

POLICEMAN TELLS TRIAL OF PAYOFFS

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A decorated New York policeman testified in court yesterday that gamblers paid bribes of \$700 to \$800 a month to individual patrolmen assigned to suppress gambling in part of the Bronx.

The witness said he had seen patrolmen take money from gamblers, had heard gamblers haggle with policemen over whether they would be arrested and had seen one police man divide up a "large amount of money in a satchel" for other policemen.

The witness who gave this picture of systematic and entrenched corruption was Patrol man Frank Serpico, a 34-year- old City College graduate who has been on the force for more than 10 years.

Says He Spoke in 1967

He testified as a prosecution witness in the trial of Robert Stanard, a suspended patrol man charged with having lied to a grand jury about his connections with gamblers. The trial is before Justice Francis Bloustein in State Supreme Court in the Bronx. Assistant District Attorney Robert Koppelman is the [p]rosecutor.

Patrolman Serpico, who now is with the Narcotics Division, testified that he first related the picture of corruption to a high police official in January, 1967, more than two years before any of the policemen involved were indicted.

He said a plainclothes man who arrested a gambler in New York was normally expected to give a \$5 tip to the police lieutenant who processed the arrest.

The witness said the lieutenants were convinced the plain clothes men making the arrests were getting a great deal more than the \$5 from the gamblers.

Patrolman Serpico testified that a plainclothes man told him that if he did not want to take bribes from the gamblers, "we can put up some money" for friends at headquarters and "I would be transferred."

Many aspects of the testimony about police corruption previously were reported in a New York Times survey of the problem published on April 25. As a result of this survey Mayor Lindsay has formed a special five-man commission to investigate police corruption and develop ways of preventing it.

Patrolman Serpico said he [w]as assigned to the 7th Division plainclothes unit in December, 1966. This unit, which at the time included 15 patrolmen, two lieutenants and two inspectors, was responsible for enforcing the gambling laws in a four- precinct area of the Bronx with More than a half a million in habitants.

The patrolman said that within a month he became convinced the unit was corrupt and he reported to that effect to an old friend, Inspector Cornelius J. Behan, now in charge of the Police Department's planning division.

'Undercover' Task

Patrolman Serpico said Inspector Behan told him that as a result of that report he would be assigned to do "undercover work" for Deputy Police Commissioner John F. Walsh, the second highest police commander in the department and the man bearing direct responsibility for fighting police corruption.

The witness said that on May 30, 1967, he met with Arnold G. Fraiman—who was then Commissioner of Investigation and now is a State Supreme Court justice—and gave him "a report about corruption in the 7th Division."

The patrolman testified he was taken to meet Mr. Fraiman by David Durk, then a detective assigned to the Investigation Department. The detective subsequently was promoted to sergeant and now is on a leave of absence and recruiting college graduates to become policemen under a \$21,000 grant from the Justice Department.

When the meeting between the then Investigation Commissioner and policemen concerned about corruption was [o]riginally reported, Justice Fraiman said the information provided was extremely general and that "no specifics were ever given." He also denied he had ever discontinued an investigation of police corruption.

Patrolman Serpico testified that sometime in October, 1967 — about four months after [w]e had talked with Mr. Fraiman — he reported the corruption in the 7th Division plain clothes unit to Supervising Assistant Chief Inspector Joseph McGovern, then as now the Police Department's top uniformed internal investigator.

It apparently was after his report to Chief McGovern, in a car parked on a pier on the Lower East Side that police officials in the Bronx were informed about the allegations of corruption in the 7th Division and began investigating them.

After a long Investigation by these officials and by the office of Bronx District Attorney Burton B. Roberts and a Bronx grand jury, eight policemen were indicted on perjury charges in connection with alleged protection payoffs by number racketeers.

Episode in a Bar

Patrolman Serpico's testimony yesterday came during the trial of one of these eight policemen, Patrolman Stanard. The witness, wearing a conservative grey flannel suit and a handlebar mustache, said that immediately after he arrived in the 7th Division, Patrolman Stanard introduced him to a gambler in a Bronx bar.

"Nino took out some bills and handed them to me," the Witness related. "I said, what is that for? Get yourself a hat. I said, I don't need hat." Nino gave the bills to Stanard."

The witness said that when he first joined the Bronx anti-gambling unit, Patrolman Stanard asked him “whether I knew what plainclothes was all about.”

He quoted Patrolman Stanard as saying that in gambling “there is clean money,” that “gamblers pay to avoid arrest” and that at that time Patrolman Standard said this came to “\$700 to \$800 a month.”

There was another occasion, Patrolman Serpico said, when another policeman, Carinelle J. Zumatto, took him to his apartment at 1411 Grand Concourse, the Bronx.

“Zumatto had a satchel which had a lot of money and I helped him count it out, apportion it,” the witness asserted. “This is your share for the month,” he quoted Patrolman Zumatto as saying “I’m putting it in an envelope and when you decide whether you want it, you can have it.”

Patrolman Serpico estimated there was more than \$2,000 in the satchel.

He said that on another occasion Patrolman Zumatto stopped a known gambler and asked him, “Do you have it?”

The witness said the gambler pleaded poverty and an appointment was made to meet later in the day.

The witness quoted Patrolman Zumatto as saying to the same gambler a month later: “I told you to get up some money. Now you’re going in. If you don’t come up with the money this time, I’m locking.”

Patrolman Zumatto is among those indicted on perjury charges.

On another occasion, according to Patrolman Serpico, several patrolmen walked into the apartment of a gambler, who protested he was paying the police and was not subject to arrest.

After considerable argument, Patrolman Serpico said, one of the patrolmen asked the others to leave.

“When he came out,” the witness testified, “he had some money. It came to \$40 a head. They also had some for the lieutenant who had been in on the original observation.

“I said I didn’t want it, but they stuffed it in my pocket. The next day I put the money in their boxes in the office.”

Source:

<https://www.nytimes.com/1970/06/19/archives/policeman-tells-trial-of-payoffs-says-members-of-bronx-unit-got-700.html?url=http%3A%2F%2Ftimesmachine.nytimes.com%2Ftimesmachine%2F1970%2F06%2F19%2F90608647.html>