

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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23 DEC 1981

Dear Mike

PRIME MINISTER'S INTERVIEWS

... In response to your letter of 17th December to John Halliday, I attach a note on major Home Office activities and achievements in 1981 and the outlook for 1982.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Private Secretaries to members of the Cabinet, to Murdo Maclean (Chief Whip's Office) Michael Parnall (Chief Whip's Office, House of Lords) and David Wright (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever  
C. J. Walters

C. J. WALTERS

Mike Pattison, Esq.



## MAIN DEPARTMENTAL ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS IN 1981

1. Police, Community Relations and Race

The central feature of police, community relations <sup>and</sup> race in 1981 was the serious disorder in some inner-city areas: this occurred first in Brixton in April, and then in other cities, notably Liverpool and Manchester, in July. The police were faced by a new level and scale of violence. The reassessment of police methods and capacity for handling disorder, begun after the disorder in Bristol in 1980, was intensified. Very quickly, the Home Secretary announced provision of new protective equipment for the police, and this - together with the organisation, nationally, of rapid reinforcements, and a review of tactics - strengthened the police response.

← Lord Scarman was appointed to inquire into the disorders in Brixton. His report was published on 25 November. The Home Secretary has announced his acceptance of the basic philosophy of policing which Lord Scarman presents, and a wide range of his more specific recommendations: for example, new consultative arrangements, the need for substantial reform of the complaints procedure, and improved training arrangements.

Although the summer disorders were not race riots, the underlying threads of racial tension and disadvantage were clear. In the light of the Report of the Home Affairs Select Committee on Racial Disadvantage, and of Lord Scarman's report, the Government has:

- a) re-emphasised its firm commitment to a multi-racial society and to the need to combat disadvantage;
- b) emphasised the importance of measuring the extent of racial disadvantage and announced a decision to conduct ethnic monitoring in the Civil Service; and
- c) strengthened its policy of meeting special needs: through administrative changes to section 11 of the Local Government Act 1972, and through a £50 m increase in the urban programme.

In advance of this work the Home Secretary had initiated a report by the Home Office on racial attacks (published on 17 November), and the Secretary of State for the Environment, following his extended visit to Merseyside, set up the Merseyside Task Force.

2. Prisons

Many of the recommendations of the May Committee Inquiry into the prisons have been implemented. The Prison Department has been given a greater measure of autonomy within the Home Office, including responsibility in large measure for its own personnel and financial matters. Independent members have been appointed to the Prisons Board. There is now an independent Inspectorate of Prisons.

Short, sharp shock regimes are in operation in four detention centres.

3. Criminal Justice

The Criminal Attempts Act 1981 has reformed the law of England and Wales relating to attempts to commit crime, and abolished the suspected person offence ('sus'). The Indecent Displays Act 1981, a Private Member's measure introduced by Tim Sainsbury MP with the Government's encouragement and support, has made new and more effective provision through Great Britain for restricting the display of indecent matter in shops accessible to people under 18 and in other public places.



Following the lead given by the Court of Appeal in 1980 towards more sparing use of imprisonment, there appears to have been a continuance in 1981 of the welcome downward trend in the average length of prison sentences recorded in the second half of 1980, and of greater recourse by the courts to probation orders and community service orders. In recognition of these developments, the Government is making available to the probation service additional resources (equivalent to some 150 additional probation officers) in 1982 - 1983.

#### 4. Immigration

The British Nationality Act 1981, which replaces our present out of date citizenship laws, received Royal Assent on 30 October. Its provisions will take effect on 1 January 1983.

#### 5. Broadcasting and Radio Regulation

A legal citizens band service was introduced in November 1981; nearly 100,000 people have already taken out licences.

A new Royal Charter was drawn up providing the framework for the continuance of the BBC until 1996. The Home Secretary established the new BBC licence fees, to last for a period of at least three years, thus assisting the BBC to plan ahead and develop financial discipline, and enabling the licence fee system to work in the way it should (in contrast to the debilitating effect of annual increases).

### OUTLOOK FOR 1981

#### 1. Police, Community Relations and Race

The main task for 1981 will be to carry forward the work of enhancing police effectiveness and encouraging community involvement and support. In the police field, there will be:

- a) a continued strengthening of the police's public order response;
- b) a reassessment of the training need in public order, community relations and management, and for new recruits;
- c) a review by the House of Commons Select Committee of the complaints machinery; and
- d) the production of guidelines on the methods, and content, of police/community consultation.

In the race field, we shall be concerned to continue the battle against disadvantage. We shall commend to local authorities the various recommendations of the Select Committee and Lord Scarman for greater consultation with community interests - the whole community, not just ethnic minorities. We shall strive for better direction of resources in order to combat racial disadvantage, and generally improve conditions in inner-cities. We shall also draw on the experience of the Merseyside Task Force. [None of this implies the use of quotas or the grant of special privileges to members of the ethnic minorities.]

#### 2. Prisons

A new duty system and improved procedures for dealing with industrial disputes are being negotiated with the POA.

Overcrowding remains the main problem. The Government have announced a very substantial building programme which should produce 5,000 new places in the 1980s. Starts on 9 new prisons - 2 a year for the next 4 years - have been approved. There has also been an important enhancement of the redevelopment of existing prisons, including major reconstruction projects at over 60 establishments which will, among other things, bring much improved access to sanitation.

A Rayner-type enquiry is being put in hand on Prison Service manpower.



### 3. Criminal Justice

In the spring the Home Secretary will bring into operation section 47 of the Criminal Law Act 1977 which provides power for the courts to pass partly suspended sentences of imprisonment. This will enable the courts while marking the seriousness of the offence by the length of sentence imposed, to limit in suitable cases the period which the offender need actually serve in custody. It will supplement and reinforce the trend towards shorter prison sentences which is essential if our prison system is to avoid breakdown.

The Criminal Justice Bill introduced by the Home Secretary in December will proceed on its way through Parliament. Its aim is to strengthen and make more flexible the powers of the courts, principally in relation to young offenders (and the parents of those under 17) but also with provisions for improving the law on partly suspended sentences, for a general increase in the level of fines, and for enabling the courts to give priority to compensation for victims.

### 4. Immigration

New Immigration Rules will be laid before Parliament in the course of 1982. They will need to take account of changes introduced by the Nationality Act, and will raise issues about differences in the treatment of men and women under the present Rules.

### 5. Broadcasting and Radio Regulation

In May 1981 the Home Secretary published the report of a Departmental study of Direct Broadcasting by Satellite (DBS), which was in general favourably received. Early in 1982 decisions will need to be taken on whether this country should embark on DBS, and if so when and on what scale. These questions will in turn raise others regards the implications for broadcasting of developments in the field of information technology.