

# New powers envisaged for police

## LAW AND ORDER

Mr William Whitelaw, the Home Secretary, announced during questions about measures to combat the rising level of violent crime, that he hoped to bring forward proposals on new police powers which had been recommended by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure.

When Mr Anthony Marlow (Northampton, North, C) called for the introduction of new measures to combat the rising level of violent crime, Mr Whitelaw replied: the Government has already increased the strength of the police service to a record level. The full benefit of this will be felt as new officers are trained and become fully effective.

But police effectiveness also depends upon the active support and cooperation of the local communities. I am taking steps to encourage and develop this.

Mr Marlow: At a time when one of our citizens falls victim to crime every five minutes, day and night, the public is massively reassured that he is spearheading the campaign against these crimes. We should be considering new and effective measures to abate this appalling increase in crime.

Will he reassure the public that he will bring forward these measures if he feels they are necessary, whatever institutions outside may consider?

Mr Whitelaw: I accept the great concern about this. At the same time it is fair to point out what the Government has done, and is doing — with the wide range of penalties available to the magistrates and judges in the Criminal Justice Bill; and the prison building programme and prison maintenance to ensure that those whom the judges and magistrates decide to send to prison, should have places there.

The wide range of penalties available in the Criminal Justice Bill, carrying out our election manifesto, is another step in the right direction. That is the right thing for us to do.

Mr Alexander Lyon (York, Lab): All of us are opposed to the rising crime and all of us seek to diminish it by effective policing. The dispute is about what is the nature of effective policing.

Where real community policing has been tried, as in Handsworth, it has cut the crime rate on the streets. That is why many of us are supporting community policing, because it is effective.

Mr Whitelaw: The talk about community policing seems to be bedevilling our policing system. What we want is effective policing which means harnessing the support, encouragement and help of the local community from which any police service springs. (Conservative cheers)

Mr Eldon Griffiths (Bury St Edmunds, C): While no one has done more than the Home Secretary to improve the numbers and the morale of the police service, what is he doing in respect of the greater powers that were recommended by the royal commission, the longer training recommended by Lord Scarman, and the greater standardization of equipment, particularly radio equipment, which in too many cases is incompatible between one force and another?

Mr Whitelaw: I hope to be able to bring forward proposals which will implement some part of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure plans on police



Griffiths: Call for longer training

powers. We are making progress on training in all forces and I am encouraging the provision of the right equipment as well.

Mr Peter Snape, an Opposition spokesman on home affairs (West Bromwich, East, Lab): Is the Home Secretary satisfied with the deployment and tactics of police forces, particularly in inner city areas, and that police authorities have the right to discuss such matters in areas like Greater Manchester?

That would lead to a more visible police force on the streets and be a far greater deterrent to crime than the unhealthy blood lust shown by some of the Home Secretary's more eccentric supporters. (Labour cheers).

Mr Whitelaw: It is important that the police get the help and advice

of the community they serve through discussions with their police authorities. That is part of the business of the Police Act 1964.

If it is going to have success, that is what has to be done and that is what I am encouraging in all police forces throughout the country.

## Vigilantes in society unacceptable

Mr Nicholas Winterton (Macclesfield, C) asked if the Home Secretary was satisfied that the projected increase in police strength in England and Wales was sufficient to deal with the recent increase in crimes of all categories and particularly with regard to street crimes and disturbances in the inner city area.

Mr Whitelaw: Yes. At the end of January, the total strength of the police service in England and Wales was 119,508. This is an increase of 9,562 compared with January 1979.

With the further increase in the police strength already provided for in the next 12 months this gives chief officers of police more officers than ever before to carry out the many tasks we expect from our police service.

Mr Winterton: Violent crime against the person is now as important a matter in people's minds as unemployment. With the increase in violent crime, including the setting up of vigilante groups within inner city areas, the situation is growing serious indeed.

What further example can this House give to ensure the courts of this land not only have the sentences to mete out that fit the crime, but they mete out sentences so that punishment is this country fits the serious crimes being committed?

Mr Whitelaw: I appreciate what he says. I entirely support him in his anxiety about the increases, particularly burglary and street crimes, which are certainly serious indeed and which must be tackled not only by this House, the police service, and the Government, but by the whole of the community. It is only by a concerted effort that we shall succeed against these particular crimes.

For the benefit of those people who seem to think there is something wrong, the first thing is to have a strong police service. When you have it strong, you need it effective. That is right,

and the Government is directed towards that.

I do not accept that vigilantes in our society can be right. If those people who want to help will do so, they could join the special constables where many good tasks are carried out.

On the sentences of the courts, this House is right to provide sentences; the judges and magistrates carry them out.

Mr Sydney Chapman (Barnet, Chipping Barnet, C): While welcoming the increase of 9,000 police, which I understand includes 3,000 in the Metropolitan Police force, this should result and continue to result in more policemen patrolling our city streets.

That is the best way to get the cooperation and confidence of the public which is an essential element in tackling the rising crime rate.

Mr Whitelaw: Yes. First, it is the Government's job, which it has thoroughly effectively with the equipment the Government provides to carry out their duties. That is their task and that they will carry out.

I trust they will get in their task the full help advice and moral support of the community as a whole.

Mr Roy Hattersley, Opposition spokesman on home affairs: Despite Mr Whitelaw's effects, the Government has been unable to fulfil its election promises to reduce the level of crime in this country. He should make clear that in his view the best way to

Mr Whitelaw: I agree entirely that is the task. I understand the anxieties expressed and fully accept the problems. I hope it can be said that it is for the community as a whole. After all, there are problems of parental discipline, discipline in our schools, and many other aspects which contribute to rising crime. The police cannot do it all on their own.

Sir Paul Bryan (Howden, C): I welcome the Government's success in recruiting large numbers for the police. The continuous support it has given the police has been a major factor in sustaining their morale.

Mr Whitelaw: I am grateful. I hope it can be said that this support will be forthcoming from all sections of the community. Sometimes I find there are people who are more ready to criticize the police than they are to support them in difficult situations.

## Finance Bill

Mr Leon Brittan, Chief Secretary to the Treasury, said in a written reply that the Finance Bill would be published next Friday.