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PRIME MINISTER

BRITISH CRIME SURVEY

"shock"

You will have seen reports in the press about the Home Office survey which shows that crime is several times higher than recorded figures. This is not a shock at all; it has been known for a long time that the real figure for crime is many times higher than that recorded in the crime statistics. Many crimes are not reported by their victims and many incidents which are reported to the police are not recorded as crimes.

The survey reports that in 1981 there were four times as many offences of property loss and damage (especially vandalism) than official statistics; there were around five times as many offences of violence (especially sexual offences). Why do people not report crimes of which they are victims? In most cases, especially those of property loss and damage, they feel that the value of the loss and the chances of catching the culprit are too low to justify the trouble of contacting the police; more seriously for sexual offences many women are worried about the kind of questioning and publicity which would ensue from reporting the offence.

There are some more reassuring findings from the survey. Britain is still a relatively safe place. The average household can expect to be burgled only once every forty years (much higher in the inner city); the elderly are in fact the least likely to be victims of violent crimes; most people are very satisfied with the police; most victims feel that police and court practice is about right.

The survey is not evidence of a new crime wave; rather a documentation of a phenomenon which we knew to exist already. The principal lessons from it are:

- i) The real need for a much more concentrated effort on crime prevention, especially to make cars and houses more secure. The Home Secretary has recently been taking more initiatives in this respect.

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ii) The need to make the police much more effective. Hence increases in police manpower under this Government, improvements in their equipment and changes in their tactics to provide a much more feasible presence on the streets (see Sir Kenneth Newman's recent initiative in London).

If this matter is raised in Questions, I would suggest the line to take might be as follows:

Line to Take

Crime is much too high, whether it is measured by the official statistics or by this survey. These figures give the clearest possible backing for this Government's policy of supporting the Police by increasing their manpower and improving their equipment. But we cannot leave it all to the Police, and I hope that all honourable Members will support my right honourable Friend the Home Secretary's campaign to make crime prevention everyone's business.

T. Flesher
Judy Clark
MP

T. Flesher

14 February 1983