

PRIME MINISTER

HANDSWORTH ETC.

CF  
The Handsworth report was touched on at the meeting with the H/Sec and Mr Mellor yesterday. The matter may come up again when the H/S comes in on 16/12. Nigel W should have these in his back up. MWA 5/12

Two things you may like to have a look at over the weekend.

i) a piece by Hartley Booth (Flag A) on Geoffrey Dear's report on the Handsworth riot.

ii) a record of a recent meeting between Lord Scarman and the Home Secretary (Flag B). This I think repays a careful look. Lord Scarman's remarks seem to me well balanced and perceptive. There is no hint that he believes the problems can be resolved by throwing money at them, and he seems determined not to let Handsworth, Tottenham etc. detract from the advances which have been made since 1981. Particularly interesting are his remarks on teachers, and the ill effects some of them have on their charges. I am sure he is also right to stress the importance of getting more black teachers into schools, and more black policemen onto the beat.

Lord Scarman must be right, as well, to point out the absence in this country of a significant black middle class as a key factor in making relationships between the races more difficult.

MWA

Mark Addison

29 November 1985

The Handsworth report is  
very worrying indeed. I should  
like to talk to the Home Secretary  
about it.

BEMBEW

ms

MR ADDISION

CF  
PL by, + edit from Scarman,  
22/29/11. 27 November 1985

HOME SECRETARY'S LETTER CONCERNING LORD SCARMAN

Although I cannot speak of the Lambeth Community Consultative Group, I agree with all nine of Lord Scarman's main points the other eight of which are summarised as follows:

1. The feeling of alienated black youth is a danger that Governments must address.
2. We each have a special responsibility to foster good relations with the black community.
3. Avoid judicial inquiries if possible.
4. The Police and Criminal Evidence Act should help community relations.
5. Education has a crucial role to play.
6. The situation could improve when a black middle class develops.
7. The Metropolitan Police often feel beleaguered.
8. The Chief Constable of the West Midlands (Geoffrey Dear) is outstanding.



HARTLEY BOOTH

26 November 1985

HANDSWORTH AND LOZELLES ROAD RIOT REPORT

No mere fictional drama could be as compelling as the parts of this report that describe the events of the 9-11 September this year (pages 18 onwards). The lack of police manpower and protective clothing in the right place at the right time is spotlighted. Forces hostile to public order can read of the police weaknesses. The public, who are entitled to protection, will feel aggrieved. A trader I spoke to in Lozelles road during that week said "I made six calls to the police for help that evening on the telephone and for three hours I was left unprotected. I am lucky to be alive, but look at my shop. Eight years' work and a lifetime's savings gone." His experience is confirmed by this police report. It is an irony that the supply of extra protective clothing, which would have allowed the police into Lozelles Road on that first evening much sooner, was due to be supplied shortly after the date of the riot.

The degree of organisation among the rioters is well documented in this report (pages 25 and 53). The report boldly concludes that the first riot was orchestrated by local drug dealers. This we suspected at the time, but had formerly been denied by the police.

The danger that officers had to experience should be brought to your attention (pages 30 and 64), and it should be

added that, although the report does complain that police resources had been cut back (page 56) it also says that even manpower reductions had not taken place then such a fuller compliment could not have dealt with the situation on their own (page 56). A formal request for more officers is made (page 73).

The following practical recommendations are made:

1. Police need a speedy ability to take out the ringleader (page 75). And suggests better equipment and training.
2. Further consideration in West Midlands should be given to the use of batton rounds or plastic bullets (page 75-6).
3. More vehicles with protective equipment, better radios, better photographic equipment should be supplied (page 77).

The report: is it adequate?

This is a balanced and good report which does cover some issues more widely than the events of early September. For example, it rejects the use in Britain of a paramilitary third force (page 74). However, it does not give any clue as to why the much-vaunted Police community relations had not spotted the emergence of trouble before the afternoon of 9 September 1985. The best we can discover from this report is that the police admit the shortcomings of their community relations

(page 72). It appears that community relations is limited to contact with group or ethnic leaders, and does not include contact with any of the alienated criminal minority who orchestrated the trouble. Our other criticism of the report is that it fails (page 33) to state frankly that the shops in Lozelles Road were destroyed according to the race of their owner. I walked along Lozelles Road with Indian traders who pointed out to me that the only shops not destroyed and which remain standing between the burnt out ashes of others, were those belonging to the West Indian black community. That this report omitted this appalling racial element is surprising. It may be that as the Brown/Black tensions were described fully elsewhere in the report, this was a deliberate omission. The Carribeans appear jealous of the profits made by the Indians for drug trading, but it appears West Indian traders make more than £3,000 in 2½ hours with Cannabis (page 16).

### Conclusion

The Home Office is dealing with all the recommendations in this report. We recommend no action at present.

*H. Booth*

HARTLEY BOOTH