**Voice at the people: Bring back Police Cadet**
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# Voice of the people

# Bring back Police Cadet Program

CHICAGO—With the Supreme Court's recent endorsement of affirmative action in the workplace, the quotas imposed upon the Chicago Police Department in 1974 by federal Judge Prentice H. Marshall are likely to remain in effect. Given that likelihood, the Chicago Police Department should concentrate its hiring efforts on recruiting more well-qualified applicants.

As The Tribune pointed out in a May, 1985, editorial, effective affirmative action programs should "take steps to increase the qualified talent pool, perhaps through special recruitment, education and training programs to better enable minorities to earn new opportunities on merit." If Police Supt. Fred Rice were to revive the Police Cadet Program, he would be credited with reinstating one of the department's most effective affirmative action programs.

Established by Chicago Police Supt. O.W. Wilson in the pre-quota year of 1962, the cadet program enabled young men between the ages of 17 and 20 to learn police procedures while attending college. In addition to receiving exposure to the police profession, cadets performed a variety of routine clerical duties and became eligible for the patrolman's examination after their 21st birthday. Despite the fact that many cadets later became full-fledged police officers, the program was discontinued in the early 1970s due to budgetary restrictions.

In June of 1986, the New York City Police Department instituted a Police Cadet Corps similar to the one created by Wilson. With $1 million budgeted for its first year, the program is open to city residents enrolled in their sophomore year at city-based colleges and universities. The 130 cadets are paid $5 an hour and receive low-interest loans to help cover college tuition.

Although they do not carry guns or have enforcement powers, cadets do wear uniforms and acquire 1,080 hours of police training. The Cadet Corps also patrols streets with veteran officers and works with community groups. After successfully completing their two-year apprenticeship and graduating from college, cadets can become official police officers.

Ideally, a new Chicago program would be a composite of Wilson's plan and the one in New York City. Cadets, male and female, could assist police officers in routine police work and in enhancing police-community relations.

In the long run, the Chicago Police Department would benefit from a pool of enthusiastic, well-educated and well-trained young adults who could fill vacancies resulting from attrition. In the short run, cadets would benefit from jobs, student loans and career opportunities.

Not only would such a program complement the overall quality of the department, it would enable the department to evolve into the professional police force that Wilson envisioned. A cadet program also would have a positive impact on the department's affirmative action efforts; it would help the department recruit top-notch minorities and women who otherwise might not have considered careers in law enforcement.

While the benefits of a Chicago Police Cadet Program far outweigh its costs, a source of funding must be determined. The department could finance the program next year by utilizing this year's salvaged funds—money allocated for salaries, equipment and supplies which remains unencumbered at the end of a fiscal year. In addition, Supt. Rice could invite corporate, financial and law enforcement organizations to cosponsor the program in conjunction with appropriate tax incentives. Just as the New York City Police Department has made a significant investment in a Police Cadet Corps, so too must the Chicago Police Department; it can hardly afford not to.

**Susan M. McNally**

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