

Victorious Whitelaw gains his reward

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By Julian Haviland, Political Editor

Mr William Whitelaw, after putting to rout his critics among Conservative MPs on Monday, was rewarded yesterday with the Prime Minister's endorsement for which the party had been waiting for some days.

Taking a cue from Mr Denis Healey who invited her to "pluck the dagger out of the Home Secretary's back", Mrs Margaret Thatcher said: "No person has done more both on numbers of police and on the pay of police than the Home Secretary — and on their morale."

Mr Whitlaw, who has borne the brunt of the Conservative's anxiety about the rise in some types of crime, will defend his record at the Home Office for the second time this week tomorrow, in a Commons debate on law and order initiated by the Opposition.

He is expected to repeat in general terms his intention to strengthen the powers of the police in dealing with suspected offenders. But in spite of interpretations put by some of his backbenchers on the remarks he made on Monday, he has reached no conclusions on the

recommendations of the Royal Commission on Police Procedure.

Specifically he has not decided whether powers for the police to stop and search suspects, already available in the Metropolitan Police area and other parts of the country, should be available to police everywhere.

The one firm proposal disclosed by Mr Whitelaw on Monday was for legislation to prevent criminals from serving as jurors.

□ Mr Whitelaw, flushed with his triumph before his backbenchers, went on to the offensive yesterday by coming out in favour of new powers to deprive big criminals of their "ill-gotten gains" (Peter Evans, Home Affairs Correspondent, writes).

He made plain in a speech in London that his target is not only petty criminals by also "in the very worrying field of organized crime, such as drug trafficking with its international ramifications".

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