

**PUBLIC DOCUMENT NO. 49;
SIXTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE
POLICE COMMISSIONER FOR THE
CITY OF BOSTON, YEAR ENDING
NOV. 30, 1911**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649421015

Public Document No. 49; Sixth Annual Report of the Police Commissioner for the City of Boston, Year Ending Nov. 30, 1911 by Various

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FROM . . .

STEPHEN O'MEARA,

*POLICE COMMISSIONER
FOR THE CITY OF BOSTON.*

Public Document

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OF THE

POLICE COMMISSIONER

FOR THE

CITY OF BOSTON.

YEAR ENDING NOV. 30, 1911.



BOSTON:
WRIGHT & POTTER PRINTING CO., STATE PRINTERS,
18 POST OFFICE SQUARE.
1912.

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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

REPORT.

HEADQUARTERS OF THE POLICE DEPARTMENT,
OFFICE OF THE POLICE COMMISSIONER, 29 PEMBERTON SQUARE,
BOSTON, Dec. 30, 1911.

To His Excellency EUGENE N. FOSS, *Governor*.

YOUR EXCELLENCY: — As Police Commissioner for the city of Boston I have the honor to present, in compliance with the provisions of chapter 291 of the Acts of 1906, a report of the work of the police department for the year ended Nov. 30, 1911.

Having completed a term of five years as Police Commissioner and entered upon a second term I may describe with knowledge some conditions of police work and organization in Boston which are peculiar, beneficial and creditable to the city. The people of Boston are daily readers of news which affects unfavorably in turn the police departments of other American cities, large and small; and it therefore seems to me to be well worth while that they should receive such information as shall save them, in so far as the facts justify, from judging their own police service by what they read of the service which is given to other communities.

FIRST — THE BOSTON POLICE FREE FROM POLITICS.

The Boston Police Department is wholly free from politics — the root of all evil in the policing of American cities and towns. A police department without politics may yet be inefficient, but a police department controlled or even influenced by politics is sure to be inefficient and worse, to just such a degree as it is affected by the political taint. In the five and a half years for which I can answer, no appointment, promotion or transfer of a police officer, no expenditure of a dollar, no grant or refusal

of a single one of the tens of thousands of licenses and permits which the Police Commissioner controls has been influenced by any political personage or political consideration. The public acceptance of this as the actual condition is shown by the fact that in all the criticism to which a police department and its commissioner are sure to be subjected, not one person and not one newspaper has even alleged in five and a half years that the department as a whole or any members of it were concerned in any way with politics, except as voting citizens. Technically, the commissioner himself might have been regarded in his first term as a political appointee, but even that suspicion is lost in his reappointment by a Governor not of his own party.

It may be added, moreover, as emphasizing the peculiarity of this situation, that by law and for lawful purposes the Boston Police Department is brought into closer relation with voters and elections than is any other police department in the world. It is to the police that the statutes have entrusted the annual house-to-house canvass of men and women whose names constitute the basis of the lists of voters prepared by the election commissioners. It is to the police that supplementary inquiries as to new candidates for registration as voters are assigned. It is to the police that all the ballots for use in the city on election days are entrusted for prompt and safe delivery at the 206 voting places. It is a policeman who hands the key of the ballot box to the warden, witnesses and certifies the number registered, and is the custodian of the key throughout the day. A policeman watches the proceedings of election officers from the opening of the polls until the final returns are handed to him for delivery to the election commissioners. He must be informed as to all the conditions under which voting should proceed and the ballots be handled and counted, for it is his duty to act instantly should any condition be violated. He has printed instructions from his own superiors and from the Board of Election Commissioners. He holds in his hand a list of voters in the precinct whose confinement in hospitals or penal institutions makes it impossible that their names should legally be voted upon. He holds also a printed descriptive list of all voters in the precinct, and uses it constantly as a means of checking attempts at fraud. And when the polls are closed