



Local Focus

The NYPD Derives Twenty-First Century Goals From Nineteenth Century England

Current New York Police Department (NYPD) commissioner Bill Bratton has had an unusual career in policing. Between 1992 and 1994, he led the NYPD under then-mayor Rudolph Giuliani. During this time period, the department was known for its embrace of an assertive style that reflected the ideas of “broken windows” policing (discussed in more detail toward the end of this chapter). Between 2002 and 2007, Bratton led the LAPD. In late 2013, he was once again appointed commissioner of the NYPD.

In 1992, Bratton’s job was to reduce crime and restore order. Today, it is to keep crime low while restoring relations between the NYPD and all of New York’s communities. New York’s commish has found a surprising inspiration for this new assignment.

Since returning as New York City’s police commissioner in 2014, Bratton has made no secret of his admiration for another famous policeman, Sir Robert Peel. Indeed, Bratton has spoken of Sir Robert with such frequency that prominent New Yorkers have had to go back to their history books.

“I have heard the commissioner refer to him continually, which made me look him up,” the Reverend Al Sharpton told *The New York Times*. Bratton has expressed particular admiration for Peel’s famous “Nine Principles of Policing,” going so far as to tell reporters, “I carry these with me everywhere.” Here are Peel’s principles:

- “The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.”
- “The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.”

- “Police must secure the willing cooperation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.”
- “The degree of cooperation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.”
- “Police seek and preserve public favor not by catering to the public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.”
- “Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.”
- “Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.”
- “Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.”
- “The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it.”

In a city struggling to build closer relations between the police and minority communities, it’s easy to see the appeal of Peel’s principles—even if scholars say that it was in fact Sir Robert’s successor who articulated them.