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Dedicated to Improving the Police Profession

Unitary Socialism and Democratic Free-Enterprise: Competing Visions of the Future of American Law Enforcement

By Stephen M. Ramirez, Chief of Police, St. Mary's University

Several years ago while driving down a main street of a medium sized American city, I was stopped at a traffic light in a nearly empty business district. Restaurants and store fronts stood vacant behind boarded and broken windows. The odor of social decay was palpable. Being a commander on the city police force at the time, I was all too aware that the area was noted for drug sales and street violence. In my mind's eye, I could see a time many years prior when the businesses were thriving and I sat with my family at a very nice restaurant on this same street, back when this was a "nice part of town". The light changed and I went back to work commanding a patrol shift in a community that was gasping its last breaths.

How have we gone so far astray in this great nation that was founded on the ideal of a government exercised of the people, by the people, and for the people? How have we traveled from the road built of integrity, to one in which political correctness is more valued than doing the right thing? In the words of Walt Kelly, "we have met the enemy, and he is us". I would hazard to posit that American Law Enforcement, like the people, not the government that it is sworn to serve, is at a crossroad in it's evolution.

Our Past, Present and Probable Future:

In 1787, the Federalist party was founded favoring a strong federal government. Shortly after in 1792, Thomas Jefferson founded the Democratic Republican Party which opposed the concept of a national government that controlled local issues. In

1865, the Union army "settled" the question by military force. Mao Tse-Tung once said that, "political power grows out of the barrel of a gun". This has certainly rung true during various dark moments in our history. The American story is an imperfect one; however, it is a story of a people who built a nation on the political concept of Democracy and the economic concept of free-enterprise.

Today, we find ourselves moving toward a trend of social democracy. The Bill of Rights seems to be undergoing a political editing process in which quite like some ancient religious document, each interest group claims to have the one true understanding as to it's meaning and intent. Meanwhile, we find ourselves confronting questions of great importance to the future of American democracy. The first of these questions relates to the fact that democracy is in part dependent on the assumption that there exists an educated, informed, and rational voting public that cares about the future of it's nation. In a democracy, education acts largely as a means of producing good citizens. As John Dewey has stated, "If democracy has a moral and ideal meaning, it is that social return be demanded from all and that opportunity for development of distinctive capacities be afforded all. The separation of the two aims in education is fatal to democracy" (Dewey, 1944). The facts of pre-millennium America seem to indicate our general national failure in this regard.

The second question deals with a general sense of apathy, pessimism and entitlement

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among the American voting public. There is a feeling that permeates current American thought in which each year like characters from the book of Exodus, Americans hope for leaders to give us deliverance from ourselves, while each year we get politicians. We cannot mistake politicians for leaders. Politicians are focused on self, winning, position, and power. Leaders are focused on vision, mission, effectiveness, and people. Mixing the two is like creating a mule. The progeny looks something like both parents, but isn't really either - and is always sterile. Again, the facts of pre-millennium America seem to indicate our general national failure to address this issue that is so vital to our survival.

With this current reality in mind, we must ask ourselves if it is possible to "exercise effective control over the future-shaping forces of today" (Heilbroner, 1995). The problem with futuristic thought often lies in the assumption that current conditions and trends will be the "dominant realities" of the future (Heilbroner, 1995). There is, however, some trends that we can look toward for guidance in our attempts to formulate visions of the future.

The first of these is a phenomenon that has been referred to as the "strange disappearance of social capital in America" (Putnam, 1995). Social capital is defined as those features of social life-networks, norms, trust, and values - "that enable participants to act together more effectively to pursue shared objectives" (Putnam, 1995). Many benchmarks currently indicate that Americans are "significantly less engaged with their communities than was true a generation ago" (Putnam, 1995). Democracy demands a public that is engaged and cares about the future of the greater, national community.

The second trend that seems to be indicative of our future is that of an ever changing demographic make-up of American society. America is growing older, more culturally and ethnically diverse, and with ever increasing demands on limited natural resources. Our fastest growing population into the new millennium are those citizens and immi-

grants who are undereducated, underemployed, and politically disenfranchised. The growing polarization among political groups and cynical, apathetic attitude among American voters paints a picture that is less than rosy for the near future of our great nation.

American Law Enforcement is a part of the fiber that makes up this American community. We share its values, fears, and world view. As Sir Robert Peel stated in the early 1800's, "The police are the public and the public are the police" (Peak, 1998). We as leaders in American Law Enforcement must begin to act as leaders. We must look outside the realm of our current paradigm for new and innovative solutions to the major issues at hand. It has been said that one definition of insanity is repeating the same action expecting a different result. American Law Enforcement leaders need to seek sane, effective, and possibly drastic organizational and cultural change to meet the needs of the next century.

Unitary Socialistic Policing

The intent of this treatise is not to provide a definitive solution to the challenges that await our society and our profession. We are creating the challenges through our collective journey. We will have to create solutions through our collective creativity and vision. Instead, it is the intent of this document to evoke imaginative dialogue in relation to the future of American law enforcement and the society it serves. The catalyst for this imaginative dialogue will hopefully be an overview of two opposing and somewhat polar visions of possible future realities.

The first of these could be entitled the Unitary Socialist form of police organizational design. It is based on the current national trend toward social democracy in some political sectors of American society. This world view favors a strong federal government. A Unitary socialist view point is that government is the best repository of wisdom in relation to what is a fair distribution of national wealth, resources, and even what

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the national values should be. Under the rule of this philosophy, there would exist a federal police force which would provide all of the law enforcement services for the nation's citizens. The law enforcement and corrections functions would be the exclusive domain of the federal government. There would exist one set of organizational standards, values, and human resource functions. Local substations of the federal police would service local law enforcement needs. The best current example of a similar organization may be the Israeli National Police. The French Gendarmerie National, Italian Carabinieri, or Spanish Guardia Civil are similar except that they are subordinated to the ministries of interior or defense (Meyr, 1999).

The advantages of such a system include the development of a semi-monoculture that is focused on one set of organizational values. Human Resource functions such as recruitment and screening of applicants, educational and training standards, and standards of performance could **theoretically** be maintained on a national basis.

The major disadvantage is that the power is again shifted away from the people and toward the government. A national bureaucracy would be making local law enforcement decisions. This nation was founded on a healthy dose of suspicion in relation to big, centralized government. As former President Ronald Reagan once said, "the first rule of bureaucracy is to protect the bureaucracy".

Democratic Free-Enterprise Policing

In her book entitled, *Danger in the Comfort Zone*, Dr. Judith M. Bardwick describes a condition of entitlement, "where workers have no real incentive to achieve and managers have stopped doing the work of requiring real work". When people are in the condition of entitlement, they are complacent. "They believe that they do not have to earn what they get" (Bardwick, 1991). I would posit that many aspects of law enforcement as a system of organizations exists in a condition of entitlement.

The one factor that is constant is **change**. Currently, American and Global society is

changing at a rate that has not been seen before in known history. A business that fails to forecast and proactively move to meet these changes will be rendered defunct. Market pressures which are created by the needs and wants of the consumer demand that each business organization produce effective results. If American Law Enforcement organizations fail to produce effective results, there is no market pressure for them to do so.

A Democratic, free-enterprise form of police organization would allow for the current type of police force to exist; however, it would also allow for their being rendered defunct and replaced if they fail to produce effective results. This means that private police service organizations would exist and would be able to compete with traditional agencies. As Dr. Bardwick points out, the path from "entitlement" to "earning" goes through "fear".

The condition of earning is where, "people are energized by challenge: they know their work will be judged and that rewards will be based on accomplishment" (Bardwick, 1991). Organizations who are in a condition of earning are productive, innovative, and are motivated toward excellence. These are the kinds of organizations that can meet an ever changing environment head on, and provide effective results. As long as police unions focus on a "what's in it for us" mentality, instead of demanding excellence from its members, we will have entitled organizations and mediocre performance. As long as police executives spend more energy protecting their careers than protecting their organizational values and the people they serve, we will have much of the same mediocre results.

St. Mary's University Police Department is a current example of free-enterprising policing. We are a private organization that must meet all state standards. We enforce the laws of the state of Texas and operate as any municipal agency would with a population of 5,000 citizens. What is different is that if we do not meet the expectations of the community over time, they can replace us! That is

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free enterprise and it can, with the right leadership, give entitlement a good kick!

Epilogue

The National Institute of Justice conducted a research project in 1998 with the purpose of attempting to ascertain what works and what doesn't work in the most recent efforts to prevent crime in America. Problem-Oriented and Community-Oriented Policing as well as the concept of "restorative justice" are some of the new methods of conducting business that seem most promising (Stephens, 1999). We know as a profession that "the way we've always done it" is not working. Too often, valuable practices such as Community-Oriented Policing and Problem Solving are treated as programs. Programs are doomed to eventual failure. Community-Oriented Policing should not be a program. It is not a quick fix or political panacea. C.O.P.P.S. is a way of being that must be supported by the culture of the profession, the organization, and the individual officer.

As law enforcement leaders, we must look "outside the box" that is our current culture in a quest for greater options in cultural change leadership. We should look toward the business community and other cultural worlds in our search for answers. All of the "programs" in the history of humanity will not make a difference if they are forced upon a culture that does not truly support creative learning, risk taking, problem solving, and critical thinking. As law enforcement leaders,

we must stop trying to influence the "apples" and instead seek to find ways to change the nature of the whole barrel.

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