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cc: N10
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10 DOWNING STREET

THE PRIME MINISTER

13 February, 1984

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Dear Leon,

Thank you very much for sending me a copy of Sir Kenneth Newman's Report. I am glad to learn of the fall in reported crime, and you must be very pleased (as I am) to see results from the many measures we have already taken to combat lawlessness.

We must continue to attach high priority to the fight against crime. With this in mind, I think you will be interested to see the enclosed note produced by the No. 10 Policy Unit. They give due credit for the progress which we have already made and are continuing to make. But they also have some suggestions about possible new initiatives we could take in some areas, and possible changes of emphasis in others.

I should welcome your comments on these ideas, and in particular on the suggestion that more attention should be given to assessing effectiveness of new types of sentence and new methods of policing; on the need for still greater impetus in the search for efficiency and value for money; on measures to help the victims of crime; and on the need to reassure the public that the war against crime is being won.

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I hope that you will find the note a useful contribution to our thinking in this important area of policy, and I look forward to hearing your reaction in due course.

BF I am sending copies of this letter and the Policy Unit note to George Younger and Jim Prior. I hope that they too will let me have their comments.

Y
Lonsdale

Rayson
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The Rt. Hon. Leon Brittan, Q.C., M.P.

The Home Office is grappling manfully with the formidable problem of combatting crime: many new policies have been launched in the last year.

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 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:

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- 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 people 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.

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.

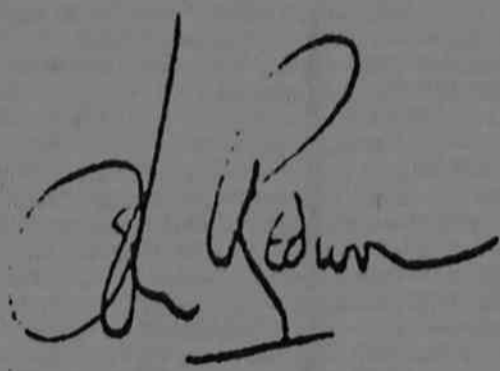
Conclusion

To build on the good foundations, the Government needs 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;

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- (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.



JOHN REDWOOD