

The Value of Centralization as applied to Finger Print Identification

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MARCH 29TH, 1897, Mr. Henry, Inspector General of Police, Lower Provinces of India, submitted a report on his system of identification by finger impressions before a committee appointed by the Government of India to investigate the superiority of the two systems, viz: the Anthropometric method of measurements and Henry's system of identification by finger prints. After hearing Mr. Henry's explanation of the Anthropometrical system then in vogue and comparing the finger print system with it the committee recommended that the system of Identification by means of finger prints be adopted in preference to that of measurements for the following reasons:—

- (i) The simplicity of operation
- (ii) The costs of apparatus
- (iii) The fact that all the skilled work required is transferred to the Central Bureau
- (iv) The certainty of the results.

Mr. Henry must have had the idea of Centralization in mind when he submitted his report and events have proved that centralization with respect to criminal identification has more than justified his opinion.

The first Bureau of criminal identification was established at New Scotland Yard, LONDON, England, and the finger prints of persons charged with an indictable offence in the United Kingdom were taken and forwarded to the Central Bureau where they were classified and fyled for future reference. It was not long before results were obtained and as the collection grew, so did the number of identifications and the Police authorities throughout the country came to rely more and more on the Finger Print Bureau for the information so essential in establishing past criminal records of persons passing through their hands. Gradually other countries came to recognize the value of this method of criminal identification and by 1910 practically all civilized nations adopted it and installed a Central Bureau.

The primary object of centralizing criminal records was to save time and expense on the part of contributors in obtaining information relative to persons whose criminal history was required for Court purposes. It had been found under the anthropometric system that inquiries had to be instituted at different places to obtain the record of a criminal and very often he escaped with a light sentence or his case was dismissed due to the information arriving too late. This condition has been changed and today no matter where the criminal is arrested, his finger prints are taken, forwarded to the Central Bureau, and his complete criminal history if on fyle is immediately written or wired to the Police authorities concerned.

The Canadian Government decided in 1910 to adopt this system of Finger Print Identification and established a Central Bureau at Ottawa in