

PRIME MINISTER

POLICE COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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Home Affairs
MB

You may be interested to see the attached paper by the Home Secretary which will be considered at H Committee on 28 June. The paper makes proposals for changes in the police complaints procedure.

As you know, the present system allows for independent consideration of complaints against the police by the Police Complaints Board but not for independent investigation. The most extreme critics of the present system propose a wholly independent system to which the Government is opposed on grounds of principle and cost. Lord Scarman in his Report last year and the Home Affairs Select Committee, whose Report was published on 9 ^{June} ~~July~~, propose that there should be a measure of independence in the investigatory procedure; the Government has already accepted this in principle.

The proposed legislation substitutes a three-tier system of investigation for the present uniform procedure.

- (1) In minor cases it proposes an informal system of local conciliation (which if used extensively would reduce bureaucracy).
- (2) For more substantial complaints and for those where informal conciliation did not work, it proposes a procedure similar to the present arrangements.
- (3) For more serious complaints (and this is the real departure) it proposes investigation by a senior police officer, normally from an outside force under the supervision of an independent assessor, i.e. the investigation would have an element of independence. The assessor would be the Chairman of the Police Complaints Board who would be assisted by a small number of assistant assessors probably appointed on a regional basis. The Home Secretary estimates that there might need

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to be three additional staff on the Police Complaints Board and that the additional cost would be approximately £200,000 in 1983/84 and about £500,000 per annum thereafter.

The new system will not satisfy the more extreme critics of the police but no system which was either politically acceptable or could command police confidence would do that. The proposed new arrangements do, however, strike a balance between acceptability to the police (they will be welcomed by the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Superintendents' Association and will not be opposed by the Police Federation) and the need for the introduction of that degree of independence needed to command greater public confidence.

JK.