

Chapter 5

Job Stability and Career Opportunities in the Work-Life History of Policemen in Victorian and Edwardian England

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Introduction

The nineteenth century labour market in England was marked by a high degree of job fluctuation. Most employers, relying on an almost continuous supply of labour, hired and fired at will, while a significant number of employees drifted from job to job. The mobility of labour during the nineteenth century was a phenomenon experienced most intensely by members of the working class. The introduction of capitalist modes of exchange into the landed economy of the eighteenth century and the accelerated rate of industrialization in the next century contributed greatly to this trend. Farm workers became day labourers or seasonal workers in the agricultural sector, moved into the factories or migrated into urban markets alongside rural craftsmen. Some workers had to change jobs because they belonged to a deteriorating industry, while others, such as construction workers, were susceptible to seasonal fluctuations in their trade (Stearns, 1975, p. 22, 39). Whereas some job changes necessitated geographical mobility, often workers remained in the same locality, changing occupations or merely employers.

Workers often chose whatever came along. Faced with unemployment, craftsmen and skilled workers occasionally found themselves plunged into the ranks of unskilled casual labour. Other workers wandered from place to place voluntarily. For some tramping was a way of life. Gypsies and showmen were 'born and bred to a roving life' (Samuel, 1973, p. 124). Many such drifters went back to an old employer as soon as work resumed or was available again, but a large number shifted to new employers.

Gradually, however, in the course of the latter part of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, a growing number of employers became dependent on a stable core of employees and an increasing number of workers acquired job security. Many workers still experienced frequent job shifts and casual labour was rife. Women, in particular, lacked steady employment. During periods of unemployment hitherto secure workers found themselves vulnerable to dismissal. Nonetheless, the general trend was indisputable.

Most employers obviously depended on ‘the positive commitment of at least a section of their workforce’, but a growing number of work organizations during the Victorian period could not afford a high turnover and required the stability of a more substantial core (Lummis, 1994, p. 18). To stop the mobility of the labour force, they designed various incentives to entice all or certain workers to stay on the job. Each created a set of rewards to suit its own needs, but notably the new large-scale bureaucratic organizations such as the post office, railway companies and some government departments also offered the opportunity to rise through the ranks, and in some cases even to experience significant social and economic improvement. Career advancement would no longer be attained by moving among work organizations but by demonstrating a willingness to maintain membership as an employee in a single establishment. Thus, stable employment and internal promotion were linked to create work environments wherein employees situated at the bottom of the bureaucratic ladder could move up the scale and profit from what this progression entailed. This opportunity was especially dramatic for people of a working class origin whose horizons were generally limited to a pay rise or a move to a position of higher status at some point during their working life. Since these bureaucratic organizations tied advancement to long-term service, they in fact offered their working class employees both employment security and a lifetime career, thereby distinguishing them from the mass of factory and agricultural workers.

The new police forces emerging in England between 1829 (when the Metropolitan Police of London were established) and the late 1850s were among the work organizations that pioneered this employment strategy. Moreover, the police created unique opportunities for its workforce, far outmatching the systems of promotion of most other work organizations willing to advance their working class employees. While other paternalist bureaucracies, such as the post office and the railway companies, offered internal mobility to only a particular group of long-term employees, the police, whose labour force in Victorian England was drawn principally from the ranks of the semi-skilled and unskilled workers in the country, presented this opportunity to the entire workforce.¹ Forces differed in terms of the number of rungs on the career ladder and the ceiling to be reached. The Metropolitan Police and the large borough forces, based as they were on long hierarchies of command, were particularly prone to make this connection between persistence and advancement. Not only was every employee granted a chance for promotion, but also there was no outside recruitment for supervisory positions, excepting those of the topmost ranks. In contrast to the army, there was no separate officer class within the police. Ambitious policemen had to compete with their fellow officers to gain promotion, but not with men from outside their force. When

¹ For example, of the 100 candidates for service in the Metropolitan Police in 1867, while 52 were labourers, only 8 belonged to the mechanic and artisan class, and the rest were servants, discharged soldiers, railway porters, etc. (*PSA* 11 May 1867, p. 2). For the provincial forces, see Steedman, 1984, pp. 70-73, 86-91.

the police forces were first formed, the authorities needed to man their hierarchies all at once and therefore were forced to recruit from outside sources (Steedman, 1984, pp. 72-73). Subsequently, however, most positions were filled by candidates from within the police ranks. In fact, employment in the police could potentially constitute a life-long career.² The authorities encouraged officers to stay in service until retirement and not to move to another employer, and in return, they offered the possibility of entering a hierarchy of privilege.

This paper uses the example of the English police to gain insight into two important developments in the history of working class employment: the growth of long-term employment and of career mobility. Further, it aims to explore the relationship between the two developments: their interdependence, both in theory and in practice. The study seeks to understand the perspectives of both management and employees in relation to the two developments under review. To attain these goals, the paper is divided into two. The first part focuses on the question of job security in the English police forces, and the second on career opportunities. On one hand, the study examines the motivation underlying the desire for a stable workforce and the policies that were generated as a result, while on the other hand, it explores, by referring to the officers' voices and personal data, how police employees experienced life in the police force and how they reacted to the incentives offered to them. This dynamic interaction between policies and workers' responses explains the changes introduced by police chiefs and highlights the tensions between promise and implementation as well as the reality of job security and career mobility in the English police force of the Victorian and Edwardian period.

The Problem of Labour Turnover

The English police forces, which were new work organizations in the nineteenth century, derived many of their work rules and norms from the rural world of traditional England. Yet the heads of police, particularly in the large forces, also absorbed new work-related concepts and pioneering notions, which were articulated principally by people influenced by utilitarian ideas. In the spirit of utilitarianism, people connected to police matters hoped to make the new forces highly efficient and rational.

Labour force efficiency, they believed, depended greatly on a stable workforce. High turnover was costly. First, there was the expense of replacing departing employees. While service in the police force was an opportunity open to every young man regardless of social background, each recruit had to go through a

² The term 'career' is used here in the sense of 'a patterned sequence of occupational roles through which individuals move over the course of a working life, implying increased prestige and other rewards, although not excluding downward occupational and social mobility' (Marshall, 1998, p. 55).

relatively long selection procedure in which special officers examined the candidate's literacy skills, recorded his personal details, and carefully checked his credentials and the credentials of those who recommended him, even if this investigation entailed long journeys. Special surgeons ensured the physical fitness of candidates. A second source of expenditure was the training process. The great majority of recruits entered the police force with no professional preparation for the job, and the administration was obliged to equip them with the skills necessary to perform police work. Upon entry, every recruit went through a short period of formal training followed by on-the-job informal instruction by experienced officers. In addition to training expenses, which included wages for trainees, the police had to sustain the cost of lost productivity of both the new hires as well as that of the veteran officers who taught them the ins and outs of the job during the long period of informal training. Not surprisingly, the police leadership wanted to reap a return on their investment. Funded by local rates and government grants, the authorities were under constant pressure from the central government to keep costs down, a pressure that intensified in the latter part of the nineteenth century (Parliamentary Debates, 325, 24 April 1888, col. 316; Morris, 1974, p. 68). They could not but conclude that the departure of competent employees disrupted efficiency and was a 'waste of public money' (*PSA* 1 June 1867, p. 3).

The issue of labour stability, however, went beyond the question of financial costs for the authorities. The police were expected to provide continuous and coordinated service, which depended on the permanent presence of employees. High turnover disrupted the normal operating routines and threatened the effectiveness of the overall organization. Admittedly, long-term service did not mean that the officers' contribution to the police in terms of performance was necessarily good. Still, cumulative experience of veteran officers was essential for police efficiency (*Reports, Northern* 1871, p. 415). Experience entailed higher job skills and knowledge. Considerable time – at least two years in police estimation – was required before the new employee internalised police duties and norms (*Select* 1875, p. 589). Newcomers often brought new energies with them, but this advantage was counterbalanced by their having to go through the same long process of job skill acquisition before they were able to perform their tasks effectively. The police may have benefited from the departure of older men who were 'burnt out'; however, they were not the only ones to leave. Experienced officers who could still contribute their expertise and insight to the smooth performance of police tasks also left in droves, though in much lesser numbers than short-service men (Steedman, 1984, p. 93). High turnover also had a demoralising effect on the remaining group members and was detrimental to the social integration of officers and to the cohesiveness of the organization as a whole. For all these reasons, from the outset, the early departure of employees was a major concern for the authorities who throughout the period emphasised the need to persuade workers to remain in service. Frequent references were made to the undesirability of high turnover and often policies were justified by their expected beneficial effects on the stability of the workforce (*Reports, Northern* 1871, p. 415;

Reports, Northern 1875, p. 116). Other public services were guided by similar calculations.

The Policies of Labour Retention

Since the police in England, especially the largest forces such as in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham, belonged to a category of employers whose work depended on long-term relations between management and employees, the strategy of labour retention had overall and consistent support among police policy makers. To a large extent the reward structure was tailored to achieve the goal of stability. Paradoxically, during the first few decades, they dismissed massive numbers of employees for the flimsiest transgression of the rules, thereby exacerbating the already high turnover caused by the extensive voluntary withdrawals. Officers also left when found unfit for service because of failing health or deteriorating physical condition. Nevertheless, police forces all over the country aimed to keep the competent and physically fit officers within the force; to this end they gradually amended their penal policies, substantially reducing the number of dismissals. During the period between 29 September 1830 and 31 December 1831, 1,586 officers were dismissed from the Metropolitan Police, whereas 736 resigned voluntarily. However, starting in 1856, this proportion was reversed, resulting in 2,609 dismissals and 7,678 resignations over the following ten-year period (*Select* 1834, p. 31; *PSA* 20 April 1867, p. 3). Discipline continued to be harsh, but no longer led to almost automatic expulsion (Steedman, 1984, p. 92). Other means, such as fines and reduction in rank were used to exact obedience to rules. The goal of low turnover gradually took precedence over other priorities.

In fact, police policy makers were united in the belief that the use of the ‘stick’ should be accompanied by material advantages. Incentives were essential to counterbalance the harsh disciplinary regime and daily routine. Although the police authorities, not unlike other bureaucratic paternalists, were motivated by the desire to gain the compliance of employees and to reform many of their habits, no less important was the aim of attaining their life-long commitment and loyalty. A system of economic compensation was built up over the years, the product of a long process in which disparate ideas, pressures, and constraints played a part.

First and foremost, the sheer necessity to guarantee continuity of service prompted the police to provide their employees with a regular income. Steady income, though always low for those at the bottom of the hierarchy, was granted irrespective of effort or performance. No subcontractors were used. Slack periods of job scarcity did not undermine the policy of secure employment. Experience and promotion entailed an increased rate of pay. Further, the police were among the few work organizations that did not differentiate between permanent and temporary workers and in principle offered security of employment to all workers who toed the line.

Moreover, while most employers in England focused on wages as the sole means of payment for work hours, the police, alongside other bureaucratic paternalists, devised a set of incentives based on both monetary and non-material rewards. Their strategy was anchored in the belief that there was a significant positive correlation between work conditions and increased tenure. They hoped that despite the harsh discipline and the fact that many uniformed policemen did not enjoy the tasks required by the job, material rewards would strengthen the workers' motivation. On this basis, supervisory officers as well as ordinary policemen were offered path-breaking welfare schemes. In addition to regular wages, police officers enjoyed free medical care, some sick pay and occasionally sick leave. For injuries received in the actual performance of duty, a lump sum or even a pension for life may have been granted. Above all, pension upon retirement was considered the bonus that justified staying on. As early as 1839, the London police awarded a pension to some employees who were found unfit for service by a strict medical examination. Those with over 15 years of service were paid fifteen-fiftieths of their pay for a term of five years unless the commissioner recommended a longer period (*PSA* 24 March 1866, p. 1). After thirty years of service or at age sixty the pension was for life and equalled thirty-fiftieths of the pay. Similar laws were enacted for the provincial police in the next two decades (For details, see Steedman, 1984, pp. 124-125). In 1890, pensions became compulsory for all police forces under the Police Act of that year.³ The prevalent conviction among top management was that pensions 'would induce men to join the service', 'remain in the force' and be efficient (*Select* 1875, pp. 377, 383-384, 569). As a bureaucratic institution, the police had the manpower and the financial resources to administer this complex reward structure.

Another way of motivating employees to stay in service was by granting them benefits in kind, such as the periodic supply of uniform, boots and coal. Yet another positive reinforcement was promotion from inside and the ability to develop a career and gain benefits as a result. This incentive was offered to long-serving employees alone.

How the Workforce Experienced Conditions of Service

No doubt, some policy makers were impelled by the desire to meet the aspirations of the officers for adequate terms of employment. It is equally certain, however, that the predominant motive for the paternalist policies was the intention to achieve management's ends, callously if necessary. The authorities clearly wanted officers to work with a sense of positive commitment, but they also had other considerations in mind. The system of incentives was meant not only to make the workers appreciate the job security and welfare schemes offered by the police, but

³ For details about the welfare benefits provided by the police, see Shpayer-Makov, 2002, ch.5.

also to generate a disincentive to leave. Officers who contemplated departure (or insubordination) knew that they would be penalized. Both dismissal and voluntary resignation entailed the forfeiture of all the money officers had contributed to the superannuation and other funds.

In the same vein, the authorities were determined to manage the system of incentives with the lowest possible cost. The officers themselves financed or helped finance many of the benefits. The participation of officers in provident societies and saving schemes, often run by themselves, both eased the financial burden on the authorities and created a more rewarding work environment.

Notably, monetary benefits in excess of pay were not considered a right but a privilege and were therefore not always granted. Decisions concerning disability in the Metropolitan Police, for example, depended on a certificate from the commissioner that the officer had served ‘with zeal and fidelity’, creating ample room for discretion and personal bias (*PSA* 24 March 1866, p. 1). Even old-age pensions were not obligatory until the Police Act of 1890 (See for example, Steedman, 1984, p. 92). As a result of discretionary latitude and the high rate of voluntary departure, less than 14 percent of all recruits to the Metropolitan Police until 1860 were granted a pension upon retirement (*Select* 1877, pp. 159, 240).⁴ Policemen complained that ‘no sooner is a police constable morally entitled to a pension by long service than he is subjected to a system of espionage’ (*PSA* 3 Feb. 1866, p. 1). But even after the act was passed, pensions were not guaranteed, even to senior officers such as superintendent Kemp from the Worcestershire Police who had been discharged from service six weeks before his title to a pension had matured on account of an alleged charge of misconduct (For details, see *PR* 20 April 1894, p. 186, 19 April 1895, p. 184, 24 May 1895, p. 246). Although he succeeded in completely re-establishing his character and obtaining damages at the Birmingham Assizes, he failed to obtain payment of his pension money and died before he managed to redress his case. Indeed, this predicament was particularly severe for veteran policemen, who over the years had invested large sums in the pension fund. Many officers in any case regarded their contribution to the pension fund ‘more as a tax than a benefit’ (*PSA* 9 March 1867, p. 2). In view of the many cases of loss of pension, this privilege came to be seen as ‘humbug’ and ‘a complete farce’ (*PSA* 11 Aug. 1866, p. 1).

For decades, the worker benefits offered to the policemen failed to prevent the voluntary withdrawal of masses of officers, and the outflow of officers continued without interruption.⁵ Voluntary resignation was the major cause of departure. An officer serving in the north of the country observed in 1866 that ‘so rapid are the changes that during the last six or seven years more than double the strength of the

⁴ For the pension rate in the provincial forces, see Steedman 1984, p. 92.

⁵ For information about the turnover situation in the early days of the Metropolitan Police, see Shpayer-Makov, 2002, p. 79; For the provincial forces between 1856-80, see Steedman, 1984, p. 92.

force has joined and left, and there are plenty more now ready to go as soon as anything else better turns up' (*PSA* 11 Aug. 1866, p. 1). Often it was 'the promising men who leave, the men whose services are worth a day's pay; the zealous and deserving' (*PSA* 24 May 1872, p. 1).

Leaving was a crucial decision for all policemen – most of whom came from a background of economic uncertainty. In addition, departure almost invariably meant an irreversible break between the individual and the police, since only rarely did the authorities agree to re-employ an officer who had terminated his employment. Interestingly, many workers decided to terminate their employment with the police even when alternative jobs were not easily available. For them the push elements in police work were stronger than the pull elements. The benefits instigated by the paternalist authorities in the early decades were apparently not attractive enough to dispose officers to stay. The reward package provided some degree of future security, but even though the job of policing was supposedly permanent, due to the continued resort to dismissal as a form of punishment, permanency was not clearly defined and could be stopped at any point by a superior officer regardless of the years of loyal service of the dismissed person. Policemen complained of the 'harassing and vexatious nature of the duties' and left because they found 'the regularity and strictness of a disciplined life irksome and distasteful' (*PSA* 20 April 1867, p. 2; *Reports, Eastern* 1878, p. 7). Ordinary policemen patrolled long beats 'by day and by night, in fair weather and foul, when the pavement is hot and glaring, and when it is muffled up in snow or coated with ice' (London Police Duty, 1879, p. 278). They were also exposed to physical danger from certain elements in the community. Thus, although the majority of policemen came from a semi-skilled or unskilled background, and thus faced limited opportunities in the labour market, many of them opted to leave.

Almost four decades after the establishment of the first professional police there were still 'hundreds that will not and never mean to stop in the Police force, and are only waiting to improve themselves for better situations' (*PSA* 9 March 1867, p. 2). Many resigned soon after joining (*Reports, Northern* 1871, p. 415; Steedman, 1984, pp. 93-96). Many others may have initially meant to stay but could not cope with the strains of police life. Still others refrained from applying in the first place. The three inspectors of constabulary nominated by central government to inquire into the state and efficiency of the provincial forces time and again complained about the large number of vacancies in the various districts and the difficulty in getting suitable candidates (*Reports, Eastern* 1871, p. 349; *Reports, Southern* 1874, p. 278; *Reports, Northern* 1875, p. 116).

The situation changed course during the 1870s. As can be seen in Figure 5.1 regarding the Metropolitan Police, even though the number of policemen gradually increased, the rate of turnover decreased consistently, stabilising around four percent to six percent during the 1880s. This trend applied to the provincial forces as well (*Reports, Southern* 1878-79, p. 222; *Reports, Southern* 1880, p. 214). The shift in disciplinary policy is demonstrated by the fact that the almost consistent decline in the rate of voluntary withdrawal from the Metropolitan Police in the

course of the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the next was accompanied by a simultaneous sharp rise in the average and median lengths of service.⁶ The number of vacancies in the provincial forces varied from district to district, yet all inspectors of constabulary reported a significant drop (*Reports, Eastern* 1877, p. 6; *Reports, Northern* 1877, p. 115; *Reports, Southern* 1877, p. 207). The authorities, though, were still dissatisfied with the withdrawal rate. ‘There has not been quite so great a difficulty as heretofore in getting men for the service’, the inspector of constabulary for the Eastern Counties, Midland, and North Wales District observed, but hosts of young policemen still left the police every year to look for other employment, a situation that disrupted work in the police and caused extra expense (*Reports, Eastern* 1877, p. 6). Moreover, officers were quick to resign as soon as they completed 25 years of service for fear of losing their pension (Klein, 1992, p. 432; *PR* 15 Jan. 1897, p. 33). This precise calculation led detective inspector Ore of the Birmingham Police to resign after thirty years of service with an unblemished record, for fear that if he continued in service he might fail in something and lose his entire pension (*PR* 24 May 1895, p. 246). In this manner, the police forces were deprived of the services of veteran officers who were still able to contribute significantly to the work process. Nonetheless, the survival rate rose steadily and the veteran policemen came to be the major component of the police force.

It can be claimed that this change in police workers’ behaviour could have been influenced by external or private circumstances unrelated to the reality of their workplace. However, a close analysis of the evidence suggests that the stabilisation of the police workforce in the latter part of the nineteenth century occurred in tandem with improvements in the conditions of service. After years of high turnover and the promptings of supervisory officers that ‘every reasonable encouragement should be offered to steady and intelligent men to persevere and fit themselves for the higher grades’, the authorities finally showed a greater determination to meet this goal (*Reports, Northern* 1871, p. 415). They were now more willing to act upon the belief that labour stability and better work performance depended on such changes. A strong current of unrest among policemen in forces around the country (in the 1860s and early 1870s) and a strike in the Metropolitan Police (in 1872) were more than sufficient to demonstrate this sense of urgency. The nomination of Edmund Henderson as the commissioner of the Metropolitan Police (in 1869) provided the right person to instigate reforms in the largest police force in the country. As was acknowledged in 1872 in the *Police Service Advertiser*, a vehicle for policemen’s opinions, ‘greater inducements are now offered in most forces for good, sober, and intelligent men to remain and seek advancement where they were trained’ (*PSA* 26 Jan. 1872, p. 2).

⁶ For the median length of service of leavers between 1873-1913, see Figure 3.2 in Shpayer-Makov, 2002, p. 82.

Although the supervisors' tight grip on the constables was not significantly relaxed, grudgingly and at a slow pace, the authorities widened the range of incentives and rendered the provision of welfare less discretionary. The stronger the guarantee of benefits, the more the policemen had to lose by departure. Similar steps were taken in the provincial forces as well. The strike in the Metropolitan Police was followed by improved wages. In addition, policemen were encouraged

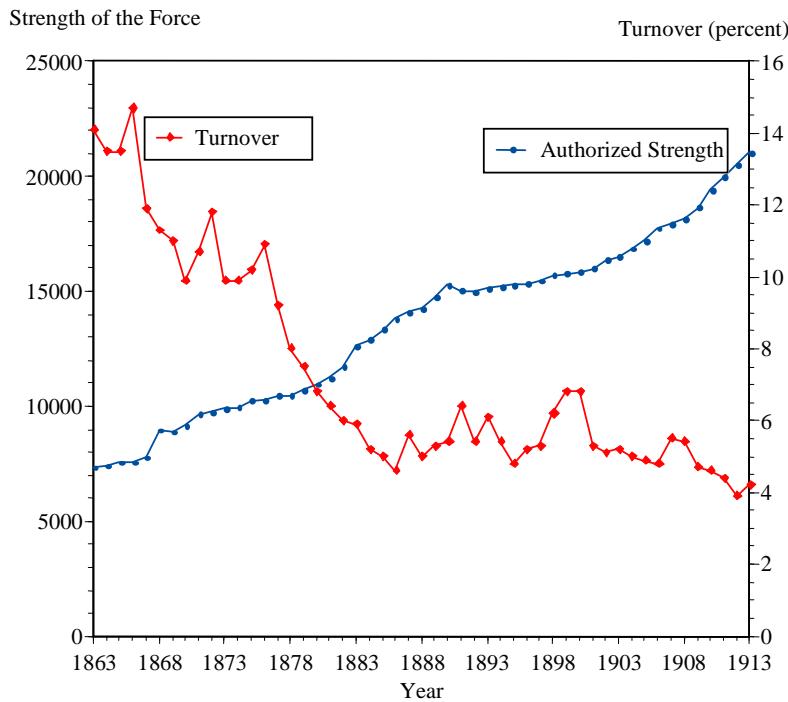


Figure 5.1 Total strength and the rate of turnover in the Metropolitan Police, 1863-1913

Source: Report of the Commissioner, various years.

Note: Turnover refers to the number of quits divided by the size of the force in a particular year.

more than previously to engage in self-help ventures and the authorities helped by soliciting the financial support of philanthropists and other leaders of the community. One example was Henry Whiting, who in the latter part of the century donated large sums of money towards various police causes, such as a reward fund for officers who distinguished themselves by performing an act of bravery and a

fund for the relief of officers in financial distress.⁷ Enterprises such as orphanages for the children of deceased officers and convalescent homes for officers, initiated and subsidized by private benefactors, also made the police a more attractive place of employment. Although the Police (Pension) Act of 1890 was ratified only after many years of pressure exerted by officers and their benefactors (including another police strike in the Metropolitan Police in 1890), once it took effect, it became evident to the police leadership that this measure brought 'great satisfaction to all members of the police forces, and has done much to settle the men, and make them careful of their present conduct, with a view to their future prospects. Misconduct among the forces being now rare' (*Reports, Southern* 1893-94, p. 149).

Against the general background of the democratisation of the political process in the country, and greater labour militancy both inside and outside the police in the latter part of the century, the authorities also set out to placate and regularize labour by subtler means (*Report of the Commissioner* 1883, p. 369).⁸ From the 1870s the police leadership around the country provided after-hours leisure to be enjoyed by officers and their families. A careful reading of the pronouncements of senior officers regarding the reasons for the investment of money and energy in leisure provision reveals that work-related recreation was intended not only to compensate policemen for the harsh conditions of service, but also to supply them with reasons to join and stay (PSA 23 Feb. 1872, p. 1). Their decision to stay was reinforced by the promise of upward mobility in the hierarchy.

Policemen did not change their behaviour overnight. Conditions of service changed only gradually and it took time before officers became convinced of the advantages embedded in police work. Only when officers calculated that the advantages outweighed the less pleasant aspects of police life did a growing proportion act on the premise that they could gain much by staying. With time, the abatement of scepticism regarding employment security and social protection became a crucial element in the decision of officers to give their energy and loyalty to this one organization. Now they were more certain to enjoy not only real economic protection, as rewards became more predictable, but also the ability to adopt a long-term view of their lives and plan ahead.

The decision of individuals to leave or stay was obviously influenced by the specific interaction of officers with the job environment. The availability of alternative and more attractive job opportunities was another key factor. Indeed, many still left the police even when conditions improved, though in decreasing proportions. However, employees were the products of their past environments and their decision was also determined by their experience and individual characteristics. An earlier study by the author of this article, based on the personal data of all recruits to the Metropolitan Police between 1889 and 1909,⁹ found a

⁷ For a portrait of Henry Whiting and his supportive activities, see *PR* 6 July, 1894, pp. 319-320; 13 July 1894, pp. 328-329; 20 July 1894, p. 340.

⁸ For detailed descriptions of the strikes in the Metropolitan Police in 1872 and 1890, see Reynolds and Judge, 1968, pp. 202-225.

⁹ Clearly, the nature of the job requirements determined the type of recruits, who were expected to be young, literate, strong, physically able and possessed with a small family

positive correlation between increased tenure and personal features. The findings showed unequivocally that the stable policeman was likely to come from the lower echelons of the social scale, the lower the occupational grade of the recruit, the greater was his inclination to stay in the force.¹⁰ Recruits whose new job offered better conditions of service than their previous employment and who could not command such conditions in the external labour market were relatively disinclined to leave. Thus, former rural workers, particularly agricultural labourers, had a record of constancy, while clerks, small traders, professionals, farmers and engineers were less likely to develop a lifelong commitment to a place of work that impinged on their autonomy and could not ensure higher prestige and income. Thus, diverse social groups reacted differently to the opportunity to develop a lifetime career within the police.

Forms of Advancement

The aims of the police organization obviously necessitated a command structure. The supervisory ranks made sure that police work was performed well and continued uninterruptedly, and that policemen operated according to police rules and norms and did what they were told. These functions, however, do not explain why each police force usually manned the ranks with its own employees instead of recruiting men from outside sources, as was done in the majority of work organizations. Only in the top ranks (which in the Metropolitan Police, for example, constituted less than one percent of the workforce), were employees nominated to their positions, which were in effect closed to members of the force.¹¹ Even more unique was the practice (with few exceptions) that all promoted officers had to start from the bottom of the hierarchy and experience the hardships of a constable's life for long periods of time. In the majority of cases, those who were successful had made their way up through every rank without skipping any. Consequently, excluding the peak positions, there were no serious social gaps between men in different stages on the job ladder. More significantly, since most

only. Good references were also essential. To monitor the qualifications of newcomers, recruiting officers wrote down the age, height, weight, family status, occupational and geographical background of all recruits. Later, the date and reason of departure and the promotional progression of each recruit were recorded on the same form. The only surviving records of recruits to the Metropolitan Police are of the period 1889 to 1909 and can be found in the Public Record Office, MEPO 4/361-477. These served as the basis of a detailed examination of the profiles and work histories of recruits to the Metropolitan Police in this period. For a full exposition of the statistical findings, see Shpayer-Makov, 2002, Chs. 1, 2, 3 and 6.

¹⁰ The study was based on a sample of 20 percent of the total annual enrolment between 1889 and 1909, taken at two-yearly intervals. The data consisted of 2,252 cases.

¹¹ At the beginning of the twentieth century there were 11 positions in the Metropolitan Police that were closed to internal promotion (the commissioner, 4 assistant commissioners and 6 chief constables). In the provincial forces the chief (or head) constable was usually appointed from outside sources.

police recruits came from the lower rungs of society, police employees enjoyed a prospect available to only a small proportion of the working class then. A supervisory post was in principle not a product of outside patronage or of money, social position or background, as was customary in traditional society, but of persistence, effort, ability and performance.

The policy of internal recruitment was based on the assumption that only men who experienced police work at every stage on the work ladder could be efficient and competent supervisors. Knowledge of the different aspects of policing could be gained in no other way than through long-term service. Nonetheless, this policy was also a device to reduce the high turnover rate from which all forces suffered. From the rhetoric of police leaders it transpires that, combined with employment security and the various welfare provisions, the promise of advancement was part of a wider strategy pioneered by the police and adopted by other large bureaucracies to promote the allegiance and commitment of the workers to their employers. Admittedly, long-term service did not guarantee a police career, but the actual promise of advancement opportunities was meant to induce stability. Moreover, the hope of promotion was also expected to elicit effort and deference. As indicated above, some employees stayed in the same workplace due to the paucity of alternative employment opportunities, which meant that they did not necessarily constitute keen or subservient workers. The message conveyed by the promotion structure was intended to remedy such attitudes by offering all officers the chance of advancement if they conformed to work rules, were obedient and performed as was anticipated of them. Possibly, the authorities used internal promotion also to avoid paying high wages to external recruits.

Cognizant of the importance of a stable and deferent workforce for the police institution, senior officers of different ranks time and again promised subordinates that 'where ability as an officer is displayed it surely leads to notice and advancement' (*Report of the Commissioner* 1884, p. 367). When Thomas Smethurst joined the Bolton Borough police in 1888, he was told that 'by good conduct, efficiency and attention to duty it was possible for any man to rise and hold a superior position in the Force' (Smethurst, 1922, p. 7). The longer an officer worked for the police the better were his chances of advancing significantly and reaching the more rewarding ranks of inspector or even superintendent (although progression was blocked after a certain age). This kind of rhetoric induced the officers to feel confident that they could eventually reach their desired goal. The standardization of the career line could only enhance this feeling of high probability, as could the structure of continuous progression. No doubt the officers were aware of the fact that promotion was not inevitable and that there might be reversals in their career direction due to demotion, but the clear image of a path to success was expected to have a greater effect.

Bureaucratic control necessitated the application of rational criteria in the promotion of officers. Indeed, as in other bureaucratic organizations, upward movement was governed by administrative rules and procedures. All officers were officially subject to the same criteria. Unlike most other workplaces in England at the time, progress was anchored in a well-defined career ladder which consisted of a graded hierarchy generally leading from the entry position of constable through

sergeant, inspector to superintendent (or related ranks in the detective system) followed by retirement on a pension. A vast gap in rewards existed between constable, or even sergeant, and superintendent. For example, while a constable's pay in the Metropolitan Police at the turn of the century began at 25s.6d. per week and rose annually by increments of 1s. per week to a maximum of 33s.6d, the annual wage of superintendents was over £400 a year (Savill, 1901, pp. 273-274).¹² In addition to higher pay and pension and other benefits, promoted officers also enjoyed a position of authority and a higher status within the hierarchy. Their standing within the police force also reflected on their standing in the community. Moreover, the higher they advanced, the more removed they were from hard physical labour. Persistence thus offered ordinary workers the rare opportunity to develop a career and cross the class boundary into the middle class proper.

The factors affecting access to supervisory positions were many, although progress was not automatic even if the candidate for promotion was qualified. In many forces, there was a minimum period of service in each rank - 'sufficiently long to exclude the probability of mere temporary appointments to the inferior stations, for the purpose of qualifying for the superior', but no set time for movement between ranks (Robert Peel to the Commissioners 10 Dec. 1829, p. 408). Mobility was a function of the availability of positions. Only when vacancies occurred could officers move up the scale. The number of vacancies depended on both the rate of exit from positions and organizational growth and contraction. Filling a position obviously created a vacancy in the lower level, which meant that officers had to compete with others of the same rank for advancement to the next highest level. Moreover, since the shape of the hierarchy was pyramidal the probability of career advancement became constrained the higher the officer advanced up the ladder.

According to Robert Peel, the Home Secretary who was the architect of the Metropolitan Police of London, and who set the tone for the employment terms in other forces, promotions depended on 'the character, qualifications and services of the persons selected' (Robert Peel to the Commissioners, 10 Dec. 1829, p. 408). Physical fitness was another factor influencing ultimate career attainments. Promoted officers were also expected to be able to drill, ride, drive and 'keep perfect command of their horses' (Clarkson and Richardson, 1889, p. 143). Finally, the candidate's movement within the career line was determined by his ability to pass examinations.

So certain were the police authorities of the positive effects of the option of promotion on the stability of the labour force that they devised yet another system of advancement for those officers who either did not aspire or failed to leave the rank of constable.¹³ The understanding that the vertical route to advancement was not sufficient to keep the bulk of the force in service convinced policy makers to provide yet another incentive to stay by offering long-term constables an

¹² For wage rates in the borough and county police between 1856-80, see Steedman, 1984, pp. 109-110.

¹³ At different times and in various forces also ranks higher than constable included several classes.

incremental rise in wages. This lateral movement through several classes of constable (usually three, but could be eight as well, depending on the specific force) offered changes in the rewards without a job shift (Steedman, 1884, p. 110). The level of reward attained was still low, yet even this small gain in status provided officers with a remunerative advantage over newcomers.¹⁴ Constables had a target to look forward to within the police even if they did not excel in their work. In some forces, the authorities advanced constables to a higher class when they considered them qualified, and in others mobility was restricted by the number of vacancies (*Reports, Eastern* 1875, p. 8). If the hierarchical path was supposed to filter individuals in terms of personal attributes and merit, this alternative route demanded no special effort or ability, only the willingness to stay in the police and follow orders. Thus, sheer seniority, obviously with a clean record, benefited policemen.

Although the horizontal path to advancement entailed no serious alteration of tasks or increased status, as was involved in vertical advancement, it was still acknowledged by both superior officers and ordinary policemen as a form of promotion (*Reports, Eastern* 1875, p. 8; *PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148). Police leaders explained that this system gave 'a man certainty of advancement by diligent and steady conduct, even if he cannot obtain advancement in rank' (*Reports, Eastern* 1875, p. 8). This aspect of police employment, they hoped, would lead 'him to continue his services, instead of hastily transferring him to a better paid establishment'.

Evidently, length of service was rewarded not only with regular income, but also with betterment of material benefits and some advancement, even if officers did not ascend the promotional scale. Still, the ability to develop a career constituted a much greater reward for police veterans. It should be remembered that although the prospects of upward mobility increased as a function of tenure, tenure alone did not guarantee this kind of promotion. It is therefore necessary to ask to what extent did the authorities actually fulfil this promise? Could a substantial percent of policemen take advantage of the opportunity to rise up in the ranks and improve their prospects?

The Reality of Promotion

The available service records of recruits to the Metropolitan Police allow a precise assessment of the rate and speed of promotion for those who entered the force between 1889 and 1909. The study mentioned above established that only a small number of recruits actually managed to ascend the ladder of promotion.¹⁵

¹⁴ For the pay scale of the different classes of borough and county policemen, see Steedman 1984, pp. 109-110.

¹⁵ For details, see Shpayer-Makov, 2002, Ch. 6. The statistical analysis of promotion is based on two samples. The first, used earlier in this paper for constructing the portrait of a stable policeman, is based on 20 percent of all recruits between 1889 and 1909 randomly drawn every second year. This set provides a comparison between promoted officers and

Excluding those who served less than five years, the proportion of promoted officers from amongst all recruits to the Metropolitan Police between 1889 and 1909 amounted to just under 25 percent of the force.¹⁶ Evidently, seniority was no guarantee for promotion for the majority of officers who endured the arduous work of routine patrolling throughout their entire service in the London police and had to be satisfied with a sideway movement. Moreover, an analysis of the entire promoted population by alternate years showed that most promoted officers (about 68 percent) stopped at the rank of sergeant (ordinary, section or station sergeants, or their equivalents among the detective staff) and that only 3.5 percent and 1.7 percent moved up to the ranks of chief inspector and superintendent respectively.¹⁷ A study conducted by Carolyn Steedman of the rate of promotion in the Buckinghamshire and Staffordshire police during 1856-1880 revealed that the situation was much worse there. Of the 1000 policemen in that sample, 'only four rose through the ranks to become inspectors or superintendents' (Steedman, 1884, p. 97).

In addition, the step-by-step progression constituted a slow process, as can be seen in Table 5.1. It took an average of ten years for those recruited into the Metropolitan Police between 1889 and 1895 to attain the first promotion (to sergeant), almost another seven years to reach the rank of inspector and about the same period to become a chief inspector.¹⁸ Those few who rose to the rank of superintendent had to serve an average of 29.5 years. Hence, young people could not attain a high position in the Metropolitan hierarchy (further information about the length of service to promotion in the Metropolitan Police is given in Table 5.1). In 1876 in Staffordshire, it took about twenty years for constables to become sergeants (Steedman, 1884, p. 107). The pyramid-like structure of the police hierarchy made it virtually certain that all but a few of any cohort would find their upward progress blocked at some point.

those who remained constables and determines the survival and promotion rates in the force. It also exposes the intimate links between tenure of office and upward advancement. The second sample concentrates on the officers who moved up to a supervisory position. It comprises all officers promoted during the years of the first sample (2,058 cases), so as to ensure a sample large enough to include all ranks and to provide a sufficient number of cases. This latter sample helps in identifying personal factors associated with promotion and with the pace of promotion. The data at our disposal reveals not only a single moment, but also career stages widely separated in time, as is ordinarily done in longitudinal research.

¹⁶ Since constables were not eligible for promotion before having served for five years, the sample excludes officers who left the force earlier.

¹⁷ Two recruits managed to enter the top level, which was usually filled up by outside recruitment: one as a chief constable and the other as deputy assistant commissioner. It should be noted, however, that these two, as well as other promotions, occurred after the period discussed in this article.

¹⁸ During the decade before the First World War, the average period between ranks was slightly lower (Fosdick, 1915, p. 249).

Table 5.1 Length of service to promotion in years, 1889-1895

	Rank			
	Sergeant	Inspector	Chief Inspector	Superintendent
Min.	0	11	18	23
Max.	26	28	34	37
Mean	10.23	16.88	24.14	29.50
Median	10	16	24.50	29

Source: Personnel records of the Metropolitan Police (MEPO 4/361-477).

Further, the statistical analysis of the service records also revealed that career mobility was linked to personal variables and that in an inverse relationship to permanency at work, the higher the social origin of recruits the greater their chances of attaining promotion. The frequency of promotion was greatest for officers from a lower middle class background, followed by the skilled and semi-skilled workers, leaving the unskilled workers with the least frequent opportunities. The bias between non-manual and manual workers was also highly evident. Most significantly, former clerks, who tended to have a short service but better education, had easier access to higher positions on the job ladder. Clearly, some social groups within the force were more fortunate than others. This was the combined result of the talents of individual officers and police priorities. Selecting supervisory strata from amongst the more educated officers made it possible for the authorities to reconcile the policy of promotion from below with the greater professional demands of the higher positions. To gain insight into the inner world and priorities of officers and unfold their economic calculations and job expectations, it is now necessary to investigate how they perceived the promotion system in the police.

How the Workforce Perceived the Promotion System

The expectation to develop a career was not as prevalent in the nineteenth century as it became in the next century. Most jobs provided no hope of serious advancement and workers' horizons were circumscribed. However, economic life was highly dynamic: patterns of employment changed in the course of the century, new skills arose, workplaces expanded and some offered opportunities to alter one's predicament for the better even for those who belonged to the lower social strata. The ideology of equal rights heralded by a growing number of groups and publications and indications of democratization in the political system in the latter part of the nineteenth century mobilized workers to demand their own share. This trend and the rise of socialist organizations in the country had the effect of raising hopes of social mobility within working class communities. Policemen, as an integral part of these communities, were no less aware of these developments. Disaffection within the ranks culminated in strikes in the early 1870s and in 1890. Officers demanded and gained enfranchisement of their political rights at both the national (1887) and local levels (1893). The police workers' drive to change their

live prospects was also expressed in their growing expectations for a chance at upward mobility, as promised to them by their superiors in the various police forces.

Admittedly, for the many common labourers among the recruits, joining the police ranks in itself meant a rise in skill level and therefore constituted a kind of advancement (*PSA* 11 May 1867, p. 4). By becoming policemen they also enjoyed better economic rewards and higher status. All this may have put a limit to their aspiration. Moreover, since constables were no longer eligible for promotion after a certain age, men who were disqualified regarded themselves as 'past the age for ambition' (*PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148). Sometimes officers declined the offer of promotion when it entailed a geographic change, as in the case of a transfer of Metropolitan policemen to the royal dockyards outside London. Others may have simply lacked the drive to rise up in the ranks. However, direct evidence of policemen's feelings and sentiments clearly shows that quite a few men were preoccupied with future career considerations both upon joining and afterwards. Whether in their memoirs, letters to police journals or in evidence to committees of public inquiry, officers insisted that the hope of promotion played a significant role in their decision to embark upon a police career (See, for example, Caminada, 1895, p. 29; Smethurst, 1922, p. 4). The high levels of expectation new hires brought with them also kept them in police service. Some officers, who were initially unmotivated for a career, developed the desire to be counted among promoted officers only while working in the ranks (Cavanagh, 1893, pp. 1-2). Whatever the case, this drive to change one's lot constituted a strong incentive for officers to endure the hardships of police work.

The data on recruits to the Metropolitan Police between 1889 and 1909 provides empirical evidence of the link between ambition and length of service. By definition, the supervisory officers were long-term employees. However, as the statistical analysis demonstrates, their term in office was considerably longer than that of constables. While promoted officers served 24.8 years on average, constables served only 15.2 years. Furthermore, patterns of turnover amongst those who served five years or more indicate that 83 percent of the promoted officers reached a full term of service (26 years) compared to 59 percent of those not promoted. This contrast between a group of promoted officers with a long-term service record and the 'fluctuating lower ranks' was at an earlier period symptomatic of the provincial forces as well, as revealed by Carolyn Steedman (1984, p. 106). Apparently, the authorities' strategy of offering a chance at promotion to entice officers to enter and remain in the police force was successful in a great number of cases. Officers' behaviour was certainly influenced by the prospect of career advancement.

So anxious were many men to rise up in the ranks that, as Thomas Smethurst, a Cheshire policeman, reminisced in his memoirs, they 'would stoop to any mean action in order to gain their object' (Smethurst, 1922, p. 45). Officers took the prospect of promotion increasingly seriously; therefore, those who were not promoted or whose promotion was blocked at some stage did not accept this verdict stoically. There were only a few avenues open to them to express their discontent. Trade unionism was banned in the police forces and any form of open

criticism was punished severely. This, however, did not deter them from acting. Devoid of a mechanism for collective bargaining, policemen had to find other means of protest. Officers talked among themselves and shared each other's grievances and they also voiced their frustration in public, although often under an assumed name. Equipped with some literate ability and two trade journals that opened their columns to officers' views – the Police Service Advertiser and the Police Review – policemen advertised their cause in print.¹⁹ The editor of the *Police Review*, in particular, took upon himself to serve as their mouthpiece. Officers responded in droves. Every week the paper allocated space in the letter columns for officers to express their dissatisfaction.

The question of promotion loomed large in the paper. In the mid-1890s, the *Police Review* contended that the promotion system was 'the one question upon which the hearts of our readers are most exercised... It causes continual discontent and heartburning in all directions' (*PR* 20 Sept. 1895, p. 452). So inundated was the journal with letters complaining about promotions that two weeks later it reiterated that this issue was 'the one grievance that most sorely afflicts the Police, especially in the larger Forces, namely, the sense of uncertainty and unfairness they realise in the matter of Promotion' (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 474).

Indeed, there was a disparity in promotion prospects among forces of different sizes. Wages differed from region to region, as did the workload and the responsibilities, and chances of improving one's predicament varied according to the size of the borough. As the editor explained: there was a 'much more extensive subdivision and more complicated gradation of ranks in a large city than in a thinly peopled countryside' (*PR* 24 July 1893, p. 354). This fact did not escape the attention of aspirants who, realizing that promotion prospects in the smaller forces were 'few and far between', joined the larger forces (*PR* 16 March 1894, p. 127).

Complaints generally addressed the way the system operated. Aware that their career opportunities were limited, officers did not hesitate to say that the system looked fair on paper only (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 476). Personal competence, according to some, was not necessarily the determining factor in promotion. Increasingly, officers evaluated their career timetables and compared them to those of other employees in their own and other forces. Senior officers were held responsible for advancement or the lack thereof. Officers were particularly incensed at the favouritism that infested the promotion procedure. Time and again officers' letters imputed that 'the rise or fall of an Officer can be dependent on mere favouritism or caprice; or that patronage by a Councillor or member of a Watch Committee can count for anything' (*PR* 26 April 1895, p. 198, 4 Oct. 1895, p. 474). Sometimes objects of nepotism were identified almost by name. For example, a letter published towards the end of November 1893 charged the Derbyshire Constabulary with the premature promotion of the son of a chief constable who had served a short time only (*PR* 27 Nov. 1893, p. 568). A policeman from Liverpool was even more condemnatory. He felt that standards were not equal for all policemen and that 'unless you are the son, nephew, son-in-

¹⁹ *The Police Service Advertiser* first appeared in 1867, but subsequently changed its name to the *Police Guardian* and then to the *Police Chronicle*. *The Police Review* started in 1893.

law, or prospective son-in-law, or 31st first cousin of some Superintendent, Inspector, or sergeant, promotion you need not expect' (*PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148).²⁰ Even the chief constable of Stalybridge, William Chadwick, admitted (in his memoirs) that favouritism was rife in the police and could spoil the chances of promotion not only for constables (Chadwick, 1900, p. 143). Influence was 'a greater factor than merit' even in the appointment of chief constables, he disclosed. As one of the few chief constables to have risen through the ranks in the course of the nineteenth century, Chadwick added his voice to the complaints and condemned the preference of social standing over ability and training as detrimental to the efficiency of the police. Favours were bestowed not only by police officers but also by members of watch committees and other prominent dignitaries (Klein, 1992, pp. 156-159, 161. Also see Critchley, 1972, p. 154). Belonging to the right religious denomination helped too (Klein, 1992, pp. 161-163).

Since the rhetoric of the authorities did not define precisely the criteria on which individuals were evaluated, officers who felt they performed well and abided by the rules could not understand why they were not among the promoted men. In particular, officers with unstained records felt they were unfairly treated when 'passed over' by less deserving men who had been 'placed in authority over them' (*PR* 26 April 1895, p. 198). These men assumed that good conduct should be a serious consideration in promotion deliberations.

Officers also reproached the system for the slowness of promotion, which affected all policemen – the talented and the well-behaved. Delayed promotion was seen as a 'prolonged apprenticeship' and produced 'bitterness of accumulated disappointments' (*PR* 24 May 1895, p. 246). Young officers were particularly impatient with the blockages caused by veteran officers – the 'hangars on' - who served for a good many years, past the allowed time for retirement, and thus impeded upward ascent (*PR* 24 May 1895, p. 246). The editor of the *Police Review* warned that if all the superior officers were 'to be clutched by 'sit-fasts' until senility disables them, the younger grades will soon be forsaken in disgust by desirable men' (*PR* 24 May 1895, p. 246). Some of the ambitious policemen were probably willing to remain in a given post provided their promotion was assured, but this often was not the case and their career remained frozen in one position. A long wait may have caused some men to give up their aspirations to move upwards.

Policemen who failed to advance horizontally within the rank of constable also voiced charges of unjust treatment (*PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148). They, too, complained about the long wait between classes. A point of contention during the 1890s was the promotion of constables in batches, a procedure that forced some to wait more than necessary and lose the difference in pay (*PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148).

Implicit in the criticism was the conviction that long years of faithful service and zealous execution of duties deserved recognition among promotion considerations (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 477). Progressively, promotion was accepted as an essential part of officers' rights (*PR* 6 Nov. 1893, pp. 530-531). The tenuous

²⁰ Also see a case in Nottingham (*PR* 27 April 1894, p. 196).

relationship between belief and reality may have frustrated and discouraged the men, but it also led them to scrutinize the system and voice their attitudes to it. Now that the reaction to unfavourable conditions of service was not departure en masse as it was in the first few decades, policemen could exert greater pressure on the authorities to change the system. Suggestions were related to various aspects of the employment structure, including the promotion pattern. For example, officers recommended that all first class officers be allowed to compete in examinations, thereby putting an end to favouritism (*PR* 30 March 1894, p. 148, 27 April 1894, p. 196). Some demanded that the few nominee positions at the top of the police pyramid be opened to candidates who have gone through the ranks, not unlike the rest of the force (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 478, 8 Nov. 1895, p. 532). Others proposed that the period of movement between ranks be shortened. Still others insisted that seniority should override other considerations or called upon the authorities to include in their considerations previous service in a different police force when promoting officers who had moved from one force to another (*PR* 4 May 1894, p. 208). For them, movement between forces was perceived as a continuous job progression within the same institution. Although in practice sponsorship and merit were key factors to success, officers conceived an intimate and necessary relationship between persistence and reward.

So intense and pressing were the complaints and disaffection, particularly in the large police forces, concerning the operation of the promotion system that the authorities felt obliged to respond. Interestingly, some top officials chose the *Police Review* as their arena. Feeling a need to justify themselves or explain their position to a great many policemen, they advertised their case in this journal that was widely read by both senior and ordinary policemen. A letter by J. W. Nott Bower, the head constable of Liverpool at the end of the nineteenth century, reveals not only the promotion system in one of the largest forces in the country, but also the response of the authorities to criticism (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 477). In his letter, Nott Bower rejected the possibility that promotion should be by seniority, but conceded that 'promotion by selection is necessarily fettered with the fallibility of those who have to make the selection'. Admittedly, he continued, the system was not perfect and lent itself to injustice 'to individuals who did not come under the personal notice of the Head of the Force', but many others were not considered for promotion because of insufficient education.

His answer shows that discontent within the ranks did not go unnoticed by the authorities and that pressure by officers could bear fruit, even if it took years before it had a serious effect. Nott Bower disclosed to the readers that a few years earlier he and other senior officers had reviewed the system with a view to incorporating some of the officers' major criticisms. The response of officers to his detailed letter was that notwithstanding the head constable's efforts, favouritism still operated, though behind his back (*PR* 4 Oct. 1895, p. 477).

From the wealth of evidence concerning the reaction of officers to the promotion system, it is clear that although many officers refrained from open criticism fearing that their action might provoke victimization, they became more militant towards the end of the century and advertised their grievances, not only through anonymous letters in the *Police Review*, but also within police circles. For

example, cases of obvious favouritism such as the speedy promotion of the son of the chief constable of a small borough in the south ‘made such a stir about this irregularity’ that the young man was forced to leave his father’s force (*PR* 27 April 1894, p. 196). This case indicates that the men’s voices were taken into account. For the promise of promotion to be effective in attracting and retaining workers, it was essential that they believe that such prospects were real. The top-level officials had no choice but to amend the system periodically to respond to this need.²¹

Conclusion

The growing importance of labour stability for employers during the nineteenth century created workplaces that promised employees both employment security and career opportunities. This combination was particularly noticeable in the large public services, as in the case of the police, which crucially needed a stable workforce and had the bureaucratic infrastructure required to administer the incentives designed to attain this end. The reality of work and implementation was less rosy than the declared intentions. The case of the police exemplifies this development most clearly. Job tenure was not guaranteed and promotion rates were low. As a result of failed expectations, the threat of dismissals, partial provision of welfare benefits and generally onerous conditions of service, many workers continued the habit of job changing. However, gradually, under the pressure of continued departure and officers’ protest, the heads of police provided sufficient security and upward mobility to persuade a growing number of employees to stick to their workplace. More and more workers believed that they would be amongst the lucky ones to enjoy what was promised by the official rhetoric.

True, long-term employees were less likely to find alternative opportunities in the labour market than those with short service, but it was also the hope of developing a career that helped keep an ever-increasing proportion of policemen in service. Job immobility was of greater benefit to officers of the lower middle class, whose background granted them far better long-term career prospects than those afforded to their working class colleagues, who in this structure also enjoyed chances of moving up. Even if applicable to a small minority among them, men of working class background now faced the possibility of a life-long career and therefore a change in status. In addition to material advantages, being in a supervisory position gave them a sense of empowerment and accomplishment denied to most of their classmates in the country. No doubt, those who were promoted relished the feeling of self-fulfilment and gratification ingrained in climbing up, and thus became more stable and satisfied with their employment. Based on the pronouncements of officers and the statistical data, it is evident that those who experienced career mobility were generally more strongly loyal to the

²¹ The system of vertical advancement, too, changed under the constant pressure of officers. For details, see *Reports, Eastern* 1875, p. 8; *Report of the Commissioner* 1878-79, p. 467; *Report of the Commissioner* 1882, p. 332.

organization than were employees who did not experience upward mobility. Promotion enhanced feelings of belonging, security and a positive self-image.

Clearly, the incentives had an effect. In time, even those who were not promoted but opted to remain in service identified more profoundly with the organization. Instilling commitment in the workforce was a slow process, but however gradual, it ultimately changed the entire police culture. Inasmuch as it is possible to generalize, the more time policemen stayed together in the same workplace, the greater was their attachment to each other and to their new occupation. With time, an *esprit de corps* developed, abetted by the odd work hours and the inability of policemen to conduct their social life in harmony with the habits of other groups of working class. As a result, policemen and their families were impelled to spend their leisure time together. The sizeable provision of recreational activities by the police after work hours brought them even closer together. The many police dinners, sports days and excursions, in which the policemen's families participated, strengthened the bond not only among the men but among their families as well. A sense of community was created.

In the opinion of some senior officers, extending the years of service also had the effect of moderating officers' daily conduct. A provincial superintendent remarked in 1887: 'a very marked improvement has taken place in the general behaviour and discipline of the men during the last few years, and the number of punished even for slight breaches of duty has decreased in a marked degree' (*Reports, Eastern* 1890-91, p. 7). True, the penal policies had been mitigated, but it is also possible that the socialization of a growing number of officers into police culture and the fact that many employees were no longer young and single, predisposed them to demonstrate a more conforming attitude to their job.

Growing identification with work through perseverance was not incompatible with hostility to management or with industrial struggles. Discontent was rife among officers. Sparse promotion in itself had a detrimental effect on policemen, some of who reacted by losing interest in their work. In fact, it may have been the increased number of officers who now enjoyed job stability that helped them organise protest and develop better methods of struggle (See, for example, *Times* 2-10 July 1890; *PR* 14 June 1901, p. 283). Workers increasingly took employment security and career opportunities for granted and complained when the system looked as if it failed to live up to expectations.

A survey of police employment policies and pronouncements suggests that management was aware of and occasionally responded to such pressure. Nott-Bower's letter is a case in point. Management was constricted in its ability to promote officers because of the shortage of vacant positions. It was, however, increasingly important for police leaders to create the impression that they were attentive to workers' complaints. Clearly, the intimate link between length of service, commitment and the promise of promotion was constantly in their mind. They were aware that a limited and slow promotion produced disaffection and lack of interest in the job. The letters to the *Police Review* were signals of feelings that were widespread among the rank and file. The mounting need to appear considerate of workers' interests explains why some of the response appeared in the widely circulated *Police Review*.

In a dynamic manner, the amelioration of working conditions and the optimistic discourse had the effect of further stabilizing the workforce. Senior officers and the inspectors of constabulary themselves identified the positive impact of improved conditions of service on the availability of candidates and the retention of employees, and their assessment was based not only on casual observation but on information which they accumulated systematically over the years (*Reports, Southern* 1875, p. 212; *Reports, Southern*, 1877, p. 207).

While it would be difficult to establish a clear-cut cause-and-effect relationship between certain work conditions and steadiness of employment, existing evidence suggests that the policies of bureaucratic paternalists such as the police contributed to and even accelerated the process of job stabilization that characterized the last few decades of the nineteenth century. No doubt, the mere option of internal promotion played a significant role in producing interest in perseverance. While promotion was not contingent upon seniority, length of service was the à priori requirement to begin the ascent up the job ladder. The knowledge that they could advance must have persuaded at least some workers to endure the harsher aspects of the paternalist system. From this perspective, the policy worked and became a contributing factor in the process of the bureaucratization of careers.

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