

# **AN ARRESTING IDEA**

**The Management of Police Services in Modern Britain**

Edited by Timothy Evans

Adam Smith Institute

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

As people become ever more concerned with higher levels of reported crime it is natural that new and innovative approaches to provision of police services are sought and scrutinized. This report provides a critical examination of current policing structures and goes on to discuss the scope for reform. It suggests that with the right policy environment British policing could be dramatically improved.

The report argues that while many private security firms currently provide a wide range of useful services, their delivery could be greatly enhanced if the much needed, and somewhat overdue, policy review gives due weight to the potential contribution of this sector. Government interference in the labour market — for example, the inability of employers adequately to vet employees — exemplifies the centralized regulation that directly damages service quality.

In analysing the organizational structure of the police, the report makes a number of recommendations, which, if implemented, would provide a more sophisticated and responsive service for citizens in today's community. As well as looking at the opportunities for greater local autonomy and flexibility, suggestions are made which would allow local police chiefs to work more closely with a variety of new groups within the broader labour market. In short, police chiefs should be free to draw upon private, non-state, security units and civilians for some policing tasks. Not only would this give them vital access to a highly flexible workforce, but it would release many police officers for those duties which cannot at present be expected to be provided by the developing private sector.

## **Outline of the Report**

The report begins by presenting a short historical overview of British police history. The point is made that while in recent times policing has been characterised by ever-higher levels of state expenditure and centralization, this has not always been the case. Within the last two centuries there have been many examples of successful non-state policing arrangements.

After providing a critical analysis of current police structures in the UK, and making the point that despite a decade of economic liberalism, the police service has been largely spared any reform of its state monopoly position, the report moves on to examine private sector involvement in other countries. The many examples of private security provision cited there serve to demonstrate some potential advantages of greater private sector involvement. The report concludes by arguing that more private sector involvement and more competition could improve the standard of the state police and improve the general keeping of the peace. In this context, specific proposals for British law enforcement are outlined.

## **The search for alternatives**

At the centre of the problem for the Police Service is the fact that while the crime rate appears to rise inexorably, local authorities and central government have to operate within an economic framework of financial restraint. Resource allocation to the police therefore not only implies difficult decisions, but is further complicated because the business of evaluating the success of the police is an imprecise and highly subjective matter. Because of its monopolistic, un-competitive structure, it operates all too easily in an environment where there is little or no yardstick for comparison against alternatives.

The report argues that for the sake of public safety, this situation has to be remedied. New structures must be sought, which allow for greater service evaluation, improved efficiency and a more flexible response to the increasing market demand for choice.

## 2 THE POLICE SERVICE: A SHORT HISTORY

by Simon McIlwaine

The word "Police" originally referred to the organization and government of the city. Aristotle defined it as:

"The good order, the government of the town, the support of the people, the first and greatest of all gifts."

The word first appeared in English in the 16th century and was used to mean "civil administration" in 1774 when "Commissioners of Police" were appointed in Scotland.

### Constables

The word "constable" goes back to Roman times, deriving from the Latin military expression "*Comes Stabuli*", the count of the stable; and then it came to be applied to such high military posts as the constable of a royal estate.

In the law-enforcement sense, constables were first mentioned in England in 1262, when they were synonymous with the tithingmen, headboroughs and borsholders — the Anglo-Saxon and Norman police. It was the Statute of Winchester (1285), which first directed walled towns to provide watchmen to supplement the constable, thus originating the principle of public policing, which prevailed until the 18th and 19th centuries. Although the watchmen would arrest any strangers found during the hours of darkness, the constable of this period was unpaid and wore no uniform.

Following the union of the English and Scottish crowns in 1603, the office of constable (in the modern sense) appeared in Scotland. Unlike England, constables in burghs and counties were paid for their duties and were appointed for a period of six months.

This system of "policing" fell, however, into disrepute. Watchmen (or 'Charleys' as they were colloquially known) were inefficient, often notoriously corrupt and had, by the 18th century, minimal impact on the prevention of crime and the apprehension of felons.

### Private Sector Alternatives

The historian Dr Stephen Davies<sup>1</sup> has observed that, by the turn of the 19th century, private alternatives to this ailing system of crime detection and prevention had evolved. Thus the years between 1750 and 1850 saw the development of a multitude of private agencies of law enforcement, ranging from the systematic use of newspaper advertising for the return of stolen property, to professional detectives and thief catchers.

The most significant were associations for the prosecution of felons. These were voluntary groups of citizens, which were set up initially to defray the considerable costs of mounting criminal prosecutions. As time passed they acquired a wide range of

functions, particularly crime prevention and insurance. The association members contributed to funds in proportion to their ability to pay: the members contributions were then used to pay for compensation for loss through theft or criminal damage, to recover stolen goods where possible, to cover the costs of criminal prosecutions and the compiling of information against known delinquents, and increasingly to finance permanent foot patrols or 'watches'.

Between 1744 and 1856 some 450 such associations were setup. By 1830, the larger associations, such as the Barnet Association, had effectively become successful private police forces. The evidence shows that they were providing a service to their members, which was both cheap and efficient, and that their membership was by no means simply confined to the well-heeled.

It is interesting to speculate how these free-market crime prevention mechanisms would have evolved had it not been for the introduction of state policing in its modern form, in the 19th century.

### **Scotland's First**

Contrary to popular belief, the first modern urban 'state' police force was established in Glasgow, not London. In 1778 a small uniformed professional police force of one inspector and six officers was formed to supplement the city guard. This became the Glasgow City Police in 1800.

The first official and uniformed police force in England was the police Horse Patrol that came under the control of the Home Office in 1813. It supplemented the Bow Street Patrol, a corps of plain-clothed detectives who acted on the instructions of the Metropolitan Stipendiary Magistrate.

In 1816, 1818 and 1822 committees were set up by Parliament to consider the creation of a uniformed, paid police force in London, but the idea was rejected as inimical to individual liberty. Nevertheless, a further committee was appointed by Sir Robert Peel in 1828 which paved the way to the Metropolitan Police Act 1829. This established a full-time, uniformed "professional" police force in the capital. (It is interesting to note that when today Conservatives tend to be seen as uncritical of the Police, Peel's proposals were implemented in the teeth of fierce opposition from the Tory backbenches. Many MPs feared that the new force would be used to spy on and harass innocent citizens).

### **National Measures**

The Lighting and Watching Act of 1833 was the first statute to deal with the establishment of paid police forces in England and Wales generally. It enabled, but didn't require boroughs to form forces along the lines of London's Metropolitan Police. However, this Act was replaced by the municipal Corporations Act 1835, which required boroughs to establish paid police forces. The 1835 Act applied, initially, to the 178 boroughs that had been granted royal charters of self-government.

Many expanding towns such as Birmingham, Bradford and Manchester had not been granted charters of incorporation at this time so they were not obliged to create a police force. By 1838 only about one half of the boroughs in England and Wales had established police forces and when the first Inspector of Constabulary was appointed in 1856 it was found that 13 boroughs were still without a police force.

In 1839 the County Police Act was introduced, known as the 'Permissive' Act. While it enabled (but did not require) counties to establish constabularies, only eight such forces were formed in 1839, twelve in 1840, and four in 1841. Public opinion had become so concerned with the cost of policing the counties, that only four more forces (1844, 1849 and two in 1851) were established in the next 15 years. Interestingly enough, about half the counties did not implement the 1839 Act at all.

The reluctance of many boroughs and counties to establish official police forces is clearly an indication that the absence of official constabularies did not mean that these areas were given over to mass disorder, plunder and mayhem. As we have noted, the absence of state police did not mean an absence of effective law enforcement. The growth of private and voluntary crimefighting agencies quite clearly was providing most of the population with a standard of law enforcement that was thought quite adequate.

Nevertheless, the County and Boroughs Police Act 1856 compelled all counties to establish police forces, and exchequer grants were payable to forces serving populations of more than 5,000 people. Unfortunately for local accountability, many small parish and borough forces merged with other forces in boroughs with a population of less than 10,000.

Another feature of the late 19th century policing map was the police forces that were established, under private Acts of Parliament by commercial concerns such as the dock companies and the various private railway companies. Officers of these forces were sworn in as Special Constables, but the financial burden of maintaining these forces fell on the enterprises concerned.

Examples of such private constabularies were the Great Central Railway Police, the London and South Western Railway Police, The Southern Railway Police, and the East Dock Park Police. As the various companies whose property they guarded were nationalized and amalgamated over time, so too these private police forces. Gradually came under the control of the state. Today the British Transport Police traces its origins from a myriad of such small private constabularies.

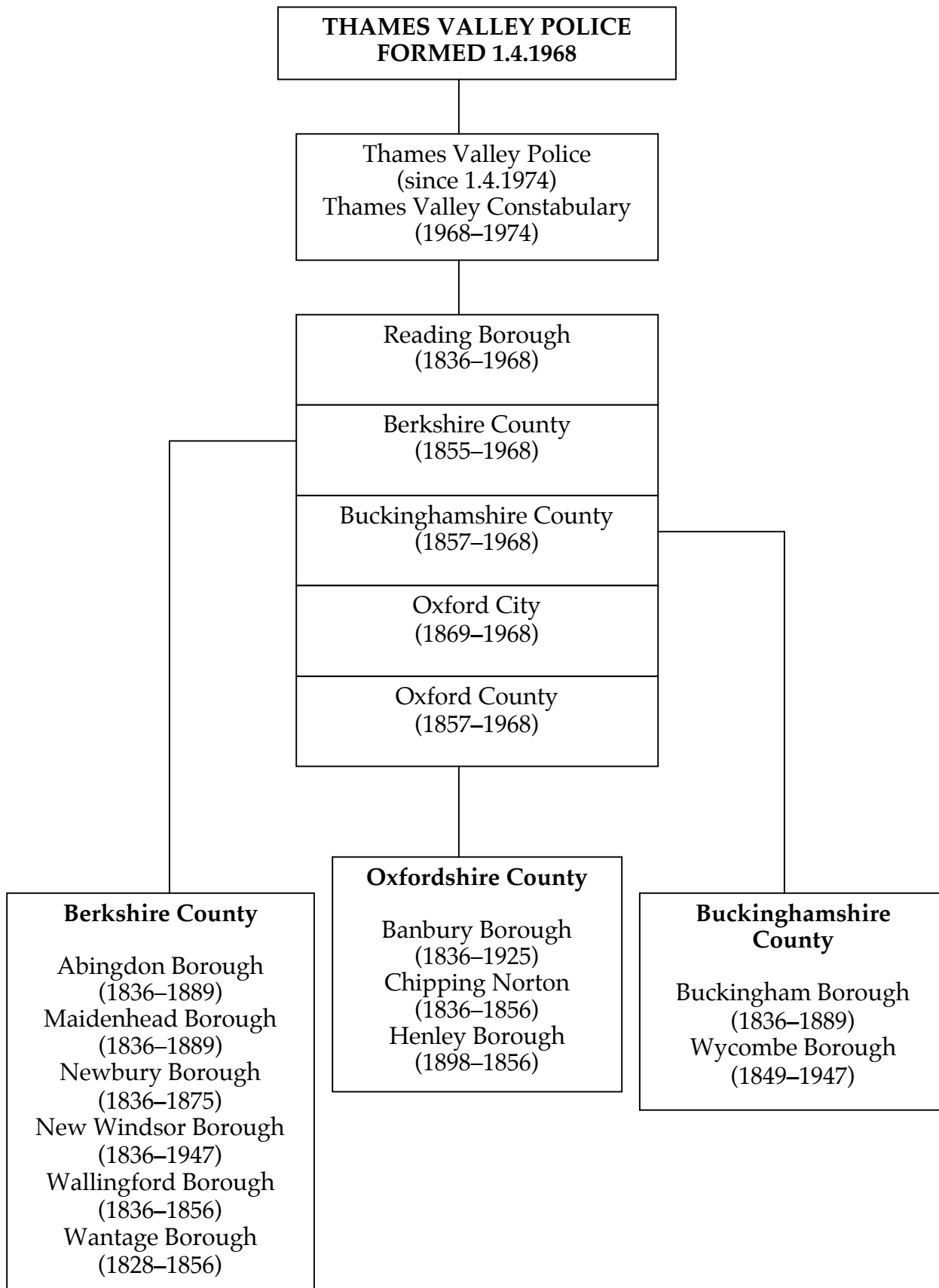
### **Postwar Amalgamation**

While by the end of World War Two there still existed a large number of borough police forces in addition to the county constabularies, the Home Office was keen to reduce the number of forces and to increase its influence over them. Accordingly, the Police Act of 1946 abolished 45 non-county borough police forces and empowered the Home Secretary to require county boroughs with a population of less than 10,000 to amalgamate their forces with the county force.

Although other provisions allowed the merger of two or more county or county borough forces voluntarily, it was not a popular option. Only seven such voluntary amalgamation schemes were made between 1947 and 1964. Compulsory amalgamations were made in 1948 (Brecon, Montgomery and Radnor), 1949 (Cheshire and Chester), 1951 (Leicestershire and Rutland) and 1958 (Cardiganshire and Carmarthenshire). Yet by as late as 1964 there were still a much larger number of local police forces than there are today.

The Royal Commission on the Police of 1961, taking the Royal Ulster Constabulary as its model, recommended the creation of "national" police forces for Scotland (Royal Scottish Constabulary) and England and Wales (Royal England and Wales Police). Although these recommendations were not implemented, the Police Act 1964 massively increased the Home Secretary's powers to enforce amalgamation, and was followed by compulsory amalgamations in mid-Anglia, the West Midlands, Northamptonshire, and Bedfordshire.

This move paralleled the reforms going on in a local government where — in the belief that larger authorities could achieve economies of scale — the old structure of small urban and rural district councils was replaced by one containing large new metropolitan authorities, regions and new 'supercounties' such as, Hereford and Worcester. In this new structure, encapsulated in the Local Government Act 1972, the overall number of police forces in England and Wales was much reduced. This was the beginning of the age of 'superforces' such as Thames Valley Police, the West Mercia Constabulary and West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police and so on. Today, proposals are currently under consideration at the Home Office for yet further amalgamations with a yet smaller number of regional constabularies.



## Emerging Problems

However, the somewhat problematic amalgamation process can be clearly illustrated in the creation of the Thames Valley Police (see diagram). This involved the disappearance of the Oxfordshire, Berkshire and Buckinghamshire county constabularies as well as the Reading and Oxford urban police.

The fact is that there is little evidence for the proposition that the increasing amalgamation of the police service has had a positive effect on the fight against crime. Of course, it is arguable that where forces were permitted to amalgamate with neighbouring forces, they might well do so if the potential benefits were large. Some of the amalgamations of small borough police forces serving small geographical areas, in the late 19th century, could be seen in this light.

On the other hand, the enforced amalgamations, which took place, especially in the 1960s, on the orders of the Home Office, undoubtedly did mean that some forces amalgamated in circumstances where they would not have felt it advantageous to do so. They were thus forced to amalgamate into forces that were larger than the level at which they would benefit from economies of scale. As a result the job of policing has in real terms become more expensive, with no evident increase in effectiveness in the fight against crime, amalgamated 'superforces' having grown in size, but becoming less efficient and more bureaucratic than their predecessors. Meanwhile, while their loss of the social identification with the communities they serve has increased their alienation from the public.

The second reason why the policy of reducing the number of forces appears to have undermined police effectiveness is that most crimes are committed by people who live in the geographical areas in question. This obviously excludes such phenomena as terrorism and organized criminal gangs. However, the crimes which most people fear, and which affect the quality of their daily lives, are the inherently local ones of mugging, assault, burglary, theft and sex offences. This pattern of criminality suggests that the decentralization of the greater part of the policing process, and perhaps a greater reliance on the local voluntary and private sectors, would better promote the safety of the public.

### 3 THE NEED FOR CHANGE

by Timothy Evans

Whenever it is suggested that a public service could be organized more efficiently, those who rely on it are naturally worried that 'improving efficiency' may be simply a euphemism for cutting costs. Concerns are heightened all the more when it is a sensitive service such as policing that is being scrutinised. The general public, fed on a daily news diet of rising crime figures and awed by the importance and specialist nature of police work, have tended to support increases in police budgets unquestioningly.

What the economist is really interested in, however, is not the extent to which costs can theoretically be cut, but the most cost-effective way of delivering a given standard of service. It is for politicians to decide the required service level after that we should all be searching out the most efficient way to provide it.

The test-bed of competition is an ally in this, because it is only when performance is checked against practical alternatives that real self-criticism is possible. Removed from the constant need to maintain a competitive edge which spurs the private-sector, the police service has found itself undermined by the same problems of other state monopolies; high and rising costs, top-heavy bureaucracy, a lack of flexibility, and a propensity to favour ever-greater increments in manpower. New working practices and methods are slow to be implemented because of the inherent conservatism of the structure the Service's monopoly status removes the incentive to respond to the new challenges and demands made by society.

To date, in acknowledging that problems exist, Chief Officers and state officials have endeavored to produce performance indicators within the Police Service largely to justify present and future claims on government funds. More man-hours on the beat indicates success within the context of a political policy to have more community policing; a better crime clear-up rate is taken to show, that law enforcement is improving overall.

The problem with such measures, however, is that they avoid the real core issue and are a diversion from the real debate. By discussing the problems in a marginal and superficial way, the need for a radical change in the structure, organization and administration of policing is never fully acknowledged. Instead, the budgets and the paperwork simply tend to increase while the public become ever more despondent.

Although the introduction of more elaborate performance indicators has been used in recent years by an economy-minded government, to test whether the taxpayer gets value for money, the fact is that a great deal still has to be done.

In attempting to deal with the challenges that lie ahead it is now time to undertake a radical re-examination of not only the Police Service itself but also the structure in which policing is generally provided.

## The Background

Although crime has dramatically risen in recent years, the last decade has also witnessed a major increase in manpower deployed throughout the criminal justice system, as government figures show.

	<b>89/90 Manpower</b>	<b>Increase % since 79/80</b>
<b>Police</b>	175,004	13
<b>Crown Prosecution Service</b>	5,543	{est. 1986}
<b>Courts</b>	12,093	12
<b>Probation</b>	12,092	35
<b>Prisons</b>	32,910	37

(Source: Tackling Crime, Home Office, London 1990, p.8.)

Police expenditure as a whole has risen sizably in recent years. While in 1977/8 the total expenditure by central and local government was 1,035 million pounds by 1988/9 this figure had risen to 3,825 million.<sup>1</sup>

However, despite ten years of increased spending, the police argue that it is manpower shortages, not their ineffectiveness, which now leaves 65 per cent of reported crimes unsolved.<sup>2</sup>

## The Issue of Value

A recent report leaked to the Association of London Authorities, and reported in the *Daily Telegraph* stated that each police constable deployed on the streets of London is now estimated to cost £150 a day plus overtime. The Metropolitan Police 'ready reckoner', used for calculating police costs for operations and activities pointed out that sergeants cost £177 a day while senior officers cost proportionally more, up to £336 a day for commanders<sup>3</sup>.

These figures produced by Scotland Yard's F2 (finance) branch as an 'easy-to-use' tool for senior police managers to evaluate in 'cold cash terms' any particular police operation, were significant because:

'It was the first time that the "true cost" of policing operations in the capital had been revealed.'<sup>4</sup>

While no private business could survive without comparatively evaluating their costs, performance and levels of service at every stage of the firm's development, the police, as a result of their operational and structural environment, have not had to do so. Because they have operated as a "public service" they have not by definition had to face the constant scrutiny of their record of value for money, which security and other firms in the independent sector face from customers every day.

There can be little doubt that if no major re-structuring is initiated then the Police Service's reputation will continue to decline. Instead, the private security market will simply continue to expand, further threatening the power and status of the Service. Continuing calls for ever more cash, personnel, and further regulation of the private security industry will not resolve the crisis in the long term.

### **The Structural Problems**

Structural problem areas are not difficult to identify. Like all monopoly services, investment levels, resource targeting, and general efficiency give rise to profound concerns.

**Transport:** For example, after police officers' pay, transport is the largest item of police expenditure and typically accounts for over 20 per cent of the remaining costs. A recent Audit Commission paper concluded:

“despite the function's importance to operations and the significant expenditure on it, senior police management has not generally given vehicle fleet management the high profile it warrants.”<sup>5</sup>

The report goes on:

“...there is scope in many forces for reducing the total cost of transport by up to 20%. One of the main problems is a lack of continuity in vehicle management, because police officers assigned to transport do not stay in the post long enough. Other problems arise from a rather bureaucratic and un-commercial approach to fleet management.”<sup>6</sup>

**Communications:** Regarding police communications rooms, which cost provincial police forces in England and Wales around £160m a year (equivalent to over 5% of police expenditure), another recent Audit commission report stated that:

“...few forces have specified the standards of service they expect. Fewer still monitor their actual performance. Most forces do not know how long operators take to answer calls from the public or the delay before patrol officers arrive at incidents.”<sup>7</sup>

The report, “*Calling All Forces: Improving Police Communications rooms*”, concluded that the variations in performance were dramatic across the country:

“The cost of police communications varies between forces from £1260 per police officer per annum in one force visited to nearly £2160 in another. Based on analysis of data from the study forces, there is potential to reduce costs nationally by around 15% — equivalent to £25m a year. This can be achieved by making more efficient use of staff and by increasing the use of civilians.”<sup>8</sup>

**Training:** Similarly, the management of police training has also been scrutinized by the Audit Commission. In December 1989 a report asserted that: "nationally there is scope for improving the responsiveness, effectiveness and efficiency of training." Poor resource use was evident,

"much of the accommodation for training is not ideal and many schools have surplus capacity while neighbouring forces have plans to expand their facilities."<sup>9</sup>

While such stories are only to be expected given the current noncommercial nature of these operations, analysis by investigators like the Audit Commission clearly demonstrate that simply allocating more money would not necessarily improve the service's performance. Instead, they suggest that there is a need for change in the structures of operation.

### **The Fear of Reform**

Given these assertions however, it is not surprising that "Policing for People — Not Profits" was the theme of a recent conference of the Police Federation, (representing police officers up to the rank of Chief Inspector). Understandably, fears were expressed that while the government was seeking to constrain expenditure on the police, it was also believed to be "moving tentatively towards allowing a bigger role for the private security industry", and as such was "putting unacceptable pressure on chief constables to extend civilisation because it is a cheaper option than increasing police strength".<sup>10</sup>

Highlighting the concern and conservatism of the Police Federation, the *Financial Times* reported:

"There could be no balance sheet in public service prevention and detection, Mr. Alan Eastwood, the federation's chairman, told his members, but in terms of value for money the public interest was handsomely in credit. Britain had become an infinitely more dangerous and crime-troubled society since 1979 and "if people are looking for evidence of value for money from the police, they only have to look at the yearly total of 17,000 assaulted officers to understand the true nature of policing in Britain as we enter the 1990's."<sup>11</sup>

The view that "there can be no balance sheet in public service prevention and detection" seems designed to exclude *any* rational assessment of costs and quality in service provision. Private sector companies though rarely regarded as agents of the public interest, cannot afford to operate in such a way: indeed, they prove that indeed a balance sheet can, and should, figure in providing the public with security. As a director of one such company put it:

"...this company is currently actively engaged in providing security services to the international market. The Directors believe that there is a considerable demand for high quality, trained and disciplined personnel in this particular market and this belief is borne out by the success that we are currently enjoying. The international competition is, however, very fierce and it has been

necessary for us carefully to cost our activities in order to price our services attractively. In this context, both our budgets and our cost/price structures are continually reviewed in the light both of experience and of market intelligence. Quality alone is not sufficient for success in our market. If we price our services incorrectly the market will find us wanting and we will fail.<sup>12</sup>

Because in the police service, the idea of competition and financial accountability is so alien, mismanagement and poor resource usage are logical consequences. Indeed, it is understandable that many police officers have been frustrated by such a public service conservatism, which merely serves to preclude innovative, dynamic and effective operational strategies.

### **The Opportunities**

While some criticize private security firms and attempt to defend the police service's record in optimal resource use, the fact is that the evidence lets them down. *The Times* for example, covering a report published by the Public Accounts Committee in the House of Commons, '*Control and Management of the Metropolitan Police Estate*', stated:

"Mismanagement of the £1bn Metropolitan Police estate — with more than 6,800 properties — was condemned in a report by the Tory dominated Public Accounts Committee. In one case, a £575,000 site in one of London's most expensive areas was used as a car park for 16 years after being bought for a new police station."<sup>13</sup>

Another finding was that one in five police stations were at the end of their useful lives and that 144 out of 188 stations were too small for operational requirements. At the current reconstruction rate of two stations a year — this means that each station would be 94 years old before it was replaced.

Detailing the poor levels of management it was not surprising that the MPs asserted:

"We consider that the poor condition of the Metropolitan Police's operational estate is unacceptable, and that this almost certainly hinders efficiency and effectiveness."<sup>14</sup>

According to the latest Audit Commission report on the police, only a quarter of all police work is covered by efficiency checks. The Commission found that in one force, 85 per cent of police action plans, aimed at improving community relations and combating a particular crime, did not include any way of measuring performance.

Commenting on the report, Howard Davies, the Commission's controller, said:

"An awful lot of measurement of police effectiveness could be done and the police have been somewhat coy about measuring their performance in the past. They should open themselves up more and be prepared to discuss actual figures and performance measures. Their only chance of tuning round the adverse trend in public confidence is to take the public into their confidence. This means saying more about what good policing is."<sup>15</sup>

## **The Time For Change**

If the Police are to provide a cost-effective service, which both combats crime and raises levels of public confidence, then new managerial and structural solutions have to be sought. More money is not the answer, because it simply falls into the existing inefficient machinery. As is the case with other state operations, the simple cry for more money avoids the core issues and often serves to feed the problem. What is needed is not only an examination of other possible modes of police operation, but a re-examination of the role, organization and methods of the Police Service.

## **4 THE SCOPE FOR PRIVATIZATION: BRITAIN AND THE INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE**

By Nicholas Elliott

### **BRITAIN**

The government already involves the private sector in normal policing tasks, and has sought to give it an expanded role more recently. The Home office has contracts with four private security firms to supply detention and escort service, for illegal immigrants. In its 1988 green paper, 'Private Sector Involvement in the Remand System' the Home Office proposed to consider contracting-out the court escort function normally discharged by the police. At Harwich docks, guards from the British Transport Police were replaced recently by private security guards sworn in as special constables. At the end of 1988, the merchant bank County NatWest was appointed to consider the options for reorganizing the Police National Computer, the Directorate of Telecommunications and the Forensic Science Service.

Some initiative has also been taken in reducing costs by using civilians to perform tasks normally undertaken by uniformed officers. The Home Office has identified photography, fingerprint examination, road safety, vehicle examination, driving and physical training instruction, personnel, and patrol room duties, as tasks that can be done by civilians rather than uniformed officers. West Mercia and West Midlands forces use civilian Administrative Support Units to process prosecution files and to do follow up inquiries. The Metropolitan Police have contracted out wheel-clamping and vehicle removal. Since 1979 the number of civilians doing police jobs has been increased by 17%.

### **The Security Industry**

Alongside this limited devolution of police jobs to civilian firms there has been a steady increase in the size of the private security sector. There are in fact more guards in the employment of private security companies than there are official policemen, and the same is true of Canada and the United States. The services provided by private security firms are wide-ranging and include mobile and foot patrols, guarding of cash-in-transit, electronic surveillance, store detectives, and private investigators. To some extent the private sector provides services very similar to those provided by the police, while other services are a specialization so that there is a division of labour between the public and private sectors.

### **Neighbourhood Patrol Scheme**

A notable development has been the proliferation of neighbourhood schemes, where residents take the initiative in patrolling their own locality. A survey by *Police Review* found that there are over one thousand private patrols operating in Britain. Some of the patrols surveyed were run by local residents, some by private security firms paid for by businesses or residents, and some by local councils<sup>1</sup>.

On the Brunton Park and Melton Park estates in Gosforth, Newcastle, residents started their own patrol to deter thieves. Pairs of residents patrol the area in cars between 11pm and dawn, reporting anything suspicious to the police. The patrols were initiated when a neighbourhood watch scheme failed to reduce crime levels. In three months of patrols only three break-ins occurred, compared to a previous annual average of 130. As a result, these residents have found their home contents insurance premiums reduced by 35 per cent.

At Grimethorpe in south Yorkshire 82 residents set up a patrol to counter increasing crime in the area, they patrol at night with torches and call the police if they encounter any suspicious activity.

The sources of demand for private security are quite varied. At Eyemouth near Berwick-upon-Tweed, fishermen and businesses pay for a two-man patrol with radios to watch over their boats and business premises.

Residents of Sunningdale in the Surrey commuter belt pay a private security firm £250 a year to patrol their neighbourhood. Neighbourhood watch was not a practical option for the area because houses are too far apart for residents to have any effective surveillance over adjacent houses; yet the area is vulnerable to burglars because there is a nearby escape route onto the M3 and the M25. Executive Security, who operate the patrol, use six full-time guards, with dogs, vans, and two-way radios.

Private security guards patrol the Calthorpe Estate in Edgbaston, charging 3,000 residents 40 pence a week. The guards wear blue uniforms, carry two-way radios, have marked vans, and the use of dogs.

Residents of a street at Blackfell in Tyne & Wear hired a private security firm to cut break-ins and car thefts. One resident explained that, "The police would come round after a crime was reported but usually could do little more than take the details from the injured party and offer sympathy."<sup>2</sup>

Retailers in Southend employ a private firm to provide High Street security, through surveillance cameras.

Leeds football ground use a private firm to patrol the ground on match days and to expel difficult fans.

### **Local Authority Security**

Local councils around the country use private security guards. The *Police Review* survey found 239 patrols operated by private firms on behalf of local councils and 28 patrols staffed by council employees. Bromley council in London was the first to use a private firm to patrol housing estates. The council hired Sentinel Security to provide patrols in crime-ridden estates. Patrols of shopping centres and precincts are becoming more common, and there are thought to be 75 in existence now.

At Sefton in Merseyside over 100 officers were at one time used by the council to secure council property, paid for under the Community Programme of the manpower Services Commission (NBC). These security officers were equipped with green berets and uniforms, carried radios and patrolled in Ford Fiestas.

The 100-acre North Lynn industrial estate in Norfolk had been plagued by more than 50 break-ins a year. With pressure from businesses on the estate the council used NBC funds to install infra-red cameras operated by eight disabled people. According to *Police Review*, 'overnight, crime on the estate almost disappeared.'

In 1985 the Cinnamon Brow Community Association in Padgate took on 40 unemployed people to patrol the local area. The patrols proved successful in reducing crime. The scheme has now been taken over by the Warrington Corporation.

Other councils also take on their own non-police security guards. The London Borough of Camden employs 18 plain-clothed patrolmen to secure housing estates, libraries and administrative offices. Camden also employs 17 guards to provide a private cash-in-transit service in escorting payrolls.

At Livingston in Scotland, 42 council guards equipped with radios patrol housing and shopping precincts. The patrol is run by a former police sergeant who reports that 'residents say they feel safer going out at night because of our patrols.'<sup>3</sup>

In the London Borough of Wandsworth uniformed guards with radios watch over council buildings and housing and check on work done by contractors. Wandsworth has also set up its own parks police to watch over Battersea Park, Tooting Common, local cemeteries, leisure centres and a hostel for the single homeless. These guards have cars, radios and dogs, and the power to make arrests. They are dressed similarly to the official police, in dark blue with flat-topped hats. Up to January 1989 they had made over 90 arrests for offences ranging from drug trafficking to fishing without a permit.

## **OVERSEAS EXAMPLES**

The forms of private enterprise policing found in other countries can be dealt with in two categories:

- (i) Collaborative ventures with the official police and contracted-out duties;
- (ii) Initiatives taken by private individuals independently of the official police.

Many of the examples of privatized policing are drawn from the United States, where there is a strong tradition of private individuals playing a role in the enforcement of the law, and privatized policing has also been more extensively written about than in most other countries.

### **Collaborative ventures/Contracting-out**

The practice of using private security firms to do police work, or work alongside the police, is becoming increasingly common in the developed world.

**Licensing enforcement:** In Switzerland the private company Securitas employs 1,700 guards throughout the country to provide police back-up services. Securitas have contracts with the police and with municipalities for such services as visiting restaurants and bars to ensure compliance with licensing laws, and patrolling car-parks and railway property.

**Alarm response:** The great majority of calls from household alarm systems are false, and responding to them can waste many police man-hours.

In San Diego, California, the police use private security firms to respond to alarm calls, saving on what used to be 'one of the largest drains on manpower.' Some of the private guards are armed, and some are not. On arriving at the property, they contact the police department to let them know the status of the call. The San Diego Chief of Police, William blender, describes how — "our liaison has enhanced the lifestyle of San Diegans. The partnership maintained by both elements has provided the types of activities that neither party has the manpower nor the resources to provide separately."

In Amarillo, Texas, the local police authorized a private security company to respond to alarm calls and were saved the trouble of responding to an average of eight false alarm calls per day, saving approximately 3,428 man-hours. The company also benefited by making new client contacts.

**Car tow-away:** Nearly three-quarters of American cities have contracted-out the removal of illegally parked cars, just as London and other local authorities do in the UK. New York City, for example, contracts with a private firm to tow vehicles away, and then charges the owners a fee to cover the cost.

**Protection of public property:** A 1986 survey by Hallcrest Inc. found that 44% of American law enforcement officials contract-out the patrolling of public property. San Diego, Los Angeles County, Norwalk in California, and St Petersburg in Florida have all contracted out the patrolling of public parks. Housing projects are patrolled by private guards under contract in San Diego, in Lexington, and in New York City. Contracting-out of public buildings and grounds security is practiced in Boston, Denver and Fort Collins, Colorado, Houston, Los Angeles County, Pensacola, Florida, New York City, San Francisco, Seattle, and the states of California and Pennsylvania.

In Fresno in California, 21 private security firms provide security at shopping centres, in apartment complexes, at concerts and sporting events, and at the city convention centre and zoo. Some firms provide their services to the city for as little as \$10 per hour, compared to the average cost of \$59 per hour if the police were to do the job. One Fresno firm, Interstate Guard Service, is offering security services to the nearby city of Orange Cove at a cost of \$28 per hour, where the existing police cost \$48 per hour.

Los Angeles County awarded 36 contracts for guarding services between 1980 and 1984 and "county data show that the cost was 34 percent greater when the work was performed by county personnel".<sup>4</sup>

Within Europe, private security firms in Bavaria are used to patrol the Olympic Park grounds, university sports arenas, a mental hospital in the suburbs of Munich, and the Munich subway.

Prisoner custody is contracted-out in parts of Maryland and California. In New York City and Alabama private firms escort prisoners going for hospital treatment. Other policing functions frequently contracted out in the United States are communications-system maintenance, police training, laboratory services, radio dispatching, traffic control and parking.

**Whole-service policing:** In a few instances, the whole policing of an area has been contracted out to a private firm. The first city to try this was Kalamazoo in Michigan. In the 1950s, a private firm was given responsibility for street patrols and for the apprehension of traffic offenders.

One of the most successful examples is Reminderville in Ohio. In 1981 Reminderville and neighbouring Twinsburg Township were advised that they would have to pay \$180,000 per year for the continuation of police cover by the local county. Instead, they took on Corporate Security Inc. a local security firm run by Arthur Robataille, formerly police chief in nearby Aurora. Corporate Security agreed to provide patrols and emergency response for \$90,000 per year, half the cost of the official police. The firm also offered to increase the number of patrol cars in the area to two, from the one previously operated by county police. And they improved the emergency response time from the previous 45 minutes to 6 minutes.

Part of the reason for the lower cost of the service operated by Corporate Security was that they did not insist on flashy equipment. They used much cheaper secondhand patrol cars, and secondhand radar speed detectors purchased for \$350 compared to the price of \$2,600. They patrolled with only one officer in each car, saving on the cost of standard two-officer patrols. The firm was motivated to find cost-cutting measures because they were paid a flat yearly fee, and because they wanted to retain the contract by giving value for money. Nevertheless, adverse media coverage of this radical experiment disturbed local officials who then set up their own city police department at higher cost in 1983.

Another example of fully contracted out police services is from Oro Valley, Arizona. There, fire fighting, police services, alarm response, and paramedic operations were provided to 1,200 residents by the company Rural/Metro. The contract was agreed in 1975, with a flat yearly fee of \$35,000 to be paid to Rural/Metro, a saving over what the same state services would have cost.

The company agreed to a number of conditions giving the town control over their operation. They agreed to establish a police headquarters in Oro Valley, to keep records according to state guidelines, and to supervise and assume all liability for their employees. The town authorities retained ultimate authority, able to override Rural/Metro if they felt it necessary.

During their time in securing Oro Valley, the company employed some innovative operating methods. They sometimes patrolled in four-wheel drive vehicles so that difficult roads and sandy areas could be more easily negotiated. They initiated a dark house scheme whereby residents who planned to be away could leave their addresses with the company and their property would then be checked twice every 24 hours. Burglary rates in the area fell from 14 a month to an average of 0.7 a month.

However, the Rural/Metro contract encountered opposition from the Arizona Law Enforcement Officers Advisory Council. The Council refused to allow the firm's employees on its training programmes and refused to grant accreditation. Then a state attorney questioned the legality of the whole arrangement. With-costly legal action looming, Rural/Metro agreed to transfer their policing duties to official town police, with the company reducing its role to the supply of vehicles and equipment.

Notably, when the town authorities took over full provision again, many costs increased. One change was to replace the civilian employees of Rural/Metro with uniformed officers on higher salaries. By 1982 the police budget in Oro valley was \$241,000, when Rural/Metro had done the job for \$35,000.

Other examples of places which have fully contracted out police services are Buffalo Creek in West Virginia and Indian River in Florida.

**Police Assistants:** One other interesting experiment from the United States is the use of "police assistants", partly trained civilians who do some of the less-skilled work of policing. A Law Enforcement Administration survey found that the average cost of employing police assistants is 49% less than that of employing regular police officers.

At Worcester, Massachusetts, federal aid was used to establish a programme for police assistants. Some of the assistants went through police academy without doing firearms or self-defence courses, while others were sent on shorter courses and then assigned to an experienced officer, being sent on the full police training course later. The assistants were set apart from the regular force by having different uniforms, badges and cars, having no guns, and having no more legal powers than any civilian.

Established police officers were at first skeptical about the value of police assistants, but soon appreciated the spreading of their workload. As Captain John Hughes of the Worcester force explained: "The complaints didn't last long ... when the officers realized that instead of having to detour traffic and take care of injured kids, they could concentrate their efforts on patrolling."<sup>5</sup> The assistants were eventually able to take on 30% of police duties including dispatching, writing reports, dispensing parking tickets, and paramedic duty. The scheme lasted from 1976 to 1981, when, under pressure of budget cuts civilians were laid off.

The police department in Scottsdale, Arizona, have a police assistant scheme under which assistants respond to non-crime calls. The assistants have to meet the same entry requirements as full police officers, but are given half the amount of training. It has been estimated that the assistants save the Scottsdale police about \$100,000 and 2,500 man hours per year compared to the cost of using fully qualified officers to do the same jobs.

Another example comes from Miami in Florida where police assistants direct traffic at accidents, write reports, administer first aid, and carry out crime prevention programmes. The assistants are given ten weeks of classroom training, and then training on the job for seven weeks with a senior officer.

Beavercreek, Ohio, has a programme called 'Citizens On Preventive Patrol'. Volunteers receive an 80-hour police assistants training course and are used to support the local police. The volunteers, uniformed but unarmed, carry out business security checks, vacation house checks, and respond to look-outs. They also patrol the two city-owned parks. Funding for the programme came from private donations, from the Crime Prevention Unit budget, and from the volunteers themselves. Several arrests have been attributed to the vigilance of the volunteers, including the capture of a major radar detector theft ring. Police Chief Eric Sernt praises the programme for "freeing officers to attend to police duties, while allowing the department to provide additional services to the community."<sup>6</sup>

## Private Initiatives

It is difficult to provide a comprehensive survey of the extent and growth of security initiatives taken by private individuals abroad. However, some evidence and examples from the United States will give a good idea of the range of things which are done in other countries.

One growing form of private initiative is that undertaken by homeowners associations. These are organizations of residents, who co-operate to provide local services, sometimes within the terms of rules laid down in property deeds. There are estimated to be over 90,000 of these associations in the United States. According to the Community Associations Institute, 25% of them provide manned security for their members, and 15% provide electronic surveillance. Street closure is one tactic used by homeowners associations to drive out crime from an area. In St. Louis, Missouri, for example, many associations have blocked off their streets to through traffic. The finding has been that this improves the cohesion of a neighbourhood and makes unwanted visitors more conspicuous, and a study by Newman <sup>7</sup> found evidence of a subsequent fall in burglary rates. Patrols of residents occur in many cities: The Rand Corporation found examples in Boston, Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Los Angeles, Newark, New Orleans, Norfolk and San Jose.

In common with Britain, businesses and householders have also turned to professional security firms in recent years. Residents of East Graceland in Chicago hired a private security firm to drive out gang warfare from their neighbourhood. They took on Security Enforcement Services for two months in 1989 for a charge of \$8,000. Rather than strong-arm tactics, the company used intelligence to rid the area of crime. They became familiar with the known trouble spots and offenders, as well as with residents. They videotaped illegal activities such as vandalism and drug dealing, and then handed the tapes over to the official police.

Allstate Security Industries, the same firm which provides alarm response in Amarillo, also run a neighbourhood patrol program. In the downtown business district the firm keep one guard on patrol at all times. Allstate's guards are trained in first-aid and are armed. Besides foot patrols they offer a special vacation service in which mail and newspapers are collected, and homes are checked for leaks or other problems. Guards even water plants and feed pets if requested. Two other innovative services are offered to local householders: an escort service for elderly women, and a 24-hour emergency helpline. The helpline relieves the police of responses to minor emergencies and prowler calls.

The CityCenter project and surrounding area in Fort Worth are patrolled by a 50 man patrol funded by the owners of the Center. The security guards carry out surveillance with 150 hidden cameras. They mount foot patrols and mobile patrols in Suzuki jeeps. The guards have made some citizen's arrests, including at two bank robberies. Fort Worth police chief Thomas Windham looks favourably on CityCenter Security: "They do not police the public area in the same sense that the Fort Worth Police Department does, but they do perform a tremendous public service."<sup>8</sup>

The most unusual and enduring example of private initiative comes from San Francisco. The city is divided into approximately 80 'beats' which are franchised by the Police Commission to 'patrol specials' deputized with peace officer powers (one step down from police officers). The specials are charged between \$15,000 and \$250,000 for their

beats, and the money is recouped by the owners through contracts with local businesses and residents. The patrol specials must pass a rigorous selection procedure, including an investigation into their backgrounds, before being sent on an arrest and firearms course at the police academy. Beat owners buy their own equipment, and some have several patrolmen in their employment. The specials report to one of nine district stations in the city, and are obliged to deal with all calls, not just those from their own clients. The specials must answer to the Police Commission for their conduct, and are keenly aware of the need to maintain their reputation and to avoid insurance costs incurred from carelessness or mistakes.

Beat owners arrange their patrols to coincide with the most crime-prone times of the day. The arrangements are flexible: some of their clients ask for patrols only during the night hours, while others, like the Japan Trade Center, pay for a 24-hour service. One beat officer, Lung Xai Chiu, argues that the difference between beat officers and the official police is that:

“With the city police, if you're dissatisfied with their service all you can do is complain. Patrol specials? You can fire us.”<sup>9</sup> The specials cost nothing for San Francisco taxpayers, and they have endured since the 1850s.

## **Conclusion**

The international evidence shows that law enforcement can be provided efficiently by the private sector, either independently or in direct collaboration with the official police. Of course, some of the examples cited here could not practically be repeated in Britain. Even so, some applications can be made and many lessons can be drawn.

International experience shows that contracting-out of police services can be taken much further than it has so far in Britain.

The evidence shows that individual citizens are capable and responsible enough to take steps to protect their own neighbourhoods, and that such initiatives are on a rising trend.

Finally, the international evidence shows that an expanding private sector in policing can be compatible with a more efficient government police force. This evidence should reassure those who are startled by the thought of private-sector law enforcement.

## 5 PUBLIC SAFETY: RESPONSIVE SOLUTIONS THROUGH CHOICE

by Timothy Evans, Nicholas Elliott, and Simon McIlwaine

### THE POLICE SERVICE

A number of opportunities exist to improve the quality and efficiency of police.

#### Decentralization

At present, not only does the Home Office control police force budgets, but to a great extent, the actual utilization of resources. Yet, an increasing number of Chief Constables have argued that they are far better placed to manage expenditure, and therefore should have a bigger say in the process. Some experimentation in local management may well provide some useful new initiatives.

The Chief Constable of South Wales, Robert Lawrence, for example, has argued with regard to capital expenditure on property:

'In common with other enterprises which have their roots in Victorian times, the Police Service possess many buildings which are not suited by design or location to meet the demands of the late 20th century. In addition, such premises are often costly to maintain.

On the positive side, many of these buildings occupy large sites, which are of value to commercial undertakings, If it were permissible to sell these properties and apply the proceeds to current needs, there would be the opportunity to provide modern accommodation more in tune with current demands, reduce overall maintenance costs and utilize any residual funds to finance capital expenditure such as "information technology"<sup>1</sup>

Because Chief Constables are more aware of local problems and local demands it seems logical that they should have more power to decide how their budgets are spent. To encourage thrift and improve resource targeting some sizeable fraction of the savings made would have to be left at the disposal of the local force.

Again, it would be reasonable that Chief Constables should be given the discretionary power, and financial autonomy, to hire private security guards whenever and wherever they feel appropriate. Given the evidence, it is quite likely that senior officers would choose to hire such personnel to patrol the worst crime spots, like some council estates, in a deterrent role.

## **Civilianization**

The aim of civilianization is to exploit differential unit labour costs in order to release Police officers engaged in support activities to do the jobs that only they can do by virtue of their legal powers and extensive training.

The potential for civilianization is considerable. The Audit Commission, in a recent report, recommended the widespread employment of civilians in clerical, administrative and support duties. Although some progress in this area is visible, the variation in civilian-occupied posts between forces remains large. The Commission suggests that a police force with around 800 constables and 100 civilians might manage to increase its front-line strength by up to 50 without any increase in overall expenditure.

In Britain and especially in the United States, the trend towards civilianization is increasingly evident in the activity of radio-dispatching. In communications/operations rooms, civilians are commonly employed to answer telephones, take messages, and dispatch officers. In addition they update the relevant computer held records.

In police stations many activities currently administered by expensively-trained police officers could be performed by civilians. For example, civilian message-switch operators could not only update information bulletins routinely sent out by police station duty officers, but with suitable software they could also undertake much of the report-writing that regularly removes police officers from operational duty for long periods of time.

Instead of individual officers laboriously writing up crime reports, details could be dictated to a civilian operator directly. The operator could then key the information into the computer and circulate it quickly, producing as much hard copy as required. Fixed capital cost aside (which over time is minimal) an extended reform of this kind introduced with economies of scale could release many trained officers back into sectional strength without any major increase in manpower expenditure.

Another effective and useful reform would be to civilianize the maintenance and supervision of holding facilities for people in police custody. It does not require lengthy police training or wide legal powers to look after prisoners held in designated police stations. A more expedient discharge of this function could be facilitated by having dedicated civilian custody officers trained and invested with the necessary prison-officer type powers to accept people into custody, preserve their welfare and keep custody records.

The first step is to catalogue the various functions carried out by the police. This demarcation could then isolate the many specialized tasks that are suitable for civilianization. To an extent, The Police and Criminal Evidence Act of 1984 began this process: in clarifying some of the powers and procedures for carrying out Police duties, the Act lends itself to the adaptation of having less expensively trained civilians actually carrying out many of the jobs presently consuming the time of professional officers.

## **Contracting-out**

While in recent decades the police service has been increasingly regarded as the only omnipresent emergency / social service, this has meant that it has been ascribed duties which do not easily fit with its prime responsibility which is the "protection of life and property".

So as to enable the police service to fully utilize its specialized training, there are several tasks which could be diverted from its responsibility.

The areas of police work that could be contracted-out to private companies include: the registration procedures associated with aliens, the escorting of abnormal loads, the surveillance of motorway traffic, the provision of security at courts, and the service and execution of process.

The police service operates a number of ancillary functions which, although they involve a level of police expertise, could easily be made available to other private agencies without undue difficulty. Driver training, communications training, physical training and photography and printing, could all be contracted out and savings made. On the Audit Commission figures, the average saving yielded when a private contractor is brought in to perform a service function is around 22%, so there may well be improvements of similar order in police ancillary services.

## **Police Specials**

A reform of the Special Constabulary combined with better integration into individual police forces could lead to beneficial results in improving policing whilst also holding down costs.

Because of the voluntary and thankless nature of the job, the service has been progressively neglected over time. The decline in their numbers, from 118,000 in 1938 to just under 15,000 in 1981, is a clear indication of the scale of loss. A key problem is that some professional officers believe that Specials have little application in law enforcement.

To reverse this trend and provide a more important role for the Special Constabulary, the Police Service could learn from the armed services. Since 1981, the role of Volunteer Reservists received renewed professional attention and stimulated by the introduction of an Annual Bounty of £200, many civilians with the relevant skills were recruited into the Territorial Army. Encouraged by incremental payments to undergo more training, better attendance levels were achieved over time.

To achieve similar results within the Police Service, payments would be made to Specials conditional upon their training, compatibility, and levels of attendance. Specials could be used not only to spread the police presence on the streets, but they would be well placed to also takeover enquiry bureau, investigate minor traffic accidents and be engaged in technical and driving support duties.

Again, Specials could be used to refer calls for service to other more appropriate public agencies and thereby reduce the amount of time spent by professional officers engaged in social work and problems of an essentially non-criminal, non-police, nature.

After a specified length of service the more experienced Specials could then be promoted to the rank of 'Police Assistants', thereby attracting more responsibility, a larger annual bounty, and enhanced status. As a result of their proven record such personnel could be entrusted to take a much more active role in both crime prevention and detection.

For example, by liaising with Neighborhood Watch coordinators, they could undertake to patrol troubled areas both in uniform and in an information-gathering role in plain clothes.

Well-planned reform along these lines creates the prospect of more responsive policing at modest cost. While it does not entail the replacement of professional police officers, it does offer a cheaper means of reducing the burdens placed on the police service. Such a reform would release regular officers to engage in a more intensive campaign against serious crime.

### **New Methods**

There can be no doubt that significant savings could be made within the Police Service by considering, experimenting with, and evaluating new operating methods.

For example, in the area of the use of patrol cars, one important question is whether to assign one or two officers per car. The common argument against one-man patrols is the inherent lack of backup when a crime occurs. However, contrary to expectation, in 1977 the results of an intensive survey of one-man versus two-man cars in the US concluded that the advantages of two-man patrols were negligible<sup>2</sup>

The experiment consisted of dividing city police into 22 one-man and 22 two-man cars, assigned evenly throughout San Diego. While careful records were kept on all aspects of their operations for one year, it was found that the overall performances of the units was about the same. Although backup assistance was required by one-man cars more often than two-man cars, it was not found that this justified the presence of the extra officer in the car from the outset of the patrol. The cost of the two-man patrol was 83% higher than the equivalent one-man patrol system.

A further study conducted by the Sheriff's Department of Los Angeles was concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of different vehicles. Again, it was concluded (contrary to all expectations) that on a wide test including slow and high speed performance, handling, reliability and instrument performance, small compact vehicles are best suited to police work. Indeed, the full size sedan commonly used in different US states came bottom in the test of five very different cars.

Similarly, changes in shift patterns and the mix between manpower and technological innovation can also enhance police effectiveness and reduce costs. Cutting down on hundreds of hours that officers typically spend in court waiting to testify as witnesses could be possible by a much more business-oriented relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service and the courts. By rationalizing traffic accident cases and the majority of petty theft cases so as to bunch them together, a great deal of time and money could be saved. Instead of officers waiting interminably long hours they could simply be 'paged' when required.

Another radical improvement could be made by scheduling patrol shifts more in accordance with varying demands. Since the evening hours usually generate far more calls than other times of the day, the adoption of overlapping shift plans, particularly if related to shopping and licensing hours, could permit increases in the number of on-duty officers without increasing the overall size of the force.

An obvious but less tangible means of holding down costs and increasing police effectiveness could also lie in exercising greater discipline in assigning officers to calls and in deploying officers to work in areas where they have greater motivation and incentive to produce results. Just as ownership encourages more responsibility to look after the thing that is owned, so there is naturally more of a vested interest to preserve the peace and welfare of one's own home beat than if the officer merely walked a 'foreign' patch.

### **The Active Citizen**

Some are opposed to private sector involvement in policing and criminal justice because they believe that it is the state's responsibility to maintain law and order. Indeed, is it not part of the definition of government that it has a monopoly on the use of force?

However, in the words of James Stewart, Director of the American Institute of Justice:

“Although law enforcement is rooted in constitutional principles, the responsibility of government to ensure security need not necessarily mean that government must provide all the protective services itself.”<sup>3</sup>

Resistance to involving private individuals in the maintenance of law and order, although very common, is out of tune with our political tradition, as Michael Trend argues in *The Spectator*:

“Any hint of a local group of civilian residents wishing to contribute to an active role in local policing is most strenuously discouraged. Why this should be when the original idea of our police force, unlike those which grew up in police states, was simply to put citizens in uniform to protect their own and therefore everybody else's interests — not to create a paramilitary world of police and civilians — is something that many find it hard to understand.”<sup>4</sup>

While it may seem that it is only the police who ensure that laws are observed, that individuals play the greatest role in keeping order, just in the course of going about their daily business. As urban analyst Jane Jacobs writes:

“The first thing to understand is that the public peace the — sidewalk and street peace — of cities is not kept primarily by the police, necessary as police are. It is kept by an intricate, almost unconscious, network of voluntary controls and standards among the people themselves, and enforced by the people themselves.”<sup>5</sup>

If we agree with this, then it becomes apparent that private individuals have always, and will always, be instrumental in the maintenance of law and order.

## Self-help Groups

As crime rates continue to rise, and police protection is seen as lacking it is not surprising that there is increasing pressure from citizens to set up self-help law enforcement groups.

Perhaps the most inspiring example of such activity has been the New York "Guardian Angels", established in 1978 by a hard-working, individualistic young man, Curtis "Rock" Sliwa. Originally "The Magnificent 13 Subway Safety Patrol", and today better known as the "Guardian Angels", Sliwa's brainchild now has over 700 members in such cities as Los Angeles, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Stamford (Connecticut), Jersey City, Hoboken and Newark.

The Angels patrol the worst and poorest sections of their cities, the subways and back alleys ignored or neglected by the state police. Unarmed, but highly disciplined and trained in the martial arts, they are regarded by many as having brought a worthy safety into previously lawless areas.

In the US, like the UK, the Angels were treated with almost total hostility by the law enforcement establishment. By contrast, the mass of ordinary people greeted them with enthusiasm. Public opinion polls and revealed their overwhelming public support, so that politicians and police have now been forced to come to a *modus vivendi* with the Angels.

The law enforcement establishment in Britain were likewise outraged when the Guardian Angels established a presence on the London Underground system, though the general public seem to appreciate their presence, particularly in the light of what are perceived to be inadequate levels of official policing and staff numbers.

## Private Security

Much criticism has been directed at the private security industry, and calls have been made for it to be regulated. Critics argue some private security firms by their nature attract undesirable characters and vet them inadequately, that they are corrupt, and that the growth of private security poses a threat to civil liberties. What is lacking is any comprehensive and impartial evidence about these claims. Much of what is presented as evidence is anecdotal. The private security industry might feel justified in claiming, as do the police, that there will always be "bad apples."

One problem in resolving this is that the private security industry is bound by the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974). This Act allows for convictions of up to two and a half years imprisonment to be discounted if the offender stays within the law for a set period afterwards. Consequently, security employers are limited in checking the backgrounds of job applicants. A number of professions and trades are exempt from the Act, including policemen, servicemen, prison warders, probation officers, traffic wardens, teachers in further education, proprietors of private schools, youth club workers, managers or directors of insurance companies, abortionists, firearms dealers, barristers, doctors, dentists, vets, nurses, opticians, and pharmaceutical chemists. For these trades and professions, job applicants are asked to disclose past offences, and failure to do so incurs risk of dismissal or revocation of licences. One way to enable the security industry to improve the reliability of its employees would be to add it to this exempt list, which can be done by the Home Secretary, without legislation.

Additional regulation, on the other hand, may not achieve the desired consequences. It is often advocated without any consideration of the economic consequences, though there is a considerable literature on this subject<sup>6</sup>, which shows that large firms gain because they are spared the competition of smaller or more innovative competitors. If this were to happen in the private security industry it would mean a poorer deal for consumers, with less competition for business, less choice, less innovation, and higher prices.

Another issue is the public-choice problem. Once the regulation is in place, there is every incentive for established firms to lobby for it to be tightened. The benefits to them are concentrated, whereas the costs of tighter regulation are borne in small amounts by thousands of consumers. Because the benefits are concentrated, this warrants the use of large resources in lobbying.

There is also the danger of producer capture, the situation when a regulatory body comes to represent the interests of the producers in the industry that it is regulating. This problem often arises because experts are needed to conduct regulation, and experts are only found in the industry that is being regulated. Who would staff a regulatory body for the private security industry? If its officers were taken from the industry itself, then there is the danger that they would associate too much with the interests of the producers.

Consumer demand for security is certain to carry on growing. Increasing affluence gives us more property to protect, and the money to pay for its protection. More people are now willing to take steps for their own security: there is less willingness to depend on the government sector. Private companies in a market have to provide efficient and cost effective services, and the entrepreneur who wants to survive in the long term understands the importance of developing a good reputation. With this in mind an increasing number of companies are coming forward who do understand the importance of 'service'.

### **An Example**

An illustration of the opportunities and the problems in private security comes from Major Jonathan Titley, formerly of the 6th Queen Elizabeth's Own Gurkha Rifles, who launched Gurkha Security Guards (UK) Ltd earlier this year. Titley explains his motives as a businessman as follows:

"I thought we could kill two birds with one stone. As well as raising standards, we would give proper work to Gurkhas who have given such tremendous service to the British Army... They have all done at least 12 years in the colours, but they are still young and fit. They are ideal security guards — brave, completely apolitical and impossible to bribe."<sup>7</sup>

Gurkha Security Guards (UK) Ltd were set up privately in response to House of Commons Select Committee criticism of private security firms, and with no objection from either the Home Office or the Ministry of Defence. But the Department of Employment then rejected their applications for UK work permits. A spokesman explained:

“The post of security guard does not meet the skill criteria of the work permit scheme. Permits are given only for posts requiring professional qualifications, substantial administrative responsibility at a senior level or rare technical skill.”<sup>8</sup>

If we wish to improve the standard of service provided by the private security industry, it is essential that the industry should be viewed as a highly skilled profession, and treated accordingly, of course. Unfortunately, the private security industry is treated with much suspicion by public-sector practitioners for whom it is clearly a potential source of competition and a threat. This is the case even when the organization involved has credentials as strong as Gurkha Security Guards (UK) Ltd or the Guardian Angels. If obstacles are placed in the way of competition and better service quality, however, then it is hardly fair to blame the private security market for failing to raise standards.

### **A Mixed Market in Security**

The growth of the private security sector and of individual initiatives shows that demand for security and protection cannot be satisfied by the police alone. At the very least, the aim should be to allow them to do their job more efficiently by relieving them of work which can be done by non-uniformed employees or private firms. The other aim should be to encourage the private sector to develop and improve.

## **6 CONCLUSIONS: THE ROAD TO A SAFE FUTURE**

by Timothy Evans, Nicholas Elliott and Simon McIlwaine

To conclude, a variety of reforms would benefit in both the private and public security sectors.

### **User Pays Principle**

While the presence of the uniformed bobby on the beat has an intangible significance that cannot be over-stated, this fact all too often simply serves to engender the belief that law enforcement can only be a state-funded public good. However, most formal policing involves specific victims, criminals, clients and beneficiaries, and this shows how the introduction of specific user charges could promote an important and positive shift in law enforcement provision.

While the user-pays principle is most visible in the United States, its success is based upon the fact that it allows us to determine not only where the genuine demand for policing lies, but, also the intensity of that demand. Moreover, the value that customers attribute to a service at any given time often compels service providers to experiment with innovative ways in which to allocate resources.

In other countries, and to a growing extent in the UK, the user pays principle is especially evident in the provision of patrol services. Because this is a highly effective way to foster citizen involvement, British local authorities should encourage such schemes.

When in Kansas City responsibility for the maintenance of roads, street lights and for services such as refuse collection was devolved to small residential associations who then received a partial rebate in the property taxes the result was greater citizen participation in the community and its services, and an 80% reduction in the crime rate. Could this idea be repeated in the UK?

### **The Mixed Market**

Turning to the private security industry in general it is vital that higher standards are encouraged. To achieve this, security guard employers must be allowed to check the backgrounds of job applicants as one of the professionals exempted from the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act (1974). Instead of planning to further regulate the private security market, the aim should be to allow it to raise standards through the introduction of better information and competition.

It is probable that, in the context of a more open market structure, private security would gain broad public support. Indeed, it could be expected that if companies using for example, ex-Gurkhas, were allowed to operate, then the whole public-private security debate could change to the advantage of the innovators.

## **Police Structure**

To improve the effectiveness and the public's perception of the Police Service, we suggest that Chief Constables and Chief inspectors should have far more power to decide how their budgets are spent. To encourage thrift and improve resource targeting, at least some of the savings made through better capital expenditure management should then be at the disposal of the local force: for example, so as to effect greater investment in new, and much needed, information technology.

Chief Constables and Chief Inspectors should be given the discretionary power, and financial autonomy, to hire private security guards on contract, whenever, and wherever they feel appropriate. Services that are prime are prime candidates to be contracted-out to private companies include, the registration procedures associated with aliens, the escorting of abnormal loads, the surveillance of motorway traffic, the provision of security at courts, and the service and execution of process, police driver training, communications training, physical training and photography and printing.

Another potential beneficial improvement would be to reform and expand the role of Police Specials, in a similar way to that of the Territorial Army in the early 1980s. There are many people, who given the financial incentive, the training, and the responsibility, would actively meet the challenge of such a task. Indeed, many would undoubtedly attempt to become Police Assistants with the greater level of responsibility and status.

## **Conclusion**

In the short term, reform can be postponed. It is easier to spare public services' from scrutiny and to protect them from competitive pressures. However, we are fast reaching a time when the need for reform of our system of law enforcement will become unavoidable. As more people enjoy moderate affluence, quality-of-life issues are becoming more important, and chief among those issues is public safety.

People are quite rightly alarmed about the threat of crime. Employing more policemen and giving more public funds to the Police Service, has failed to produce the desired results. Public confidence in the police has fallen to an all-time low. Yet people are showing more willingness to do what they can to safeguard their own families and property, and are looking for a better performance by the Police in supporting them.

Policemen and women do a fine job, but they are still hidebound by the system in which they operate. There has to be a general recognition in policy that the Police Service is only one part of the law enforcement system, of which independent security firms and individuals form a part too. Beating crime is a task for the whole community, and it is time to sweep aside the professional jealousies and vested interests that stand in the way of allowing the community to achieve that goal.

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## Notes

### Chapter II

<sup>1</sup> S. Davies, Economic Affairs, *The Journal of the Institute of Economic Affairs*. Vol. 7 No. 6, August/September 1987

### Chapter III

<sup>1</sup> 'Breaking Ranks', *The Sunday Correspondent* 28 January 1990, p.19.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*, P.19.

<sup>3</sup> *Daily Telegraph*, 7 April 1989

<sup>4</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>5</sup> Police Papers, Audit Commission, No.3, May 1989, p.1

<sup>6</sup> *ibid* p.1.

<sup>7</sup> Police Papers, Audit Commission, No. 5, June 1990, p.1.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*, p.2.

<sup>9</sup> Police Papers, Audit Commission, No.4, December 1989, p.4.

<sup>10</sup> *Financial Times*, 16 August 1999, p.15.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>12</sup> Extract from a letter by N Bell of GSG Ltd to the editor dated 26 November 1990.

<sup>13</sup> 'Old stations damaging policing' in *The Independent*, 27 April 1990.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid*.

<sup>15</sup> *The Times* 3 December 1990.

### Chapter IV

<sup>1</sup> *Police Review*, 13 January 1989.

<sup>2</sup> *Police Review*, 21 October 1988, p.3.

<sup>3</sup> *Police Review*, 13 January 1989, p.65.

<sup>4</sup> E S Saves, *Privatization The Key to Better Government*, Chatham House, New Jersey, 1987, p.183.

<sup>5</sup> 'Cops Inc', *Reason*, November 1982.

<sup>6</sup> *Law and Order*, October 1988.

<sup>7</sup> Oscar Newman, *Community of Interest*, Anchor Press/Doubleday, New York 1981.

<sup>8</sup> *Privatisation 1989: Third Annual Report on Privation*, Reason Foundation, p.36.

<sup>9</sup> 'San Francisco's Hired Guns', *Reason*, August 1979.

### Chapter V

<sup>1</sup> Extract from a letter by Robert Lawrence, Chief Constable South Wales, to the editor dated 4 December 1990.

<sup>2</sup> 'Patrol Staffing in San Diego: One or Two-Officer Units', by John E. Boydston, Michael E. Sherry and Nicholas P. Moelter, Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1977.

<sup>3</sup> James K Stewart, 'Public Safety and Private Police', *Public Administration Review* November 1986, p.764

<sup>4</sup> 'Why Should the Police be featherbedded?' *The Spectator*, 10 September 1988, p.10.

<sup>5</sup> Jane Jacobs, *The Death and life of the great American Cities*, Peregrine Books, 1984, p.41

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, G Stigler, 'The Theory of Economic Regulation', *Bell Journal of Economics* Vol.2, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> 'Gurkhas March into a Work Permit Rebuff', *The Daily Telegraph*, 12 November 1990, p.4.

<sup>8</sup> p.4.