

## Three for the City: A Child of the Department

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# Three for the City

## *A Child of the Department*

Three major boxes on the selection checklist for a new Police Commissioner are his capacity to win internal support from the force; to win the confidence of the public, especially minority groups, and the ability to manage an immense bureaucracy. The Mayor-elect deserves high marks in at least two of those boxes for choosing Robert McGuire.

Mr. McGuire, a lawyer and former Federal prosecutor, is not a police insider, but he is a true child of the department; his father is a retired deputy inspector. The police are likely to find their new boss empathetic and understanding. Indeed, the police union quickly welcomed his selection.

The general public should find assurance in Mr. McGuire's demonstrated sophistication and experience in connection with the whole criminal justice system. He has seen it not only from the perspective of the prosecutor but also that of defendants he has represented, including police officers. Minority groups, justly concerned about evenhanded and sensitive law enforcement, may be encouraged by additional aspects of his background. He worked for 18 months in Africa as a police adviser

in Somalia and he has helped direct a community law office in Harlem.

The box that cannot now be checked is administrative ability. Mr. McGuire has no experience managing even a large organization; the Police Department is enormous. It spends a billion dollars a year; employs 25,000; touches almost all aspects of the city's life. Beyond such standard measures, the immediate administrative tasks are formidable. The hardest job of all may be to manage scarcity.

What can be done to accelerate the promotion, on merit, of able younger officers? What will be done to put new emphasis on investigations? Can Mr. McGuire reverse the present tendency to press responsibility outwards from headquarters? There is a trying agenda ahead even for someone experienced at management. The task will be that much easier if the Mayor-elect is serious about the pledge he is said to have made, to let Mr. McGuire have a free hand in choosing his deputies and making promotions. Such a pledge suggests Mr. Koch appreciates independence; that, like his choice of Mr. McGuire, does him credit.

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