



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

Prime Minister ⁽²⁾

You will wish to see this "think-piece"
from the Policy Unit on crime. But
I am not sure that you will
necessarily want to take up the
suggestion of a meeting with the Home
Secretary, at least at this stage.

We might instead invite the Policy Unit
to turn their note into a paper which
you could send to the Home Secretary.

You could then consider next steps in the
light of his response. Agree? Dmb:sh

PRIME MINISTER

CRIME

Leon Brittan has begun a transformation of the Home Office and is grappling with the formidable problem of combatting crime.

However, the public is still worried that the Government is not doing enough to counter the sharp increases in crime in recent years, that the bigger and highly paid police force is not yet making sufficient impact on preventing or solving certain categories of crime, and that the criminal justice system does not adequately deter, punish or reform offenders. The effect is to create a pervasive fear of crime and ultimately to undermine public faith in society's most basic institutions.

Some of these criticisms are unfair. There is a real prospect that after the 10 per cent rise in the number of notifiable offences in 1981 and 1982, there could be a fall in 1983. Many steps have been taken to bring this about:

(a) Police

- Police and Criminal Evidence Bill will become law this summer;
- police training has been improved;
- more police are back on the beat as a result of increased recruiting, improved inspection procedures, redeployment of officers and civilianisation of certain positions;
- police now have the equipment, training and organisation to deal with any future disorders, which they lacked in 1981.

(b) Police-Public Relations

- local consultation arrangements are already working in many areas;
- schemes such as the introduction of lay visitors to police stations are coming into operation;
- some police forces are conducting or commissioning opinion surveys to gauge public views on their performance and effectiveness;
- co-operation between the police and other agencies, statutory and voluntary (eg welfare services, schools, residents' associations) is developing.

(c) Crime Prevention

- a Home Office Crime Prevention Unit was established last November, a circular giving guidelines to local authorities has now been issued and an inter-departmental group has reported;
- various local initiatives, eg property marking, and Neighbourhood Watch Schemes, are being introduced in various parts of the country.

(d) Sentencing Policy

- the Criminal Justice Act 1982 provided for a wider range of sentences including alternatives to prison and Borstal, especially for young offenders, which have become available during the last 6 to 9 months;
- the Home Secretary set out last October changes in the sentences that the perpetrators of serious crimes of violence could expect.

(e) Prisons

- the prison service has been reorganised with a new system of inspection;
- a major programme of prison building will last for the rest of the decade;
- efforts are being made to reduce the prison population.

Among future Home Office legislative plans are:

- i. a further Criminal Justice Bill (in 1985 or 1986) embracing improvements to the systems of victim support, including compensation, and introducing new forms of daytime or weekend imprisonment; and
- ii. the setting up of the Independent Prosecution Service.

Much remains to be done if these policies are to be brought to a successful conclusion. The passing of legislation or the issue of a circular is merely the beginning of the process. In particular the Government needs to:

1. Assess systematically the impact of present policies and adjust where necessary.
2. Explore new ways of approaching especially difficult problems.

3. Take steps to improve the effective performance of all elements of the criminal justice system so that they give proper value for money.
 4. Mobilise support to hold the initiative in the political debate and enhance confidence in and support for the law throughout society.
1. Reassessment. Clearly, in some cases it will be months or even years before we have a clear idea of whether present policies are having the desired effect. Wherever adequate information becomes available, the Home Office should establish a continuing programme of evaluating the effects of specific measures and whether they are achieving their aims. If not, then changes should be proposed. Ministers should have available to them at regular intervals review reports on specific schemes with recommendations.

It should be possible to judge some policy effects earlier than others, eg:

- i. whether "short, sharp shock" helps reduce recidivism or acts as a deterrent;
 - ii. whether putting more police on the beat has any direct effect on reducing street crime (including auto-crime) or burglary, or whether it is principally offering a reassurance to the public with no measurable effect;
 - iii. whether the new types of sentence are being used by magistrates;
 - iv. whether less serious offenders are being kept out of prison.
2. New Solutions. In some cases, new or strengthened initiatives may be needed, eg:
 - i. Alternatives to prison: community service orders are a good method of handling less serious adult offenders. Attendance centres and the right type of probation can also act as the correct type of deterrent without forcing the offender to give up his job and tempt him into full-time criminality. Are these techniques being used enough?

- ii. Victim support: victims feel strongly that the system does not care about them. In some cases, the criminal should have to make good the damage done to the victim and his property. The court should always ask if the victim can be helped by the type of punishment awarded to the offender.
 - iii. Press reporting: rules over reporting are discretionary. There are times when publicity of a charge or before a verdict is wrong, as it can associate a crime with someone who may be innocent. There are other times when wider reporting of a proven crime would remind others of the dangers in loss of repute that can follow from a conviction. Should the Home Office investigate current practice?
3. Value for Money. The efficient use of resources should be a constant aim, but it has not always been acknowledged or achieved in the law and order field. In both police and prison service, a great deal has been initiated very recently to see that people and equipment are more effectively utilised. There is still much scope for improvement:
 - i. Senior Senior police officers should have more information available on the effectiveness of their forces in the tasks on which they are deployed, and whether the balance between for example uniform patrols/traffic/CID/special squads is right.
 - ii. Police and prison inspectorates should have available to them greater expertise in management matters.
 - iii. the further uses of new technology in the police should be investigated to reduce the burdens of paperwork, and as a means of transferring more tasks to civilian staff. In traffic management, more technology could replace manpower.
 - iv. The improvements in management information and targets that the Home Secretary has introduced should be widened and pressed home.
4. Public Support. Although surveys reveal majority satisfaction with the police, there are important areas of disquiet:

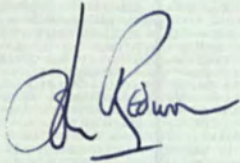
- i. Police relations with the young, and especially with ethnic minority young in inner city areas, have improved somewhat in the past 2 years, but there is still cause for concern.
- ii. Among the elderly and those living alone or in tower blocks in certain areas, there is a very real fear of crime. Sometimes it is unfounded. The police should tell people about the measures they are taking (like putting the man back on the beat) to rebuild local confidence. Publicity should be designed to reassure rather than alarm.
- iii. There is much anecdotal evidence of police alienating respectable citizens by either pursuing traffic offenders over-zealously, or shrugging their shoulders at the prospects of tracking down burglars. Would those officers deployed on the former task be put to better use on the latter?
- iv. The Government's stance on law and order is clear and much stronger than that of any other Party. The policy now has to deliver less crime and less fear of crime to avoid encountering more political opposition.
- v. Many academics and some Home Office officials still hold views on the causes and correct treatment of crime that are out of tune with common sense and the Government's approach. The war of ideas needs to be won and will need help from the politicians at the Home Office. The debate over the Criminal Evidence Bill showed that many still believe in one or other of two simple caricatures: either society is moving to a state of endemic lawlessness, or to a new authoritarianism.

Conclusion

You could mention these points to Leon Brittan, to ensure that:

- (a) a coherent sensible message is put across about the nature of the war against crime, and how the Government proposes to win it;
- (b) new initiatives on policing and sentencing are not only pursued, but also evaluated;

- (c) Leon Brittan brings academics into the task of winning the war of ideas, as he did successfully on a wider canvas in Opposition;
- (d) the work to secure value for money is pursued even more actively;
- (e) concern for the victim and for the quality of police service to the public be moved up the list of priorities.



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Briefing Note

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A STRATEGY TO FIGHT CRIME

DS 27/0

On his appointment as Home Secretary following the General Election in June, Mr Leon Brittan undertook a complete review of Government policy on crime. Referring to the importance of an overall strategy which would take in every aspect of the criminal justice system, from crime prevention and effective use of police resources, to sentencing policy and prisons, Mr. Brittan emphasised:

"All of these issues inter-relate and we shall make no serious headway in tackling crime if we concentrate on any one aspect to the exclusion of others" (Torquay, 27th September 1983).

Crime Prevention

A Crime Prevention Unit was established at the Home Office in July 1983. Initially set up on a three-year experimental basis, the Unit will be concerned with the development of short-term measures which will have a direct impact upon crime. It will have a strong research base; working with local organisations such as local authorities, police and industry, it will seek to establish an environment in which crime cannot thrive.

The police themselves have launched both 'neighbourhood watch' and property marking schemes. The former is designed to help the police and public work together to beat crime, and will be based upon 'home beat' officers; however, there is no question of a 'vigilante' element playing any part in the scheme.

The Police. Between 30th April 1979 and 31st March 1983, police strength increased from 109,998 to 119,496. This increase in manpower has allowed the police to return officers to the beat in significant numbers; many police forces are now studying how to deploy their available manpower to best advantage. At the same time, a recognition of the importance of public support for, and confidence in, the police has led to the formation of consultative groups with local people, and a greater emphasis upon the role of the public in assisting the police. These steps, in turn, have an important influence upon effective deployment.

Police Powers and Suspects' Rights. The Philips Royal Commission, examining the issues in 1978, pointed out the haphazard and inconsistent extent of police powers, and the lack of statutory control over the rights of suspects. The Police and Criminal Evidence Bill, which fell at the General Election, was designed to rectify this situation. A new Bill is to be introduced, which will incorporate a number of important changes to the original Bill, but whose aim will be, in the words of the Home Secretary:

"Better enforcement of the law, combined with surer guarantees of the citizens' rights" (Blackpool, 11th October 1983).

Changes in Sentencing Policy. At the Conservative Party Conference, Mr. Brittan announced a number of new measures:

- (i) Life Sentences. Those sentenced to life imprisonment can only be released on the authority of the Home Secretary. There are no parole arrangements attaching to life sentences; release is under licence, which can be revoked.

In future those who are convicted of the following offences can expect to serve at least 20 years:

- * Murder of police or prison officers.
- * Terrorist murders.
- * Sexual or sadistic murders of children.
- * Murder by firearm in the course of robbery.

In addition, those who murder people such as night watchmen, security guards, transport personnel or post office staff, whose jobs make them particularly vulnerable, can expect to serve very long sentences.

- (ii) Legislation will be introduced to increase the maximum sentence for carrying firearms in the furtherance of crime, from 14 years to life imprisonment.
- (iii) As part of a Bill on the introduction of an Independent Prosecution Service, measures will be introduced to allow the Attorney-General to refer cases, in which he considers the sentence to have been over-lenient, to the Court of Appeal. Although the original sentence would not be altered, the Court of Appeal would be able to lay down clear guidelines as to what it considered to be the proper punishment for such an offence.
- (iv) Those sentenced to more than 5 years imprisonment either for crimes of violence against the person or drug trafficking, will not be released on parole, except where release under supervision for just a few months before the end of sentence is likely to reduce the long term risk to the public. Details of these arrangements will be worked out with the Parole Board.

Prisons. British prisons suffer at present from serious overcrowding. As Mr Brittan has affirmed:

"Overcrowding in our prisons makes control and security far more difficult ... it is also unacceptable in itself because it is inhumane. Whatever we think of people we send to prison, we send them there as punishment not for punishment" (Blackpool, 11th October 1983).

It is essential that those who pose a genuine risk to society remain in prison, and that places be always available for them; however, by the same token it is right that those who pose no such risk either do not go there in the first place, or are released after the first short sharp shock of custody. Accordingly, the following changes are being implemented:

- (i) The minimum qualifying period of custody before a prisoner becomes eligible for parole will be reduced from one year to six months.
- (ii) Alternatives to prison are being expanded for fine defaulters, drug addicts and mentally disordered offenders for whom prison is not the proper place.
- (iii) The Home Office are consulting the Probation Service on a major reassessment of its functions. In particular, the importance of community service orders is being stressed.
- (iv) The prison building programme is to be both accelerated and extended. It will provide 4,800 extra prison places; at the same time, some 4,000 places will be gained from work on existing prisons.

As a result of these measures, prison overcrowding should be ended within the decade; in the short term, the policy of putting prisoners in police cells will, by the end of this year, no longer be necessary.

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