



HOME OFFICE  
QUEEN ANNE'S GATE  
LONDON SW1H 9AT

18<sup>th</sup>  
November 1985

Dear Mark,

Lord Scarman called at the Home Secretary's invitation on 13 November to discuss inner city policing and related matters. The Home Secretary thought that the Prime Minister might be interested to see what Lord Scarman had to say.

Lord Scarman prefaced his comments by saying that he was no longer very close to events, especially those outside the Brixton area. He had two main impressions:

- (i) he believed much of the ground that had been gained since 1981 was still held. Whereas in 1981 in Brixton there had been a stunning loss of confidence in the local police there were now responsible members of the black community who were appalled at what had happened and who had a sense of responsibility and energy to do something about it. The danger lay in the development of a pool of alienated young blacks with whom neither the police nor responsible black community leaders could effectively communicate. The situation had been complicated by the 'outrageous behaviour' of some local authorities. Mr Knight in Lambeth had actively undermined those seeking to improve local community relations. In general, therefore, though the situation was far from satisfactory it was better than before the 1981 riots, and the line had been held;
- (ii) the police had a special responsibility to foster good relations with the black community. He believed they had done well, though in some respects the relations were still fragile. Accidents of a kind which had precipitated the recent disorders might happen from time to time: officers might be frightened by sudden events however well trained and self-controlled they were. Such accidents had to be taken in the stride. Instead of full judicial enquiries (which were acceptable only at rare intervals) an added impetus should be given to discussion of problems through the local community relations machinery and to the development of police race relations training. Talking in these situations

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Mark Addison, Esq

was vital and he particularly welcomed the way in which the Police and Criminal Evidence Act allowed the community relations machinery to be tailored to each locality. It was essential to maintain and improve black confidence in the police, for which purpose the recruitment of black officers must continue to be encouraged. Black policemen would have an impression on local opinion and in the long run would help the police to communicate effectively with the young. He strongly agreed with the Home Secretary that it would be wrong to lower standards in order to encourage the recruitment of black officers.

On inner cities generally, Lord Scarman said that the problems were too complicated for one Department. It was a question not just of resources but of their application and the effort of Government at all levels must be effectively co-ordinated. He agreed with the Home Secretary that education had a crucial role to play. He had been particularly depressed by his visits to some schools in 1981, and by the attitude he had encountered amongst some teachers he met. They were ready to ascribe the cause of problems to the racist attitudes of a social system which they did not wish to support, but did not seem interested in engaging in debate or encouraging their pupils in a way which would be of practical assistance to the young in their schools or the community more generally. Lord Scarman had been struck by one headmaster who had been willing to offer his views but had felt unable to receive him at the school. It was essential to educate the teaching profession in these matters. He believed few teachers seriously addressed questions of race relations, and of those that did, many probably adopted the negative attitudes to which he had referred. He agreed with Sir Brian Cubbon that it was important to attract more black people to be teachers. The role of the education service was therefore a particular problem which must be tackled.

Lord Scarman made the following further points:

- (i) things were made more difficult by the absence of a significant Afro-Caribbean middle-class. This was in complete contrast to the United States, where a black middle-class was now well established;
- (ii) he agreed with the Home Secretary that the Lambeth community consultative group had made an important contribution despite the disservice done to it by Mr Knight. He much admired the chairman, Mr Parkinson, and recognised the important role the Home Office had performed in establishing the group.
- (iii) he shared the Home Secretary's worry that recent events might have encouraged a beleaguered feeling amongst some members of the Metropolitan Police, with the result that the atmosphere in the force would be less well disposed towards fostering good relations with the community. After his report the police had found that discussion with community leaders did not hamper and often helped their work. It would be dangerous if things slipped back and it was essential that the police did not start to think that community relations undermined their position as a law enforcement agency.

(iv) He thought highly of the present Chief Constable of the West Midlands and looked forward to studying his report on the Handsworth disorders.

In conclusion Lord Scarman said that he believed the substance of the recommendations in his report still held good, particularly those on police community relations. Inner city problems must be tackled on a co-ordinated basis. He agreed with the Home Secretary on the importance of ensuring police morale was maintained at this difficult time.

Yours,  
Supt

S W BOYS SMITH



MB



HOME OFFICE  
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LONDON SW1H 9AT

18<sup>th</sup> November 1985

Dear Mark

HANDSWORTH RIOT

Prime Minister (2)  
This is an important report,  
but the Home Office note plays up  
the key issues. It is to be published  
by the Chief Constable, tomorrow.

MEA 18/11

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Immediately after the rioting in the Lozells Road area of Birmingham in September the Home Secretary asked the Chief Constable of the West Midlands Police to prepare and publish a report. I enclose two copies of the report, which the chief constable will publish tomorrow, at a public meeting of his police authority. The chief constable intends to hold a press conference afterwards.

The Home Secretary will place copies of the report in the Parliamentary libraries. He will announce this in written answer to a Parliamentary Question (copy attached).

The report (which has been prepared in association with Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary) provides a useful account of the background to the rioting, and of the actual rioting. At the end of his report the chief constable looks at "the way ahead". You may wish to note the following points:

- (i) The chief constable says (page 53) that there is firm evidence (which he does not discuss in detail because criminal proceedings are outstanding) that the disorders were at the outset orchestrated by local drug dealers whose livelihoods were suffering at the hands of the Drugs Squad.
- (ii) He rejects allegations that the riots were due to a breakdown in police/community relations flowing from oppressive policing (pages 54 and 70), and emphasises (page 55) that the law must be enforced. (At pages 65-67 he rejects the allegations that the police subsequently agreed to "no go areas").
- (iii) He gives notice (page 73) of his intention to seek his police authority's agreement to recruit up to establishment, and then to seek an increase in establishment.
- (iv) He indicates (page 76) that he now favours the acquisition of plastic baton rounds by the force.

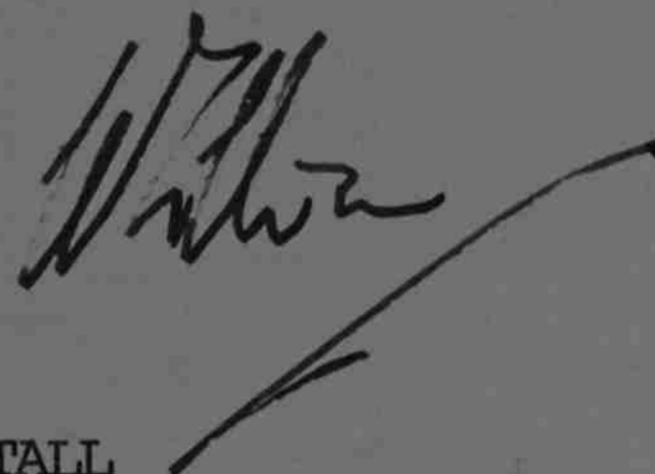
The Home Secretary regards this as a good report, which will help the police service and everyone else who is engaged in considering the lessons to be learned from the recent disorders.

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Mark Addison, Esq

I am copying this to the Rob Smith at the Department of Education and Science,  
Alan Davies at the Department of Environment, and Leigh Lewis at the  
Department of Employment.

*Yours sincerely*

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'W R Fittall', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

W R FITTALL

**INSPIRED PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION FOR ANSWER ON TUESDAY 19 NOVEMBER**

**Question:** To ask the Secretary of State for the Home Department when the Chief Constable of the West Midlands expects to publish his report on the rioting in the Lozells Road area of Handsworth in September this year.

**Draft reply** The Chief Constable is publishing his report today. I am placing copies in the Library. The report provides a clear account of the disorders and more generally is a most important and valuable contribution to consideration of the lessons to be learned from the recent disorders in Birmingham and elsewhere.