

# REFLECTIONS

## No Peace Without Justice

The other day I received a telephone call from a producer with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, inviting me to take part in a current affairs programme on the police. I asked her to explain.

It seemed that recently in Canada a number of people have been shot and killed by police officers. The victims had been members of minority groups. The police use of deadly force had triggered off a national debate about the way the police deal with visible ethnic minorities.

I began to reflect on the world-wide problem that besets the policing of plural, multi-racial, societies. The balance of policing in a liberal democracy is so much easier to maintain when the population is more homogeneous. The cultural norms of police and public are better understood, and more compatible. There is less room for misinterpreting motives and misunderstanding actions. Even body language, which is an important form of communication between public and police, can more easily be misunderstood where marked racial hetero-

geneity of populace exists. Many police officers feel uncomfortable when policing groups of people who are alienated from them by circumstance.

All these thoughts were going through my mind as I reflected on our problems in this regard and so were the controversies within our own debates on this subject some ten years ago. Those of us pressing for greater concern for new initiatives to minimise the potential for conflict, through a new form of accountable community-style of policing, were regarded with greater scepticism than exists today. Riots in Bristol, London, Liverpool, and elsewhere brought about greater acceptance of the need for consultation with those who had rioted, or for whom riots had been carried out. I wondered whether Canada, like the USA, would have to have riots before it also could understand and deal with its ethnic policing problems.

But it was my reflections on the policing of Ulster which opened up the real problem of policing minorities. Since the partition of Ireland in 1922 and the creation of the province of Northern Ireland, the Roman

Catholic Republican minority had felt itself discriminated against. Hence the genuine and legitimate Civil Rights Movement of 1969, its crude repression, and the resurgence of the historic terrorist factions.

I reflected that it is not so much the existence of minorities *per se* which gives the police greater problems, but the existence of minorities with grievances, and particularly those with feelings of injustice. There are considerable lessons to be learned by administrators and wielders of police power.

The search for public tranquility has to begin with the awareness that where injustice towards minorities exists, there can be no lasting peace. The police do not of themselves always create the problem, but unless they are aware of what they are doing when applying their power and authority, they may compound it. Police action might in such circumstances unwittingly provide the detonator for the social dynamite mixed by others.

Peace without justice is not a realistic expectation, or so my reflections seem to tell me. We still have need to tread carefully in Albion.

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# COUNCIL'S COUNSEL

## The Status of Constable

*Jim McKinney, Chaplain at the Bramshill Police Training College and member of the Council of ISTD counsels....*

**The police service shares a problem with a number of other public service professions - the problem of the good practitioner. In the language of the teaching profession, the problem is this: how are schools to reward good teachers? The natural answer is that, by and large, after a certain amount of time and after certain formalities they will be promoted in the managerial hierarchy. But each promotion takes good teachers further away from their area of competence for which they joined the profession in the first place, namely encouraging children to learn.**

**The result is a constant leaching of the best away from the chalkface where their skills are most sorely needed.**

The parallels with the police service are almost exact. For teacher read 'uniformed beat officer', for encouraging children to learn read 'helping the community' and for the chalkface read 'the street'.

The problem is even more acute for the police service, because not only is there 'leaching upwards', but there is also 'leaching sideways'. The increasing social and technological complexity of modern society forces the police service into a process of constant reorganisation, self-monitoring and specialisation. And it is through the proliferation of such specialisms that the problem of leaching sideways makes itself felt.

There is increasing concern that

good uniformed beat officers are inevitably drawn sideways to join one of the many specialisms - CID, Traffic, Communications, Tactical Support Units, Surveillance Teams, etc. The pull towards these specialisms is a strong one. They are usually marked by technical proficiency of a high order and a strong morale which often smacks of elitism. Put simply, the specialisms are much more glamorous than uniformed beat work. At present the uniformed beat officer is pretty near the bottom of the status pile within the police.

The extent of leaching from the staple uniformed 'core' of the modern police service, began to prompt penetrating questions about the present structure and organisation of the police. Police forces up and down the country are now seeking to improve

# POLICE MATTERS

## Change, Competition, Challenge

It still comes as something of a surprise to recall that in 1966 116 Police Forces in England and Wales were made jointly responsible for the upkeep of the Queen's Peace. As a result of amalgamation (1966-68) and local government reorganisation (1974) England and Wales now has just 43 Police Forces a number of which cross county boundaries (like West Mercia). Force strengths range from the Metropolitan Police, with an authorised establishment of over 27,000, to Bedfordshire (1000), Gwent (978) and Warwickshire (967).

Other than the Metropolitan Police (where the Home Secretary is the Police Authority) the governance of police is based upon the 1964 Police Act which established the 'tripartite arrangement' under which responsibility for provincial police forces is shared by the Chief Constable, Home Secretary and Police Authority. The Chief Constable 'directs and controls' his police force while both the Home Secretary and Police Authority (composed of two thirds councillors and one third magistrates) have a statutory responsibility for the provision of an 'adequate and efficient' police force. It has always proved difficult to accept the view that this arrangement was one established between equal partners. Increasing Home Office in-

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*continued*

the status of the uniformed beat officer.

A great deal is being done to make the police service ever more responsive to the needs of the community, but it is the work of the uniformed patrol officer that is central to the whole process; more than just an enhancement of status is required. A coherent career structure for the role of the uniformed constable, whereby this crucial function within society could come to be seen as a vocation in itself, is needed if the public's and politicians' pleas for closer cooperation between police and community is to be more than lip-service.

terest in improved efficiency has led to greater intervention by the Home Secretary in matters affecting the policing of the provinces. Further, the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO), representing all senior officers from Chief Constable to Assistant Chief Constable, has been happy to develop a 'bilateral dialogue' with the Home Office on a variety of policing matters. As a result Police Authorities can often feel excluded or unable to pursue what they believe are their statutory responsibilities.

It is often suggested that under the 1964 Act the Home Secretary enjoys 'power without responsibility' in relation to provincial police forces. He is able to guide and influence policing policies without being made formally accountable to parliament for what he wishes them to do. The issue was highlighted quite dramatically during the 1984-85 miners' strike when it appeared Britain had, via the National Reporting Centre, a **national police force**, albeit a *de facto* one. Subsequently, the Home Secretary has overridden the decision of Northumbria Police Authority not to provide baton rounds or CS gas to its police force. Paradoxically there has been, as a result of these developments, a growing interest in the possible creation of a, *de jure*, national police force which would at least make the Home Secretary formally accountable for the decisions he already makes.

## New Challenges

For police forces however the most immediate issues which confront them centre on new management initiatives and structures. As with other public services, Police Forces have been encouraged to demonstrate value for money and greater financial accountability. Other than the move to local cost centres, the most dramatic result to date of this programme has been the growth of **civilianisation** of staff within Police Forces. Police have been pressured to identify an increasing number of functions which, by the employment of civilians, would release police officers for operational duties. Home Office circulars 105 and 106 of 1988 clearly indicate that no substantial increase in police officer

establishment can be expected if civilianisation has not been undertaken. Scenes of crime officers and computer personnel have already been civilianised. No end seems in sight as Police Management departments analyse functions and conclude that they do not require the skills of a police officer or indeed police supervision. Indeed, a police commentator has publicly questioned recently whether, on the basis of value for money, the investigation of complaints against the police can continue to be sole responsibility of police officers. It will be perhaps ironic if the long debate over who guards the guardians is ended not on the basis of impartiality but of cost.

A further issue confronting police forces is that of **privatisation**. A notable breach in the concept of public service provision came recently at Harwich where the British Transport Police were removed and under the long forgotten 1847 Docks and Harbours Act, were replaced by 'Special Constables' who were employees of the shipping company and cost £15,000 less per 'officer' than their British Transport Police equivalents.

Recently The Adam Smith Institute has called, in Scotland, for the abolition of existing police forces and the creation of a national police force with a secondary tier of 'municipal police' for towns and cities which would be open to civilianisation and possible privatisation. While major crime and public disorder would remain the responsibility of the national police, municipal police would take responsibility for all other matters (traffic regulation, lost and found, burglary inquiries at al.). These functions, already subject to civilianisation, might be the subject of competitive bids by public and private agencies.

Nor can the implications of **European integration** be ignored. If, as is likely, border controls evaporate after 1992, will the existing structure of 43 autonomous police forces continue to be sustainable? With the increased movement of goods and people across Europe the need for a national, rather than local, police body might prove to be overwhelming.

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