

CONFIDENTIAL

MR. MOUNT

c.c. Mr. Whitmore  
Mr. Ingham  
Mr. Vereker

LAW AND ORDER: SOCIAL ATTITUDES

John Vereker reports that the Prime Minister has asked you to take a particular interest in policy issues arising in the areas of education, and law and order.

I think you will therefore wish to see the attached papers, which were put to the Prime Minister in March, when law and order was the main topic of public debate. They concern a proposal by Gordon Wasserman, a member of the CPRS, for a new initiative aimed at changing social attitudes, particularly within the family, which he sees as lying at the root of the problem. Its aim is to encourage teachers and parents to set clear and consistent limits to the behaviour of children and adolescents. It draws on work done by Professor Rutter at the Maudsley on juvenile delinquency, which was commissioned jointly by the Home Office and DHSS and which is due to be published in the autumn. In terms of action, Mr. Wasserman proposes that the Government should take a much closer interest in the training of teachers, and should consider changes in the teacher training system. He also proposes that once the Government is clear about what changes are necessary, the Prime Minister should launch the initiative by holding a seminar. To some extent, this would be a public relations exercise to stimulate public debate. Finally, the note suggests that a small unit should be set up in the Cabinet Office to work up this initiative.

These papers have since lingered in the Prime Minister's flat. You will see that at the time she showed little enthusiasm for the idea of a seminar, but favoured setting up a small unit in the Cabinet Office, presumably to work up the ideas in Mr. Wasserman's paper in more detail.

She also saw some value in the Rutter report, partly because it is useful in disassociating crime and unemployment. I remember

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her suggesting at the time that we should consider bringing forward the publication of the report, especially if there was the prospect of trouble in the summer. From her comment on these papers, it is clear that she feels we must be ready to make some use of the report.

Because the papers went missing, this initiative fell by the wayside and since the Prime Minister did not raise the subject, we assumed it had not found favour. She did, however, speak to the Permanent Secretary in the Home Office, Sir Brian Cubbon, and asked him to instigate a general review of the problem of law and order with other departments. This led the Home Secretary to minute his colleagues in DOE, DHSS D/Employment, Scottish Office, Welsh Office and DES, and to hold a couple of meetings. You have seen the records of these. Following this an inter-departmental group of officials from these Departments was set up under Sir Brian Cubbon's chairmanship. This has produced a draft report which will probably be put to Ministers in two weeks time.

The Committee's report concentrates on practical measures that can be taken by these Departments in the medium and short term to help reduce the risk of juvenile crime, especially in the inner cities. It is about practical measures, not about changing the social attitudes that may lead to criminal behaviour. That aspect of the problem has still to be tackled head on, and I think officials in most of the Departments concerned may at present feel that it is hard to identify a role for Government in this area other than as a promoter of public debate.

I think you will wish to consider whether the Prime Minister should be advised to revive the ideas in Mr. Wasserman's report, in some form or another; and, if so, how they should be carried forward.

The Home Secretary's agreement to any new policy is obviously crucial. One way of putting the possibility to him would be to await the consideration of his report, and then to say that the Prime Minister welcomes the work done on the practical remedies

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that can be taken to reduce crime, but that she feels some complementary work on the root causes would be useful, and that she would like you and the CPRS involved in this.

*W. S. Rickett*

25 May 1982