

# Plan to Overhaul City's Police Radio Hailed

## Job of Renewal Long Overdue, Say Experts

BY GEORGE SCHREIBER

Professional radio operators in the police departments in the Chicago area and other Illinois communities Saturday praised the plan of Police Supt. Orlando Wilson, to overhaul the department's radio communications system. They were unanimous in agreeing "that it is high time."

One comment was that the Chicago police department is "10 years behind the times" in its operating procedures. Another was that the city police officials charged with radio operations are not radio minded. The city was criticized in several quarters for slowness in answer messages from other cities, especially suburban communities, linked with Chicago on a point-to-point system.

### Some 5 Day Waits

"Sometimes we have to wait as long as five days for an answer," one said.

To correct these and other alleged poor practices, Supt. Wilson has hired Deputy Chief Arthur Hohman of Los Angeles. Hohman, on 60 days leave, will make a study of the Chicago communications and transportation system, the superintendent said. The Californian, an acknowledged expert in his field, is scheduled to arrive Sunday.

"Chief Hohman and Supt. Wilson can count on cooperation from us," said F. Arthur Carnahan, a state radio supervisor in Macomb, McDonough county, and president of the Illinois chapter of the Associated Police Communications Officers association [APCO]. The group is national in scope and is composed of operators and technicians. It is official adviser to the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

### State Pledges Help

Officials in the state department of public safety

also pledged their help. The department, as part of the Illinois Highway police, operates as a unit of a nation-wide radio telegraph [CW] network which has almost instant communications with 43 of the 50 states.

Joseph D. Bibb, public safety director, offered to lend "our operators to Chicago to see what they can do to help Supt. Wilson, or anyone he designates."

Other professional radio men who refused to be quoted estimated that Hohman's biggest job will be to resell the advantages of radio communications to the police department brass.

### State Sends Messages

These men pointed out that Chicago must go to the state telegraph stations to communicate with other cities in the United States or use commercial wires. They pointed out that while Chicago has no such national network of its own, many smaller cities do.

Some of these, include Buffalo, Cleveland, Duluth, Denver, Grand Rapids, Mich., Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Louisville, Toledo, and Memphis. There are a score of others, they said, all glad to cooperate with other departments.

"In 1959 the state telegraph [CW] network handled 38,000 messages for the police departments in the Chicago area to other United States police departments," said Ero Erickson, radio supervisor for

the Chicago headquarters of the state police.

"Seventy per cent, we estimate, were for the city. These messages were only outbound. There must have been at least that many coming in."

The operators said that radio telegraph is better for long-haul police work than teletype. They pointed out that wire costs make teletype prohibitive to police departments in smaller communities who would thus be deprived of outside or interzone communications.

### Work for Speedup

Supt. Wilson said that Hohman will study the police radio requirements, along with the layout of the radio room and broadcasting booths, as well as the procedures. He said the aim of the survey is to speed up the handling of telephoned criminal complaints and to dispatch police cars to the scene of a crime or accident.

Chicago has 1,110 radio equipped motor vehicles. Of these 645 are automobiles, all equipped with two-way radio. Two-way radio also is installed in 465 of the city's 620 three wheel motorcycles.

Another aim of the new superintendent is to get rid of most of the motorcycles and substitute radio equipped compact cars. A few of the three wheelers, he said, would be kept for traffic direction.

The police emergency network operates 24 hours a day on two FM [frequency modu-

lated] transmitters, not readily received on anything but a specially built receiver. The transmitters are situated on city owned property at 4911 Belmont av., and 64th street and Wentworth avenue. A third transmitter, a standby in case of trouble at either of the two others, is 31st street and Sacramento avenue.

### May Increase Channels

Associates said Wilson is particularly interested in the large volume of messages handled on the police emergency channels. Some of these messages, his advisers said, are not of an immediate nature. If the volume continues to rise, they added, it might be necessary for the city to seek additional frequencies from the Federal Communications commission.

The city employs 37 civilians, headed by Chief Engineer Frank McLaughlin, a 29 year veteran, to keep the police radios in operating condition. The civilians are needed because of the government requirement that technicians who repair transmitters have at least a second class telephone license, issued by the FCC after strict examination.

"We are charged only with the maintenance of the equipment, its mechanical and electrical order," McLaughlin said. "When in the past we have made suggestions for its more efficient use, we have been told to quit meddling in police business. We have learned to do just this."