



Bring Bratton Here

by Charlie Sykes

The week that Milwaukee Police Chief Nan Hegerty announced that she would retire after just four year in office, the mayor of Los Angeles endorsed a second full term for that city's chief of police, William J. Bratton.

"I think the numbers speak for themselves," Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa said. "The fact that morale is up in the department. Crime is down in almost every category. The fact that we are the second-safest big city in America with only half the resources that New York has. The fact that we haven't been, on a per-capita basis, as safe as we are in Los Angeles since I was 3 years old in 1956."

The mayor specifically cited an overall 7.7% reduction in serious crime in Los Angeles last year, the fifth consecutive year it had gone down.

Bratton, a former police commissioner in New York City, is one of the nation's foremost advocates of the so-called "broken windows" theory of fighting crime, in which police emphasize enforcement of seemingly minor violations as a way of reducing more serious crime.

At the heart of the philosophy is the recognition that what police do matters. Unlike Hegerty, who complained last year that Milwaukee's explosion in violent crime was the result of a "societal crisis," beyond the ability of police to handle, Bratton has taken a proactive approach to law enforcement.

Just this week, he laid out a new strategy for fighting gang crime, which has risen by 14% in the last year, despite the overall reduction in crime.

Bratton's plan includes creating a "Top 10" list of gangs which will be targeted by a coordinated effort by police, the district attorney's office, and the city attorney. The department will assign more officers and prosecutors will designate additional lawyers specifically to go after the leaders of the city's most dangerous gangs. Bratton's strategy is detailed, coordinated, and potentially deadly for the criminal class.

The contrast with Milwaukee is sobering. You'll recall that after last year's violent Memorial Day weekend, city officials deployed the former bookmobile as a "community substation."

The mayor also announced several "safe and sound" initiatives to get youths off the streets. Reported the Journal Sentinel: "Those include his summer jobs program, which this year will offer 712 slots in a variety of city agencies and private businesses; *distributing a guide to community events; and handing out free tickets to Milwaukee Brewers baseball games, donated by the ball club.*" (Emphasis added.) Chief Hegerty later announced that the department was considering no longer responding to certain low-priority calls – the opposite of what the "Broken Windows" approach employed by chiefs like Bratton.

While Hegerty's brief term will likely be best remembered for the beating of Frank Jude Jr. by a gang of off and on-duty cops (and the subsequent coverup and botched prosecution) and the explosion of violent crime, one of Hegerty's first acts in office may have been the most revealing.

After veteran Captain Glenn Frankovis referred to "thugs" in a memo circulated to his officers, Hegerty bowed to political pressure and removed him from command. Given all that has happened in the last three years, the decision was fraught with irony.

Frankovis was not only one of the department's most effective captains, he was also one of its strongest supporters of the "broken windows," approach to crime.

Here is Frankovis explaining why "quality of life" policing works:

1. *Violent crime is committed primarily by thugs;*
2. *Thugs are not Monday thru Friday 9A to 5P type people;*
3. *Thugs loiter, drive defective autos, and generally engage in disorderly conduct; they also accumulate warrants;*
4. *Quality of Life policing, coupled with the development of good neighborhood intelligence, specifically targets these thugs by seeking them out and summarily arresting them for any and all ordinance and State Statute violations. It also stops them for any and all traffic violations which then allows cops to conduct wanted checks and, in most cases, search autos for weapons and contraband. It encourages cops to use the laws as a tool to make neighborhoods safe.*
5. *The development of good neighborhood intelligence greatly reduces the possibility of collateral damage - good people getting caught in the web. And in a District centric type deployment of police officers, as opposed to deploying them out of a central location - like a gang squad, the District officers know the good people from the bad people and develop a rapport as well as the kind of trust and confidence necessary to get the job done.*

6. Now the real kicker - if most of the major crime is caused by thugs (many of whom actually are also homicide and shooting victims), then it should follow that with no-nonsense Quality of Life policing (as I have described above) there will be fewer homicides, shootings and other violent crime. You see, it's kind of hard for the thugs to do their dirty work if they are in jail - even for only 4 or 5 hours on a municipal ordinance violation. And do that enough times, they may even go elsewhere to commit crimes. It happened on a smaller scale when I was at District #3 and could happen on larger scale if what I was doing at District #3 was employed throughout the City.

7. If the thugs are in jail, even for minor violations, then the demand for service (calls to the police) should drop thereby allowing the cops more time to give proper attention to their squad areas and the good people who live there. It should also eliminate the practice of Inter-District Dispatching (moving cops from the south side to the north side during peak periods of demand).

Before he taps a new police chief, Mayor Tom Barrett should read that memo. Better yet, he should bring Bill Bratton here and find out what a leader with a plan looks like.