

THE INDIANAPOLIS STAR

Where The Spirit Of The Lord Is, There Is Liberty

II Corinthians 3:17

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"Let the people know the facts and the country will be saved." — Abraham Lincoln

Police Brass Bungled

The facts leave no doubt that there was serious high-level bungling in the Indianapolis Police Department's handling of the Jerry M. (Mike) Bayles murder case.

No Indianapolis detectives were put on the case during the crucial Saturday night hours after identification of the 10-year-old Star carrier, kidnaped about 6 a.m. Saturday near his Westside home, stabbed to death and dumped in a field in Henry County.

Delay in launching an immediate investigation may well have caused the loss of valuable leads.

It was not until 4:30 p.m. Monday, nearly 60 hours after the abduction, and 48 hours after the identification, that a team of Indianapolis investigators was officially assigned to the case.

Until then things were proceeding at best on a catch-as-catch-can basis.

It was not until Sunday morning that the acting head of the Indianapolis homicide division, on his own initiative, arranged for a meeting between an Indianapolis detective and a state police detective working on the case. This meeting occurred at 11 a.m. Sunday, 29 hours after the abduction and 17 after the identification.

Detective officers said attempts to reach superior officers in the Indianapolis Police Department on Sunday were futile.

The key witness in the case, who said he saw the boy being held at knife-point by a man who claimed to be his father, and was preventing his running away, was not interviewed by police until Sunday after presenting himself to the slain boy's family to tell them his story.

The murder victim's bicycle was not checked for possible fingerprints or other clues, but was used by other children on the day after the slaying, which would have destroyed possible evidence.

Two Indianapolis detectives were sent to the abduction scene only after Alan R. Kimbell, director of public safety, upon being informed by The Star of the foundering, told the acting head of homicide to proceed with the investigation.

High-ranking officers in the Indianapolis department based their failure to take prompt initiative on the excuse that city police lacked jurisdiction because it was not known where the victim was slain despite the eyewitness's story of seeing the abduction take place near the boy's home.

We agree with the director of public safety who said he has no criticism of the work being done by the homicide division.

However, we also strongly agree with his statement that "Even if the murder took place in . . . Henry County we have excellent reason to know the abduction took place here and the police should have acted immediately."

Weekend procedures in the department obviously need tightening up. In fact, all command and operating procedures that could lead to a repetition of this bungling should be replaced with procedures that work effectively.

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