedy promptly announced a crack-down on moonlighting and whenever policemen were found to hold outside jobs they were brought up on departmental trial and, if found guilty, subjected to heavy fines.

This crackdown had an odd result.

On Tuesday, Oct. 28, in a protest against the crackdown, the city's police staged a slow-down in the issuance of traffic summonses. The number of tickets handed out that day dropped by 23 per cent.

Kennedy rallied quickly. He blamed the incident on Patrolman John J. Cassese, president of the PBA, and transferred him from a desk job in headquarters to duty as a traffic officer.

Kennedy also checked into the summons activities of patrolmen in radio cars. Where their average was down to Oct. 28, these men found themselves out of the cars and back on foot patrol.

The commissioner sent out special investigators from his confidential squad – "shoo-flys" the regular police call them–to make sure violations of parking and moving offenses were not being overlooked.

Thus began the "ticket war."

Now under pressure, the police began handing out double the number they had previously. The average motorist screamed in pain as his pocketbook was gouged. All he had to do to avoid a summons was to commit no violations.

The patrolmen put themselves in a bind. If they relaxed their "war" – it would indicate they never had been doing their job properly.

Kennedy unblinkingly said he was pleased to see the number of summonses were up – it showed good police work.

And, even more to the point, death by auto dropped by some 50 per cent and auto accidents were down. Motorists were watching their driving.

Hearing Slated For Transient

A hearing in district court has been set for 10:30 a.m. Thursday for Richard Crane, transient, who is charged with obtaining property by false pretenses, according to District Court Judge L. L. Sawyer.

Crane is charged with issuing a bad check for $10 in Medford on Jan. 5.

The district court judge yesterday suspended imposition of sentence for one year on Alden Ardell Marrs, Ashland, who was charged with making a false statement in writing to procure benefit. Marrs was charged with issuing a bad check for $30 in Medford Jan. 8.

Judge Sawyer also suspended imposition of sentence for six months on Charles Pennington Cory, transient, who is charged with petty larceny, on condition he leave the state within 24 hours. Cory was charged with taking a bottle of wine from a local super market Jan. 14.

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