

S.F. Cops

View of the Department

By Ernest Lenn

A majority of San Francisco policemen feel that their department is only "somewhat professional," still retains political patronage, and its community relations unit is "ineffective."

These are among an array of gripes revealed today in the results of a questionnaire which the San Francisco Police Officers Association sent to policemen here.

Other highlights of the tabulated results, with an analysis, as compiled in a 155-page report by the public relations firm of Alessandro Baccari and Associates:

- The majority of the men want better equipment. For example, "they are being required to use cars that are so old and in such bad state of repair that they are endangering their own lives, and the public."

Walkie-talkie radios, and tape recorders to take on the spot statements at crime scenes, also were urged.

- Many are disenchanted with the free new Eisenhow-

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er type jackets and nylon jackets issued. They prefer a coat, "which would cover the ever-visible gun which they feel now produces a psychological effect on the public."

- They believe that lack of communication underlies "many of the department's internal problems," including the need to revamp the rules and regulations.

- There is lack of rapport between units — the relationship between the uniformed force and plainclothes men is "poor."

- The District Attorney's office is "too lenient" in pro-

secuting. There is "unwarranted leniency" in sentences imposed by trial judges.

- "A danger zone in race relations within the police department lies with the few who seek advantage solely on the basis of being either white or black."

- All avenues of negotiation should be exhausted "before even thinking of any form of 'strike action'" by policemen here. Sixty percent opposed policemen striking. Forty percent said they would resort to a substitute — either "blue flu," (calling in sick), a work slowdown, informational picketing.

As to whether policemen here should affiliate with any union, 55 percent preferred the Teamsters, 30 percent a professional or independent union, 15 percent the AFL-CIO.

- Regarding proposed fringe benefits, top priority went to a paid medical plan and a night differential. Changes in the present duty "watch" system were advocated, to improve departmental efficiency. Better retirement procedures were urged.

- Lifting of "the present ban" on the use of chemical MACE was urged.

- Staffing of the police radio communications system with civilian personnel was criticized. A majority of the officers felt that only a policeman with street experience is qualified to know the danger potential of various types of calls.

A principal criticism of the present organization of the police department centered around the number of command brass who now report directly to the chief, and the referral to him of many "routine matters."

"Both of these factors are regarded as unnecessarily occupying (the chief's) attention, which might otherwise be directed to major decisions on policy and proce-

dures," the report said.

- To insure the future "professionalism" of the department, high standards must be maintained in recruiting policemen. Advancements should be governed by ability as well as education and experience. And "race or color should have no bearing either in screening applicants or in promotion."

- More frequent promotional examinations should be held — at least every two years, said 75 percent.

- Ninety percent were opposed to requiring policemen to live in San Francisco.

- Eighty percent were opposed to the traditional parity with firemen here.

- Regarding the number of police commissioners — there traditionally have been three — 65 percent favored three, 30 percent advocated increasing the number to five.

- As to whether the police chief should continue to be appointed only from within the department, the majority said yes, and that he should be selected only from the ranks of captains. A majority held that one qualification for chief should be an educational requirement.

- Asked what they would do if they were chief, answers included: strict discipline, appointment of better officers in supervisory capacities; improved communication between men in supervisory positions and those in the ranks; providing better equipment.

- A majority said if they were chief they would improve morale by supporting the men, be fair in disciplining, give assignments according to merit rather than political influence.

- As to whether "it is more difficult for minorities to function" as policemen here, 85 percent said no, 15 percent said yes. Eighty percent felt that minorities on the force have not been discriminated against. Many felt that minority officers, primarily blacks, are given preferential consideration be-

cause of their race.

● A majority opposed certain recommendations previously made by the San Francisco Crime Committee, in its critical reports on the

police department.

They opposed the committee's proposals to bring in qualified command officers from outside jurisdictions; reducing the number of district police stations; abolishing the Tactical Squad; using motor scooters; returning the traffic bureau to the patrol force, and considering a return to one - man police cars.

● There is widespread belief among the policemen that internal discipline is presently unevenly balanced, "with matters of race and personal bias too often hindering fair judgment."

● Where the Crime Committee assailed the manner in which citizens' complaints against policemen were being handled here, a majority of officers held that such complaints were dealt with fairly.

However, "there is a preponderance of feeling that organized groups are ever alert to run any police action into a 'situation' (for) a platform

for crying 'brutality' without just cause," the report said.

"By reason of their vocal powers and numbers, credence is given to their statements without full weight being given to the officers' side."

Seventy percent felt that unjustified complaints were being made against policemen here for "harassment" purposes.

● Ninety percent were opposed to legalizing marijuana; 75 percent said that legalizing one vice leads to an increase in other vice crimes; 75 percent opposed legalizing prostitution.

● Asked if their wives, family or friends ever suggested they leave the police department for another job, 85 percent answered yes. They cited "fear of harm or death, poor working hours, lack of public support."