

CONFIDENTIAL

DN to see
+ speak pte

No - I don't think
this is enough
for police
Let me increase
manpower to 2,000
and then
we will
review the
position
of



Prime Minister
Agree to Hurd's
approach to this question?

DBS
25/10

PRIME MINISTER

METROPOLITAN POLICE MANPOWER

I had a long discussion with the Commissioner on 16 October, when he put to me his case for an increase of about 3,500 officers in the Metropolitan Police establishment (now 27,165).

His argument in essence was that although police strength had risen by some 4,500 since 1979, a large part of this increase had been eroded by improvements in conditions of service for police officers (extra leave etc); and he also considered that the increase of 576 which had been allowed in the establishment since 1979, did not compensate for the additional tasks (Royalty and Diplomatic Protection, Special Branch, and other specialist squads, etc) which had been imposed on the force.

There is force in these arguments, though they can to some extent be matched by counter arguments. They come at a moment when we are committed by commonsense and by our own public statements to show solidarity and support for the police at a tense and difficult time. We cannot go back on that.

But the situation needs very careful handling if we are not to throw away the work of my predecessors. They have carried through a massive expansion of the police forces in England and Wales while at the same time emphasising the need for effective use of resources and value for money. They have insisted that the priority which we have given to the police does not amount to a blank cheque, and that the police cannot be exempt from the financial and managerial disciplines on which you have laid such stress throughout the public sector. The police have been introduced to new ideas about the management of forces, and are just beginning to put them into effect. Of these civilianisation is one of the most important. It is vital that we do not abandon this approach.

Sir Kenneth Newman is simply the first in line with his bids. I am getting indications from all over the country, including counties far from the riots such as Norfolk and Hampshire, that Chief Constables and police authorities are mobilising opinion behind substantial claims for additional manpower. This flood will soon be upon us. It cannot be sensible in handling the London claim to give the impression that expenditure on the police is now to be regarded as demand-led and open-ended.

We have to reconcile these considerations. The key to this reconciliation is, of course, the concept of need, which appeared in your Blackpool speech and in everything I have said. I believe the stance should be that we are ready to consider applications for new resources for the police on the basis of proven need. This will be costly to the Chancellor, but not so costly as a disorderly rush.

With this in mind I have taken the following line with Sir Kenneth Newman:

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- (a) Since the Metropolitan Police is 300-400 under strength his first step should be to recruit up to strength. (In fact this will take several months).
- (b) The restructuring of the force which he has already in hand should by his own estimate release a further 200 officers from desk jobs for operational duties, mostly during 1986. To help this forward I have authorised an increase of almost 50 in the civil staff next year.
- (c) I am ready to agree in principle to an increase of 50 police posts to strengthen his efforts against drug trafficking.
- (d) His requests for further manpower on top of this will be carefully analysed so that a view can be taken early next year of the net increases found to be justified on proven need.
- (e) I am writing immediately to the Chief Secretary to ask for a higher cash limit for the Metropolitan Police for 1985-86 to take account of riot damage claims, additional equipment urgently needed, and additional overtime. (Without waiting for this, immediate deficiencies, e.g. in the stock of riot shields, will be made good).

I shall take a corresponding line over provincial police manpower.

I believe that this is a position which can be reasonably defended in public. We are past the stage when general statements of support for strengthening the police will pass muster. We shall come under strong pressure from our supporters in Parliament to concede particular increases. At the same time there was considerable recognition on our back benches on Monday afternoon of the importance of securing value for money. We shall not want or be able to resist all the increases which are sought, but we must be able to assess them in a sympathetic but orderly fashion if we are not to repent afterwards.

I am copying this minute to Willie Whitelaw, Nigel Lawson, George Younger, Tom King, John Biffen, Kenneth Baker, David Young and Norman Tebbit, and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Douglas Hurd.

22 October 1985

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Prime Minister. (2)
For information

PRIME MINISTER

25 October 1985

SIR KENNETH NEWMAN

The Commissioner invited me to talk to him and his senior officers. I spent 2½ hours over lunch during which they made the following points:

1. Manpower levels in the police still worry the Commissioner but the Home Secretary's offer to receive further detailed requests in February defers the day of reckoning on this. In the meantime he is 300 under establishment, which will be made up and 200 can be gained from reorganisation. Home Office are providing 50 extra civilians and 50 extra police for drug pursuit next year.
2. The riots need stronger action. He was privately unhappy that plastic bullets were not used at Tottenham after he had permitted their use. He was also unhappy the Home Office had not completed tests on water cannons. (We strongly feel a water cannon that sprinkled the rioters would be useful and nearly always preferable to bullets). Newman felt the riot would not have been stopped by water alone in Tottenham.
3. He welcomes your crime prevention initiative and is thinking about his input for it.
4. The fundamental attack on the police in left wing and ethnic papers and in GLC propaganda must be tackled by Government. (We strongly believe we must research ways of answering this plea).

Willie Fittell
is providing a report
MAY 25/10

late news
Prime with
the Home Sec

Addition of
course will help.

JB.

HARTLEY BOOTH

POLICE POLICY?

JAN 73

SIR KENNETH WHELAN

The following information is to be used for the purpose of...

It is requested that you advise me of any changes...

Yours faithfully,

[Signature]

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