

GLANCING BACK . . .



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A Real Believe It Or Not

A police commissioner sending a letter to the mayor of his city warning him against adopting a short-wave radio broadcasting system for the police department.

In these days of multichannel police radio systems when even the most modest police department would deem it impossible to do an effective job without radio in the patrol car, it is difficult to comprehend such action by the police commissioner of a large city.

But unfortunately all police officials did not possess the same sort of enthusiasm for the new form of police communication as shown by more progressive officials like Rutledge in Detroit, Higgins in Buffalo, and many others around the country in the twenties and the early thirties.

Seeing Is Not Believing

Despite a request from the City Council, in 1931, for the installation of a police radio system, the very cautious Commissioner, unconvinced by the successful operation of police radio systems in more than 50 cities from coast to coast, recommended instead, that a survey of the department's communications be made at a cost of eight thousand dollars.

Arguments cited by the Commissioner against carrying out the mandate of the City Council included the cost of short wave radio installations; the necessity of pro-

viding additional frequencies for the police radio system at the expense of important maritime and aviation services; and the fact that satisfactory tests had not been made with the proposed apparatus.

F.R.C. Lends A Helping Hand

Appended to the Commissioner's letter to the Mayor was a communication from James W. Baldwin, Secretary of the Federal Radio Commission, pointing out some of the operating difficulties of a short wave radio plan.

Quoting from the Commissioner's letter to the Mayor — "In regard to radio as referred to in the order of the City Council, the study and thought I have given to this matter convinces me that proper radio service would cost a great deal of money to install, maintain and operate.

"For example, the annual report of the Chicago Police Department for 1930 shows that the three transmitters used in their radio system cost approximately \$27,000 each to install, or a total of \$81,000. The cost of operation per transmitter, including labor, materials, and depreciation, is reported as \$19,000 annually or a total cost of \$57,600."

Those B Batteries Were Murder

"The cost of the radio receiving set, less the labor intallation, was about \$200 a car, and the cost of receiver maintenance, less labor, but including all materials and depreciation, is reported as approximately \$444 per car per year."

If we can believe the daily newspapers of the great city of Boston, in late 1931, Police Commissioner Eugene C. Hultman of that city was making every effort to delay the installation of a police radio system, even to the extent of offering to defer repair work on some of the police buildings to obtain funds from the budget that could be used for a study by Professor Dougall C. Jackson of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Study: An Oversize Volume of Confusion, Creating Delay

In answer to an inquiry from the Commissioner, the Professor wrote

on October 1, 1931 that "Adequate examination and treatment would require six months, possibly eight months."

There would be no charge for Professor Jackson's time but it would be necessary to charge any cost the Institute would incur for men making the survey. The cost of the study was estimated at approximately \$8,000.

Half A Loaf Is Better Than None

Perhaps the Commissioner had cruised around in some other city's police car and listened to the radio receivers often plagued by noises of every description, static, ignition noise, sparking trolley cars, fading signals, dead spots and signals from distant stations covering the local signals.

Certainly anyone familiar with the present VHF and UHF FM police radio systems would not call the apparatus of the early thirties as perfect, especially at some distance from the transmitters, but police radio was doing a job that could not be accomplished in any other way.

There were many people in Boston who did not agree with the Commissioner. They were convinced that the many police radio systems in operation throughout the country and even in his own state had shown that the money was well invested, especially during a time when gangsters and hoodlums were on a rampage of crime.

To learn more about how the other people of Boston felt about police radio, please tune in to this same channel next month.

It appeared that another Boston Tea Party was in the making.

A Big First For APCO

Things are calm now in communication-efficient Boston and should remain so until the APCO members arrive there in full force on August 14, 1972 for the first national conference ever held in New England. If you don't come you won't know beans. Duck E.

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