

# COMMISSIONER WALDO TELLS ALL ABOUT POLICE CONDITIONS IN NEW YORK

## For the First Time He Talks Freely and Comprehensively of His Work and Supplies an Astonishing Human Document--Surprising Revelations as to How the Gamblers Organized a Press Bureau to Drive Him Out of Office--Measures to Stop Graft--Reform of the Detective Bureau--The Police Force as He Will Leave It



The rattle watch of 1654.

RHINELANDER WALDO, Commissioner of Police, paced back and forth across his spacious office in the new Headquarters Building--burly, tall, broad shouldered, deep of chest and light of step. Back and forth he paced, from one end to the other of that great office with its mahogany furniture and wainscoting, its rich rugs and elaborate decorations. And as he paced he spoke, slowly, distinctly, weighing his words carefully, often stopping to consider a phrase before it was uttered.

One hour sped by--two hours, three, four. Several times he was interrupted by police matters that had to be brought to his attention. Other matters waited; for just outside his office entrance stood a uniformed officer who had orders to that effect.

By the time Commissioner Waldo had finished the lights of Christmas eve were beginning to sparkle throughout the great city; voices of happy children floated up from the streets below; bells were ringing, early though it was--and the Commissioner had given for readers of THE SUNDAY SUN an intimate picture of police conditions in New York which for frankness as well as comprehensiveness it would be difficult to parallel.

For the first time in his official career Commissioner Waldo threw aside habitual reticence and with sure, firm strokes pictured what he knows to be true of the Police Department and of its relations to millions of human beings with whom it comes in constant contact on every side. It is an extraordinary human document; in some respects it is astounding, for among its revelations is the positive, unqualified statement that in order to discredit the Commissioner and force his retirement professional gamblers effected a regular organization and maintained a press bureau whose agents had but one duty--to work up such a newspaper campaign that Waldo would be compelled to step out of office.

The efforts of these hired press agents were unremitting, the Commissioner asserts. They tried in every way to "set the goods on him." Through allegations direct and indirect regarding individual members of the uniformed force, through innuendoes affecting the detective division; through political influence, real or assumed, the gamblers' bureau sought to make the public believe that Waldo was utterly incompetent, that he had no knowledge of police conditions and could not control them. The press agents even went so far, adds the Commissioner, as to send men here and there through the middle West to tell of the things they had seen in New York, of the corruption of the police, the dangerous conditions in the streets, the gunmen and gangsters, with the object of having their tales printed in Western newspapers so that the interviews would filter back to this city and injure him still further.

Throughout the entire story Commissioner Waldo does not utter a single word in his own defence. He states merely the facts as he sees them, and some of these are not suspected by the average New Yorker.

For fifteen years Rhinelander Waldo has been engaged in public service. He was a student of engineering at Columbia University when early in 1899 he entered the army as a Second Lieutenant of the Seventeenth United States Infantry. The Spanish-American war was over, but the Philippine insurrection was just getting under way. He went to the Philippines with his regiment, where he remained on active service for two years, meanwhile being promoted to First Lieutenant.

Seth Low and Robert Van Courtland and W. H. Chamberlain are now heading a movement to have it retained permanently, with some changes modelled on the famous State Constabulary of Pennsylvania, the change being desirable because the special watershed duty will soon be over.

Waldo ran for Congress in 1908 and ran way ahead of his ticket but failed to win in the political mixup of that year, and it was not until 1910 that he came back to the service of the city, when Mayor Gaynor appointed him Fire Commissioner, one year later making him Police Commissioner. When he took active charge of the force Commissioner Waldo realized that the most difficult task confronting him was that of the prevention of graft, and he determined to try to eliminate it from the department as far as was humanly possible. In referring to this he said:

"I realized of course that you couldn't stop the acceptance of bribes by the individual policeman as long as people were desirous of bribing them; and it would be impossible to stop people from bribing as long as they could actually get protection or immunity from crimes they committed. I believed, however, that it was possible to shut off the delivery of such protection or immunity. If people found they couldn't get protection they would cease paying for it, and you will see presently how this theory worked out.

"The ordinary conduct of police work was comparatively simple--I mean the prevention, detection and punishment of crime. The root of the trouble lay in this system of graft and immunity; and to attack it at its seat efforts were concentrated on the most prolific sources of bribery, by closing gambling houses and evil resorts that could not run without paying for police protection.

"Consider for a moment what has followed." Commissioner Waldo continued, halting in his walk, across the room and speaking with impressive earnestness. "The city was startled, shocked, amazed by so-called revelations of gamblers and keepers of evil resorts, who told how and when and where they had been paying for protection. And yet," he added with a smile, "a good many New Yorkers never stopped to reflect that the only reason these revelations were made was the fact that the people making them were no longer able to buy protection, and were therefore willing to tell of money paid in past years which no longer protected them. It is not unreasonable to think that some of these gamblers and resort keepers felt outraged because they could no longer violate the laws with impunity; perhaps some of them also thought that revelations of past crimes would deal a stunning blow at the police force as a whole and compel changes in administration.

"It must be remembered that practically all of the corruption in the department has been worked through those laws which operate for the protection of the public morals--laws dealing with excise, gambling and the social evil. At the earliest possible moment, after getting a grasp on the general situation, I relieved the precinct commanders and the entire uniformed force under them from all responsibility for the enforcement of these laws and limited their activities to the protection of life and property. In like manner I limited the work of the detective bureau to the detection of crime against life and property.

"I then organized a special force for the enforcement of laws relating to excise, gambling and prostitution. By this perfectly simple and direct plan fully 98 per cent. of the police were relieved from further opportunities for accepting bribes in payment for protection, because they no longer had anything to do with enforcing the law, anything referred to; and of course people willing to pay for protection soon found this out.

"Secondly, I held each inspector responsible for his district, and assigned to each of them a special force to carry on this special work. Realizing the temptations under which an inspector might be placed, I went a step further and established four squads of men under four lieutenants, who operated all over the city, and whose activities were not confined to any section or even borough. Their business was to find evidence where it existed regarding violation of the laws concerning excise, gambling and prostitution. To guard the situation still more stringently I had each of the four lieutenants report to me personally and not to any precinct commander or inspector.

"Now what happened under such a plan? Why, the lawbreaker who desired protection found that he would not only have to bribe the inspector in his district, but also each of the four lieutenants; and to provide against even this remote contingency I had all of the four lieutenants superseded from time to time by other lieutenants chosen from the regular force. The final result was that if any one of the lieutenants endeavored to deliver protection he found himself unable to do so; and the gambling house he was alleged to be personally interested in was sure to be closed after running but a few days. Why, under this system Becker himself couldn't and didn't deliver any actual protection, no matter whether he pretended to or not."

Commissioner Waldo paused for a moment; then said with earnestness: "To-day there is not a public gambling house open in the city of New York." He then pushed an electric button. Instantly a uniformed messenger appeared at the door and saluted.

"Let me see figures showing number of gambling houses and disorderly houses suppressed from June 1, 1911, to November 30, 1913," said the Commissioner.

The messenger vanished, but quickly reappeared with a typewritten document. It showed that during the seven-month period mentioned 819 gambling houses and 1,643 disorderly houses had been closed.

"In addition to this," Mr. Waldo continued, "we have suppressed about fifty Raines law hotels, and open soliciting by women on the streets has been reduced to a minimum.



Police Commissioner Rhinelander Waldo.

citizens to find a policeman on the streets when he was needed. In order to remedy this as far as possible, and without undue delay, I introduced the fixed post system in Manhattan and in the more congested sections of Brooklyn and the Bronx, whereby from 10 P. M. to 6 A. M. one-half the entire uniformed force is on duty. The other half of the force is divided into two shifts, one on duty from 6 A. M. to 2 P. M. and the other from 2 P. M. to 10 P. M.

"Under the fixed post system patrolmen are stationed along the avenues at intervals of four blocks, so that a citizen who wants to get hold of a policeman will on reaching an avenue be no further than two blocks of 300 feet from a uniformed man. The great advantages of this common sense plan are obvious, especially to New Yorkers who remember how difficult it often was to find a policeman in years gone by.

"While one-half the night force are on fixed post the other half, or one-quarter of the entire force of uniformed men, are on patrol duty. The men on fixed post are relieved every hour by the men on patrol, and in cold weather they are so relieved every half hour. The idea that the fixed post system works hardship on a husky, powerful man in heavy winter uniform is simply nonsense.

"Of course there was a row and a rumpus made when the fixed post was introduced, and I suppose it naturally would be unpopular with the patrolman who likes to drop out of sight on cold nights and spend his time in a warm, comfortable room, where freezing weather won't keep him awake or citizens interrupt his peace of mind and slumber. At present it is hardly worth while for a patrolman to slip away to such quarters, because he knows that by the time a half hour or an hour passes and he is just getting fairly comfortable he will have to hustle out and stand on fixed post.

"One of the important results of the fixed post is that by having the city so covered it is almost impossible for a fire at night to get much headway before it is discovered and an alarm turned in. In the old days when policemen kept moving more or less actively over their posts it happened not infrequently that night fires would start and get under full headway before an explosion of flame burst out of windows. In those days, I am informed, about 15 per cent. of the fires were discovered by the police, and I think about 80 per cent. are discovered at present.

"One other feature of police work I recently introduced is that of the new green lights on lampposts, connected with the telegraph bureau. Under this system when a crime is reported to a station house from any single block in the city the patrolman on fixed post nearest to that block is instantly notified by a flash of green light on a lamp-post close at hand and he at once rings up the station house. It may be that a number of other cities, or other branches of the police department, have adopted this system.

showing every street, avenue, highway and by-way of the city, the sections being laid out in primary colors, so that at a glance Commissioner Waldo can tell exactly where every fixed post is, every precinct, every inspection district.

Standing on heavy tables down the length of the map room are large maps of each borough that of Manhattan being at least fifteen feet in length, and relatively wide. Each map bristles with small flags of various colors, and they tell him at a glance the detailed story of police conditions in every locality of Greater New York. If a riot should break out, or some serious accident happen in any neighborhood of this big town, at any hour of the day or night, Commissioner Waldo could know in half a minute the exact conditions and surroundings of that neighborhood, how many patrolmen, how many mounted men, how many sergeants, lieutenants, captains were in reach, and how soon he could get others there, and in what numbers.

He led the way back to his own private office, and again paced back and forth.

"Since I have been Commissioner," he said, "the uniformed force has been increased by about six hundred men, and they are needed. There are very few persons who understand how constantly and how rapidly this wonderful city is growing, and in how many directions it is growing all the time.

"Open fields of a few years ago are now built up almost solidly. Thousands and thousands of men and women and children live where cattle grazed not so long ago, and those men and women and children must be protected from danger as well as from crime. As long as the population continues to spread out into new areas we shall have to have increase in the number of men on the force.

"The increasing cost of living rendered it essential that the men have pay that will enable them to make both ends meet, and since I have been in office the minimum pay has been raised from \$800 to \$1,000. Many other individual changes have been made in the course of affairs affecting the individual policeman. For example, if you go into the school of instruction this afternoon you will see more than 200 new recruits being taught how to handle and care for the standard police pistol which the city furnishes them as part of their equipment.

"Before I became Commissioner each new man had to furnish his own pistol. One man would provide himself with one kind and another man with another kind. As a rule I think I am within bounds when I say that the average so-called professional criminals of the gunman type. And the idea that new recruits had to furnish and pay for their weapons was so ridiculous that I am almost ashamed to mention it because of the ridicule it would probably cause in police departments of other great cities.

"Largely because of my few years of active service in the army I soon saw on taking charge that it was necessary to enlarge and make more thorough the school for recruits, and already the course of preparatory study has been extended from four weeks to six. The recruits are carefully instructed as to laws, ordinances, the Code of Criminal Procedure and concerning the rules and regulations of the department. But the course of study and practical application of it now goes much further than this.

"I became convinced that one thing our men needed to learn was how to handle prisoners who showed fight without inflicting serious punishment by using the club or otherwise. With a desperate man it is sometimes necessary to use force, but I believed that force could be applied without so much real injury as had been the case not infrequently. So after careful consideration I arranged for Capt. Koehler, the veteran athletic instructor at West Point, to come to New York and teach a number of my best officers how to handle prisoners who were desperate and violent. He did so, and stayed here long enough to make those selected officers so proficient that they themselves are competent to act as instructors for the rank and file of the entire force. This I also consider a step forward in police work that is satisfactory.

"Not long afterward I arranged with Tom Jenkins, the famous wrestling expert at West Point, to come here in the same way and teach the men just as he taught the West Point cadets in his particular line of work, and up to date I am not disappointed with results. Coupled with these special lines of training I instituted a course of athletic work which is teaching our men to stand and properly, to hold themselves with military alertness and bearing. Already as a result of this physical drill round shoulders are disappearing and paunches that have no place on men of vigor and action.

"One of the most interesting experiments I have tried out successfully," Commissioner Waldo continued, "is that of a moot court, which is held here two or three afternoons of each week and usually by Chief Magistrate McAdoo. It frequently happens that two hundred new recruits are present and they see by actual demonstration just how a policeman presents his case in a Magistrate's court and what happens after he makes charges and produces his prisoners.

"Every step is gone through exactly as if the case of a real court and every move is carefully explained. In short, the new recruit learns in our moot court just about what he will be up against when he goes on active duty and makes his first arrests. And as a rule they need a whole lot of instruction in the particular phase of their work."

The Commissioner paused, for papers were laid on his desk which required signature. Quickly he glanced at one after another, asking question after question as he rapidly inscribed his name. Then the messenger who had brought in the papers disappeared with them and the Commissioner's visitor asked a question.

"What do you think is needed more than anything else to increase and better police conditions in New York?" "Proper support by the courts," Mr. Waldo answered unhesitatingly. "That is the most important thing that the police could possibly have.

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The policeman of to-day.

not commit crimes arousing public criticism, and if unexpectedly arrested, they would return articles they had stolen, without making any fuss.

"After careful study of the Police Departments of large cities in Europe came to the conclusion that the Scotland Yard system was best suited to the needs of New York. This I adopted, and it is now in force. Since that time has adopted the same system.

"Under this organization an inspector at Headquarters is in charge of the detective division, under him a squad of district detectives, more being assigned to districts in all the districts. The districts are divided into ninety precincts, each precinct in charge of a chief precinct detective, who reports to the chief of his district; and the body of detective work directly under these precinct chiefs, none being assigned to Headquarters.

"One of the advantages of this system is that the men doing detective work keep familiar with the people of the city, and they are working as well as without changing condition of the neighborhood. Each man thus possesses intimate and thorough knowledge of a comparatively small precinct and a limited population. He knows the people and what they do, and how they live.

"Of course, we have special men engaged in special lines of work, such as those guarding the financial district. When a robbery of securities is reported, these men know what kind of securities are marketable, and where, and just what step a thief would have to take in order to get rid of them. A detective with no knowledge of Wall Street securities would not know what to do if suddenly told that certain valuable securities had been stolen; he wouldn't know where to look for them. I am convinced that the system now in operation is far more efficient than the old plan.

Commissioner Waldo spoke in detail of one department of police work, the average citizen usually does not think of at all--that of the administration of the vast and intricate business of guarding life and property and enforcing laws pertaining to the public morals. The system of records, identification, efficiency, the old time reports, more or less accurately kept on loose sheets or in bulky books, have been superseded by complete systems of cards, indexes and card indexes, which are now being used in the third precinct.

Motor patrol wagons, and Commissioner Waldo says that the use of these horse drawn wagons, and Commissioner Waldo says that the use of these horse drawn wagons will be discontinued in this one single item of the department. Waldo is saving the cost of a year.

Seven new police stations have been built during this administration, and three new precincts in West Manhattan, and one in The Bronx, have been established. Before he came to office the inspectors used horse drawn bicycles in various districts where they use efficient numbers of bicycles, costing not over \$200 each.

### PASSING OF THE BELLOWS

THE bellows in the furnace of a household are still doing their duty when the new ones are being made. It is a fact that the old bellows are still in use, and one in The Bronx, however, has been established. Before he came to office the inspectors used horse drawn bicycles in various districts where they use efficient numbers of bicycles, costing not over \$200 each.

Now the village blacksmiths have taken down the big old time bellows and set on the beams up under the roof the new bellows, which are being made by turning a crank and writing the available men now use that for their purposes.

In a long established city the bellows shop located on the downtown side, where once across the street the wharves were lined with the great sailing ships, there was a bellows shop of the big old time bellows. The blacksmith wanted to blow a fire, he rested one hand and foot on the end of the long lever and swung and swayed on it gently while with the other hand occasionally he turned the crank. But now?

Now from the wharves a new bellows shop has been built, and from this old water front building the shop of the old time bellows has disappeared too. The new bellows are being made, and people half now that they have always done to blow a fire, they see the sparks fly when the bellows are blown, and his helper strikes on the end of the long lever and swings and swayed on it gently while with the other hand occasionally he turned the crank. But now?

Now he simply reaches up and pulls a little switch. That starts a steam, which little switch can be operated from the