

Lawmen Should Cooperate

It is impossible to estimate the damage that can be done to criminal investigations when various police agencies—city, state and county—fail to cooperate fully in working on a major case of a type which calls for such cooperation.

Cooperation to the fullest possible degree should be standard operating procedure. Each department working on a case should of course do the best work it can in its area of jurisdiction. At the same time, it should make full use of the services of other departments.

After the slaying of a young woman at Connersville last weekend, Connersville police did not notify Indiana State Police, who have a post at Connersville. State police learned of the crime via a commercial radio newscast. Five days passed before they were asked to help.

After the kidnap-murder of 10-year-old Jerry (Mike) Bayles on Oct. 3, high-ranking officers of the Indianapolis Police Department said they delayed getting a proper investigation under way for fear of treading on the jurisdiction of the state police. State police had begun the investigation because the body was found in a rural area under their jurisdiction.

Delays in establishing cooperation waste valuable time and manpower which if used effectively could vastly increase the chances of success in crime investigations. Bickering, petty jealousies and foot-dragging are frequently portrayed as characteristics of detectives in television and movie meleodramas. They are out of place in real police operations.

Incidents like these suggest it may be time for Governor Edgar D. Whitcomb to invite the top-ranking officers of the various police and investigative agencies in Indiana to a state conference where the need for interagency cooperation and the benefits to be derived from working together can be made crystal clear.

One high-ranking state police officer has suggested that reporting of major crimes to a central information agency be made mandatory. This sounds like a sensible idea. Steps should be taken to implement it.