

Conlisk, 71, Fired As Police Power

By Malcolm Wise

Retired Capt. James B. Conlisk, most powerful of the police department's "elder statesmen," was fired Friday by Police Supt. Orlando W. Wilson.

Conlisk, 71, was \$11,040 administrative assistant to Wil-



James B. Conlisk at his desk on last day as administrative assistant to the superintendent.

son—a job he had held under four police commissioners, beginning in 1930.

Announcing Conlisk's dismissal, Wilson said:

"This step is taken with some regret. I have been very impressed with Capt. Conlisk's loyalty, sincerity, earnestness and years of service with the Chicago Police Department."

'Doesn't Fit In'

But Conlisk is being removed because he "doesn't fit into the plans we've developed for the superintendent's office," Wilson said.

The plans include a streamlining of the functions of the office as recommended by Public Administration Service, which is making a survey of the office.

Wilson said the PAS had recommended that Conlisk be removed.

"We are weeding out functions that do not require the personal attention of the superintendent," Wilson stated.

"Such functions as license approval and other administrative details will be transferred to the command level."

Duties Diminished

Conlisk's duties, somewhat diminished in scope, will be taken over by John J. Lane, a patrolman serving as an administrative assistant to Wilson at a salary of \$10,512. Lane has been trained by Conlisk and has worked closely with him for several years.

The dismissal of Conlisk brought to four the number of top civilian aids ousted by Wilson. The others are Charles G. O'Regan, then a deputy commissioner; Capt. William A. Balswick, an aid to Wilson, and Capt. George T. Barnes, a labor consultant

men holding jobs as civilians are William J. Touhy, head of the motor service section; John J. Walsh, police custodian, and Richard Coyne, head of the missing persons detail. Touhy and Walsh are retired captains. Coyne is a retired lieutenant.

Joined Force In 1914

Conlisk was by far the most powerful of the seven "old men."

He joined the department Aug. 18, 1914. On Aug. 1, 1930, after patrol, traffic and horseback duty, he moved into the office of Comr. John J. Alcock.

Through the years, under Alcock and Comrs. Timothy P. Allman, John C. Prendergast and Timothy J. O'Connor, who preceded Wilson, Conlisk's influence grew.

He often knew more than the commissioner did about the department.

For example, O'Connor or his predecessors, on occasion, would tell reporters that five men were going to be promoted to captain.

The reporters would go to Conlisk for the names and he might say:

"No, we're going to make seven captains."

Seven it would be when the names were released.

Ruled On Transfers

Conlisk made up the major part of every transfer and promotion list, and his bosses frequently relied on his judgment. He did most of the work in drawing up the annual budget. He signed all requisitions, authorized all vouchers for paying bills.

All police department purchasing went across his desk, as did all requests for special licenses, all disciplinary reports

through channels to the commissioner.

Conlisk often made many decisions on details that he could handle without worrying the commissioner.

Conlisk knew all the department's 60-odd captains and about 175 lieutenants. He could also tell almost immediately where they were stationed or where they had been stationed.

A stocky man, Conlisk doesn't look or act his 71 years. A man of few words, he is extremely alert mentally and has a sharp

recall of details and past incidents.

Conlisk had been expecting his dismissal for some time. Shortly after Wilson was appointed in February, Conlisk told a reporter:

"What the heck, it's in the cards. I know it's coming. I expect I'll get it about March 1."

Conlisk probably could have been named police commissioner after Mayor Daley first was elected in 1955.

Reportedly Daley asked Conlisk's wife, Margaret, during a

visit to the Conlisk home one night:

"How would you like to have your husband as police commissioner?"

Mrs. Conlisk reportedly replied:

"You just leave him right where he is."

The Conlisks live at 1315 W. Marquette. They have seven children and 17 grandchildren.

Three of Conlisk's sons are policemen. James B. Jr., a captain, is deputy chief of traffic. William and John are detectives.