

Behind the Headlines Brash, Outdated Police Practices Need Action, Now

By JERRY SCHECTER

ON SEPTEMBER 20, 1950 a university vice-president promised a general statement on university police policy would be "issued in the near future." Work on the report had begun in May 1950. Today, a year later, there has been no action taken by the administration

Throughout this period the strained attitude between the university police and the student and faculty community has continued. Rudeness, impudence, police flaunting of the law, and an acute failure to provide any satisfactory student police policy has persisted.

The days of brash stereotyped flatfoots are gone. It is 13 years since Joe Hammersley began working as a watchman for the university. In that time he has compiled anything but an admirable record.

UNIVERSITY POLICE in the majority of colleges and universities are considered to be the students' friend. I doubt if Hammersley or any of his staff could claim that distinction.

The attitude of Hammersley and his men is outmoded and has no place in the university community. Gruff, antagonistic, blunt and belligerent conduct has surrounded the police force with a cloudy myth that cannot be refuted.

Throwing a leaded blackjack at a student, breaking into classes to "nab" students, and telling a student board member that the reason he couldn't park in a reserve area after 5 p. m. was because "we only do this to get you bunch of little big wheel dictators mad" are but a few of the outward manifestations of the senile system of student police action now in effect.

When a former university student was brought before superior court in Madison on a morals charge the writer asked Hammersley what he knew of the case. The reply: "Oh, I've had that guy's number for a long time. I've been reading his mail. You should see some of the letters he got from . . ."

THE PUBLIC RECORD of Hammersley and another member of his force is anything but commendable, and yet these men are "policing" the university campus and deciding whether a case of student misconduct belongs in superior court or whether it is suitable for student court. With no background and no trained student counselor to work under Hammersley and staff have had a free reign of law enforcement on campus—and they've had more than their share of blunders. For example:

- The attempted dormitory search without warrants during Christmas vacation last year.
- "Preventive persuasion" at the men's halls, raid on Liz Waters and Barnard hall last fall, and their threat of actual use of firearms against students.
- The farce that has been made of student smoking violations.
- The handling and methods of approach to cases of student sex activity and homosexuality.

A GROUP OF prominent faculty members including Kenneth Little, director of student personnel; Deans Paul Trump and Theodore Zillman; A. F. Ahearn, superintendent of buildings and grounds; and Howard Gill, lecturer in sociology, submitted a report to the administration. Student board has also prepared a report.

The administration unofficially has said it favors changes in the police set-up. Now, with only a week left to the school year, there must be a positive approval of a plan by the administration for a re-vamped university police force.

Student board has recommended that the police force be transferred from the buildings and grounds department and placed under the authority of an administrative official trained in human relations, with particular reference to modern methods of youth counselling.

The faculty report also urged transfer of the police from buildings and grounds jurisdiction to a separate authority with a liaison between the buildings and grounds department, and the student personnel office.

IT HAS BEEN pointed out by a member of the committee that "the police were put under the maintenance department when the university was small but that the vastness of the campus community has led to increased functions involving human relations which should be handled by personnel administrators."

Not only has Hammersley and his men bungled the administration of law on the campus but their attitude and ideas are antiquated. Certainly students should be subject to the laws of the community but they should not be goaded and mishandled by men who have no understanding of student conduct problems or student guidance. It's time for the administration to act.

6/19/51 Talked this over with
Schechter & Prof. Thayer.
JWB