

... and the times they are a'changin' After 2 years should the police department still be reorganizing?

Newton's third law of motion says, "for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction." In Trenton another law is being written which says, "for every inaction there is a disproportionate and opposite over-reaction." For the time being we will call this *Santiago's first law of regression*; however, there are many that believe Mayor Palmer's name should be attributed to this law.

This month marks Joe Santiago's second anniversary as police director in Trenton. It is hard to believe that a man purported to be as gifted in law enforcement management as Santiago has yet to develop an effective plan for policing in the city. Sure he claims to have lowered crime a staggering 32%, but during this same period Trenton's streets have become much more dangerous. Although crime reporting has often been a point of contention since Santiago arrived (and will likely remain so even after his departure), it will not be the focus of this piece.

During the two years of his reign, Joe Santiago has failed to bring any stability to the department and, even now, is still reshuffling the deck to try to find something that will work. To many in the department Santiago, with his disjunctive method of management, is viewed as a man hopelessly trying to get it right. One officer described Santiago's decision making as dashboard management. "Put all your options on a dartboard, throw a dart and go with whatever option the dart hits," explained the officer. Given the number of changes made by Santiago it is difficult to discount such a theory.

The department is in a constant state of flux and hardly a week goes by without transfers being made. While a small number of transfers are expected for routine operations, massive transfers at this phase should be cause for concern. Last month about 30 officers (mostly supervisory officers) were



transferred on one day, and there are rumors that more mass transfers are on the horizon. After two years shouldn't the department be in the "fine tuning" mode instead of a state of reorganization? Even now there are high-level meetings being held to change the policing grid from three districts to four.

Often the transfers are predicated on publicized spates of violence. Such occurrences have become commonplace since Santiago arrived and reflect directly upon his ability. Many times, a week of poor media reports will lead to transfers. Rather than changing the plan for addressing problems, the personnel are changed. Santiago's management has become more of a shell game than a cohesive approach to a plan. To finish the metaphor, he just can't seem to find the shell that has the "pea of success". If Santiago can't create a viable plan after two years then how can crime prevention or reduction ever succeed? Santiago's failure in the gang problem has resulted in the hiring of a man to "fix" the gang strategy. What is next?

Most appalling is Santiago's rumored willingness to transfer officers, sometimes en masse, because his ego has been wounded. If this is true, then Joe Santiago surely does not serve in the best interest of the citizens in Trenton. The people of Trenton deserve to have an effective police department. Whether the root cause is petty vindictiveness, ineptitude, a combination of the two or some other unknown factors, it is time for the public, City Council and Mayor Palmer to hold Joe Santiago accountable.

"You better start swimming or you'll sink like a stone"

- Bob Dylan's first law of change

There's no substitute for character

According to a city hall insider, the mayor and members of his cabinet were treated to a vivid display of adult emotion by Joe "Call Me Colorful" Santiago last week. The display allegedly happened during an emergency meeting at city hall, held to discuss Santiago's recent problems with the Police and Fire Pension system.

During the meeting Santiago allegedly became infuriated when told that there was little the city could do to help him. An eyewitness reported spittle flying during the tirade that followed.

Fire Director Dennis Keenan reportedly offered sympathy to Santiago, saying, "Welcome to my world."

Santiago quietly rebuffed Keenan without once raising his voice, cursing, spitting and/or slamming his hand and a book on the table. No witnesses could be found to substantiate the previous sentence.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Bully gets bloody nose. Skips school

TRENTON - Recently a schoolyard bully at the Grant school in Trenton got more than he bargained for when he was pummeled by his previous victims. The bully left the school with a bloody nose and ran home crying.



To the surprise of those involved the bully failed to show up at the school on Clinton Avenue and Perry Street the next four days.

CRIME & MORALE: *Non-Satire Section*

Hey something's missing! Yea, him.

Last week was a good week for the people of Trenton. The number of burglaries, robberies and shootings dropped significantly. The Vice unit arrested 24 people, seized about 50 pounds of marijuana, money, guns and a car. The teen who allegedly shot a gang member and a 12 year-old girl on a bus was also arrested and a gun recovered from him. There was one murder, but that was the result of domestic violence, which usually aren't considered "preventable."

We wonder if it is coincidence, but last week morale was very high at the station. Everybody was smiling and walking on air. The source of morale was that the man who most cops don't respect was on the ropes. No matter what future weeks may bring, Santiago was worried and absent last week. Morale was high and crime was low. Coincidence or the effect of good morale?