

to his arrival is evil.”

Esserman openly rejects anyone, politicians and others, who tries to interfere with his department. He had misgivings about taking the job—he'd promised his wife they'd never leave New York City again—and he told Cicilline during his job interview that he wouldn't consider the position if he didn't have the mayor's guarantee of a hands-off policy from city hall. Cicilline convinced him to make the move. “He made it clear he'd give the police department back to the people after it had been a king's army for a generation,” Esserman says. He's kept his word, Esserman adds.

But even after the Plunder Dome trials, where tow truck company operator Richard Autiello was convicted of trying to bribe a city official to get a friend on the police department, Esserman says he still gets calls from other pols looking for favors.

“I'm amazed at some of the calls I get,” he says. “Most are from local and state legislators looking to get someone a job.” He says he listens, but will only tell the caller what is public record. And if a politician calls on behalf of one of his officers looking for a promotion?

“Any phone call made on their behalf is their death knell,” he says. “That's a career stopper.”

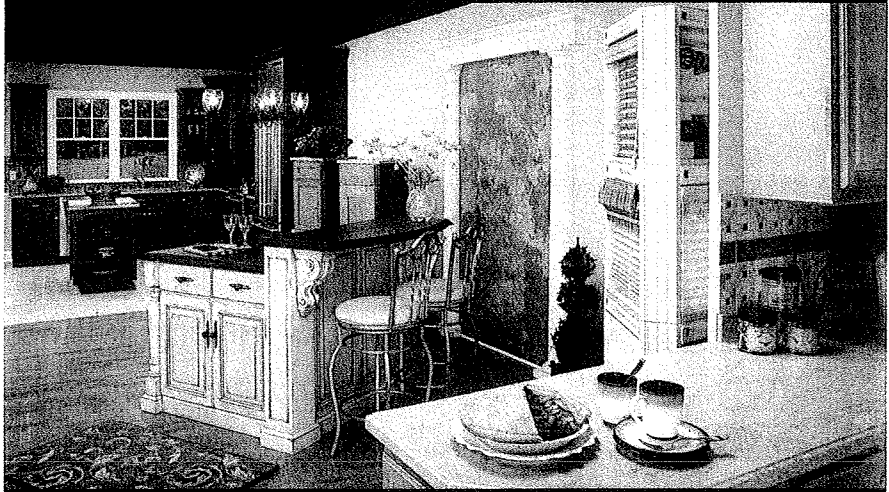
COMMUNITY POLICING IS ESSERMAN'S modus operandi for keeping Providence safe. After becoming chief, he divided the city into nine districts, reflecting the city's nine neighborhoods. Now, every Tuesday morning, at 8:30 sharp, he holds a weekly staff meeting, something that didn't happen under his predecessors. His nine district commanders, along with his command staff, sit around a long table in a conference room outside of the chief's office. But what's even more interesting is who *else* is present. A representative from the state's probation department, two women from a family service agency, chiefs of police visiting from other New England cities, members of the clergy, reporters and



Swearing in as chief, Providence, January 2003.



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