

WHITELAW FACES SACK OVER CRIME

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By GORDON LEAK

HOME Secretary Willie Whitelaw at the centre of a fierce row over Britain's rising crime rate—faces eventual sacking. That is the growing view among Tory MPs, even though Mr Whitelaw enjoys the full backing of Premier Margaret Thatcher.

The party's reputation on fighting crime has slumped in the eyes of the public, who feel the policies are not working.

But there could be a general election next year and she knows the Home Secretary, who master-minded the last law and order campaign in 1979, has lost credibility.

And Mr Whitelaw will face an even more hostile Tory conference in October than he did last year.

Mrs Thatcher has made it clear she will not sack him in the middle of the furious debate over crime.

But MPs feel the Home Secretary will put his job up for grabs—in a Cabinet reshuffle in the autumn—when the rumpus dies down.



WILLIE: Under fire

Debate

Mr Whitelaw's diary is crammed with stormy confrontations on law and order this week, which could decide his future:

TOMORROW: He meets critical Tory back-benchers at the Commons.

TUESDAY: MPs debating the Criminal Justice Bill will seek to force an amendment to restore corporal punishment.

WEDNESDAY: The House of Lords debate the crime wave.

THURSDAY: The Commons will spend the whole day on law and order.

FRIDAY: He faces a row at the Conservative Central Council meeting in Harrogate where grass roots Tories will demand tougher action.

Public support has been snowballing since the Police Federation launched its campaign for the return of capital punishment.

The Federation has had more than 30,000 letters since it placed advertisements in national papers—and only 80 disagreed.

Federation spokesman Tony Judge said: "The response has been overwhelming."

Vivian Bendall, Tory MP for Ilford North, said last night he had received 450 messages of support for his bid to force a Commons vote on the restoration of hanging.

"It would appear the vast majority want it," he said.

'Bring Back the Rope'
— See Pages 6 and 7.