

The website of the Trinidad and Tobago Police Service (TTPS) states that the TTPS mandate includes enforcement of all laws and regulations. Their unit for the enforcement of traffic laws and regulations is the Traffic and Highway Patrol Branch.

The Traffic Management Branch (TMB) of the Ministry of Works has occasionally complained about the persistence of inadequate or non-existent enforcement by the Police. In fact, in 1995 the TMB spent their funds to repair four Police motor cycles in 1995 which were supposed to have been dedicated to the then Port of Spain traffic management scheme. TMB dissatisfaction with the Police response under this arrangement was met with tales of organisational problems and even hierarchical interference. The institution of traffic wardens is largely a result of this apparent unconcern by the Police. What should be of some concern is, because the Police are used for training these traffic wardens, similar attitudes could be inculcated.

A more recent development (perhaps within the last ten years or so) is that the Ministry of Works has to pay the Police in advance for any traffic enforcement and control support needed on the roadways, such as roadworks and traffic surveys. The Police will not show up unless notice is given that payment has been made, and of course, they will not permit the highway authority to conduct the work without their presence. In addition, they also claim that the Traffic Wardens do not have such authority. (That claim will be investigated at another time). I decided to check the Police Regulations for assistance.

The Police Service Regulations states in section 61: “(1) *Subject to subregulation (2), the Commissioner may, at the written*

*request of an organiser of such entertainment, bazaars, private assemblies or other occasions or functions as are approved by the Commissioner, provide for the services of officers for the purpose of preserving order at such entertainment, bazaars, private assemblies, other occasions or functions, and for performing such extra duties as the Commissioner may determine, on the payment of such rates as the Minister of Finance may prescribe. (2) An officer shall not be deputed for extra duty under subregulation (1) unless he voluntarily undertakes such extra duty. (3) An officer may only perform extra duty under subregulation (1) outside his official duty hours. (4) Where an officer is deputed for extra duty under subregulation (1) he shall be paid for his service at the rate of ninety per cent of the charges levied under subregulation (1) and the remaining ten per cent shall be paid into the Award Fund. (5) Nothing in this regulation shall apply in the case of a private or public Government function, except that in the case of a private Government function, the Commissioner may levy charges in accordance with subregulation (1) and make payments in accordance with subregulation (4). (6) An officer who volunteers and is deputed for extra duty under subregulation (1) shall report for duty as required.”*

Is roadwork activity considered entertainment, bazaars, private assemblies or private Government functions, requiring Police Officers for extra duty? I beg to disagree, and suggest that that is a dangerous trend. Does traffic enforcement now require inducements for their conduct? I would suggest that the Commissioner of Police investigate this pattern.

I have been told that motor-cycle riding is optional in the Police Service and that there are about nine

new motor cycles parked up awaiting volunteers. If that is correct, then the Police Regulations must be amended to either (1) identify riders with appropriate compensation, or (2) select riders from new recruits, or both. In current conditions with such high traffic density (number of vehicles per unit of space), enforcement is made so much more accessible with motor cycles. It is amazing that the Police appear not to see the importance of motor cyclists. Yet they have given so much more priority to placing their officers parked in cars at risk in their “surveillance bays” on the highways.

Is speed enforcement not a priority for the Police? If so, how do they expect to do it, seeing they have not modern methods to determine speeds? Exactly what are they doing parked up in the surveillance bays? The majority of traffic crashes and fatalities on our highways have to do with high speeds, and yet we have no way to enforce traffic speed limits at present.

In addition, most of these crashes occur at night, and there is hardly ever a regular Police presence on our highways at night. It seems that there might be other priorities as evidenced by the recent charging and suspension of two highway patrol Police Constables for kidnap and sexual assault, and misbehaviour in public office.

During the daytime, every motorist would have seen situations as follows: (a) backhoes on the highway, (b) vehicles coolly driving down the right lane of the highway without overtaking, (c) vehicles taking the exit lane on the highway and yet proceeding directly across onto the entry lane, simply to overtake the traffic, and (d) drivers running the red light, Curepe junction on the Churchill-Roosevelt highway being a good example.

To be continued.

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