

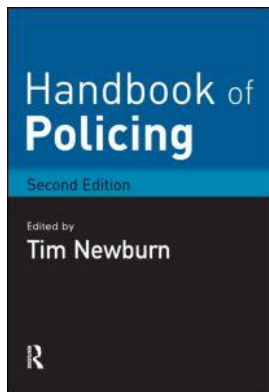
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Chapter 5

Policing since 1945

Tim Newburn

Introduction

'Never has a Government inherited a more disciplined nation than did the incoming Labour ministers in 1945, nor, almost certainly, a more united one' (Hennessy 1992: 89). According to Bottoms and Stevenson (1992: 10), 'all things considered . . . the omens for the criminal justice policy-maker in 1945 looked good'. However, as they document, and is noted by many commentators, 'the years which followed the war were jaundiced by disappointed hopes' (Critchley 1967: 237). The reasons for this are complex, but certainly include the continual growth of recorded crime and the practical and political consequences it set in train, the emergence of research questioning the efficacy of elements of the criminal justice system and a series of 'scandals', or at least incidents, that served to illustrate some of the problems with policing and to challenge previously held public views about its character and purpose.

It is worth remembering that professional policing in Britain at this time was little more than a century old. The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries had seen the gradual establishment and refinement of the system of policing and, by the 1930s, what had originally been a somewhat amateurish and chaotic system had been replaced by one in which officers earned wages almost one-third above the national average (Royal Commission on the Police 1960). Inflation gradually but systematically eroded this pay differential, and increasing post-war prosperity and full employment served to ensure that other advantages once enjoyed by police officers were progressively shared by other occupations, though the disadvantages of police work, of course, were not (Martin and Wilson 1969).

In the period since the Second World War, British policing has, in many respects, undergone remarkable change (though that is not to say that there are not also some very significant continuities). In organising this chapter, four broad themes in policing since 1945 are considered: the role and the image of the police; the relationship between the police and local communities, particularly minority communities; the relationship between government and the police; and the relationship between the police and other policing agencies. The last six decades have seen three Royal Commissions consider various



aspects of policing – though only one directly on the police – and numerous other inquiries that have sought to explore and, in some respects reform policing. Legislation affecting policing has been so extensive as to be almost impossible to summarise (see Figure 5.1). As might be expected from such a lengthy list of inquiries, reports and legislative changes, capturing the full range and nature of police reform is highly problematic. What seems clear from a simple scanning of the table is just how the pace of change – or least the frequency with which reviews and legislation are passed – has increased in the last decade or decade and a half. The British police currently find themselves in a rather odd position. On the one hand, and looking at the list of inquiries, reports and Acts of Parliament listed above, it appears that they have been subject to constant, if not increasing, scrutiny and change. On the other hand, and ironically, it remains the case that for some politicians the police continue to be perceived as ‘the last great unreformed public service’.¹ Reform efforts over the past half century have made substantial changes to police powers, have altered in important ways the system of police governance and have radically increased the degree of external scrutiny of policing. Much governmental deliberation in this period, however, has focused on the fundamental issue of the role of the police.

The role and image of the police

Policing in the post-war years was still largely organised on a beat system, the basis of which had been established during the nineteenth century. A number of beat systems existed but, crudely speaking, there were two major types. In rural areas, by and large, constables were responsible for the entire (geographic and temporal) policing of a particular area. In urban areas, where full 24-hour cover was often required, officers worked in shifts, but still walked either a fixed or a variable beat (with support from other officers where necessary). In the late 1940s the idea of motorised patrols was rejected for a number of reasons including that it would diminish ‘that contact with the public which is so useful to the police and to the public itself’ (cited in Bottoms and Stevenson 1992: 29). The drawbacks of moving to motorised patrol were also noted by the Royal Commission in its interim report and it is undoubtedly the case that attachment to beat policing remained strong, including within the police service, well into the 1960s.

Influenced by recent research, in 1967 the Home Office issued a circular that encouraged police forces to adopt a new system of policing which reduced the number of officers on foot patrol and put them into cars. This system, called ‘unit beat policing’ (UBP), was felt to have the advantage of allowing much wider geographical areas to be covered on a 24-hour basis and, together with the personal radios that were to be issued, of enabling officers to respond much more quickly to calls from the public. The hope that it would both improve policing and police–community relations is now widely presented as being the polar opposite of what happened in practice, partly, it is suggested, because it was undermined by a police culture which played down the ‘service’ element of the system and exploited the opportunities it provided for

Figure 5.1 Major inquiries and the main legislation affecting policing 1960–2008

1960	Establishment of the Royal Commission on the Police
1964	Police Act – establishes the ‘tripartite structure’ for police governance
1967	Home Office circular encouraging ‘unit beat policing’
1976	Police Act – establishes the Police Complaints Board
1977	Fisher Report – on the Maxwell Confait case
1980	Home Affairs Select Committee Report on ‘Sus’ laws
1981	Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure
1981	Byford Inquiry – into the Yorkshire Ripper case
1981	Scarman Inquiry – into the Brixton riots
1983	Home Office circular 114/83 (‘Financial Management Initiative’)
1984	Police and Criminal Evidence Act
1988	Home Office circular 106/88 (new management strategies for the police)
1989	Publication of the Operational Policing Review
1989	Taylor Report on the Hillsborough Stadium Disaster
1991	Royal Commission on Criminal Justice
1993	Audit Commission publishes <i>Helping with Enquiries</i>
1993	White Paper on Police Reform
1993	Publication of the Sheehy Inquiry report
1994	Police and Magistrates’ Courts Act – reforms police authorities
1994	Audit Commission publishes <i>Cheques and Balances</i>
1995	Core and Ancillary Tasks Review – final report
1996	Final Report of the Cassels Inquiry
1996	Audit Commission publishes <i>Streetwise</i>
1996	Police Act (consolidating legislation)
1997	Police Act – creates Police Information Technology Organisation and NCIS
1998	Crime and Disorder Act – sets out police responsibilities in connection with community safety
1999	Stephen Lawrence Inquiry report
1999	‘Patten Report’ – on future of policing in Northern Ireland
2000	Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act
2001	Criminal Justice and Police Act – establishes Centrex
2001	Cantle Report on community cohesion and policing in Oldham
2001	Clarke Report on community cohesion and policing in Burnley
2001	Home Office White Paper – <i>Policing a New Century</i>
2001	Private Security Industry Act
2002	Police Reform Act – national policing plan established; PCSOs introduced; IPCC established
2003	Bichard Inquiry into the Soham murders
2003	Home Office Green Paper – <i>Policing: Building Safer Communities Together</i>
2003	Anti-Social Behaviour Act
2004	<i>National Policing Plan 2005–8</i>
2004	HMIC report on workforce modernisation
2005	Home Office report – <i>Neighbourhood Policing</i>
2005	Prevention of Terrorism Act
2005	Serious Organised Crime and Police Act
2006	Terrorism Act
2006	Police and Justice Act (establishes National Policing Improvement Agency)
2007	Flanagan Report
2008	Policing Green Paper

‘action’ (Holdaway 1983). Reiner (1992b: 76) suggests that with the transformation of the patrol into a ‘fire brigade’ service, the emphasis was placed on ‘technology, specialisation and managerial professionalism as the keys to

winning the fight against crime'. The main charge laid at the door of UBP is that, albeit unintentionally, it was partly responsible for a sea change in the style and image of British policing, creating a new style that not everyone was entirely comfortable with. As Chibnall (1977) described it: 'The "British bobby" was recast as the tough, dashing, formidable (but still brave and honest) "Crime-Buster"' (cited in Reiner 1992b: 76). However, just around the corner were a series of well publicised cases that would challenge the police's reputation for honesty.

In the space of less than 10 years at least four separate corruption scandals involving Metropolitan Police officers were uncovered. It all began with journalists from *The Times* tape recording conversations between detectives and criminals in which the covering up of serious crimes was being discussed. Equally as shocking as these revelations was the subsequent apparent inability of those tasked with investigating these abuses to secure co-operation within the force and to discipline those officers involved. This pattern continued with other allegations against officers from the Drug Squad and the Obscene Publications Squad (Cox *et al.* 1977). There were even allegations towards the end of the decade that detectives had been involved in major armed robberies. If the general public had ever accepted the image of PC George Dixon at something approximating face value (see Reiner this volume), they were unlikely to do so after this (Sparks 1993).

Corruption of a different sort, sometimes rather misleadingly referred to as 'noble cause corruption', formed part of the impetus behind the establishment of a further Royal Commission in 1981. In these cases the issue was the behaviour of the police during the detention and interrogation of suspects – in particular of people suspected of being involved in Irish Republican terrorism. The police had been under enormous pressure to get results. Throughout the 1970s there was concern about the convictions secured in the aftermath of the bombings in Birmingham, Guildford and elsewhere, with allegations of intimidation, violence and the fabrication of evidence being widely made. The release of the Guildford Four, the Birmingham Six, the Maguires, the acquittal on appeal of the Tottenham Three, and widespread concern about the activities of the West Midlands Serious Crimes Squad, were part of the reason that public confidence in the police fell dramatically – though there was evidence of changing public attitudes more generally towards public services (Glennerster 2000).

The Home Secretary responded by appointing a Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure (RCCP). Arguably the commission's greatest impact was in forming the basis for much of what later became the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE). The RCCP focused on the rights of suspects, an issue that had been debated vociferously for some time, but which had been brought to a head by the 'Confait case' in which, it was subsequently found, three boys had been convicted of murder on the basis of false confessions. The Judge's Rules, which at that time formed the basis for suspects' rights, were identified by many commentators, and by the Royal Commission, as being inadequate. PACE not only extended police powers in a number of important ways but also introduced far-reaching procedural safeguards (some of which were revised in 1991 and again subsequently) to guard against abuses of these

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powers. There can be little doubt that the Act has had an impact on the behaviour of police officers, and on the culture of policing, and the worst fears of its critics should certainly have been allayed (though see Sanders and Young, this volume).

The early 1980s also saw both significant urban disorders and a bitter miners' strike. The very visible public order policing these involved also affected the image of British policing. Though using a degree of hyperbole in describing the policing of the miners' strike, Jefferson suggests that the new image of public order policing was:

not one of a line of bobbies defensively 'pushing and shoving', but of 'snatch squads': menacing teams of officers, unrecognizable in visored, 'NATO-style' crash helmets and fireproof overalls, advancing behind transparent shields being banged by drawn truncheons, making 'search' sorties into crowds of fleeing demonstrators for the purpose of arrest, or a spot of retributive 'destruction'. (1990: 1-2)

Similarly, the 'television pictures of a police officer apparently hitting a prostrate picket repeatedly with his truncheon at the Orgreave coke works during the miners' strike did immense damage to the police reputation for restraint' (Waddington 1991).

Against this background, public consensus about, and satisfaction with, the style and nature of policing appeared precipitately to decline. The response from within the police was to endeavour to institute a programme which would begin to alter the image and, wherever possible, the reality of policing. The Metropolitan Police instituted a programme of reform – the Plus Programme – and the Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPO) built on this with the release of its *Strategic Policy Document* (ACPO 1990), within which was its 'Statement of Common Purpose and Values'. At the heart of much of this endeavour was the intention to present policing as a *service* rather than as a *force* (Stephens and Becker 1994); the reform programme being both 'a reaction to ... declining public satisfaction and also as a consumerist expression of managerialist policy' (Mawby 2002: 45). Both the Strategic Policy Document and the Operational Policing Review which preceded it identified considerable public dissatisfaction with much of the current style of policing. It was around this time that there emerged ideas associated with 'community policing' and, as one of the more radical chief constables of the period put it, 'police should be much more than law enforcers; to use an older term they should be "peace officers"' (Alderson 1984: 11). There was a significant shift in emphasis in policing at this time and this could be seen, in part, in the slowly changing role accorded to crime prevention.

Although since the inception of the new police crime prevention has been thought of as a key function, there has generally been a lack of clarity about what this is to mean in practice. It was not until after the publication of the report of the Cornish Committee on the Prevention and Detection of Crime (Home Office 1965) that specialist crime prevention departments began to come into being in any number. Despite the apparent rise in the stock of crime prevention with central government, responsibility *within* police forces for crime prevention work for a long time remained the domain of specialist crime

prevention units and crime prevention officers and was initially treated as a peripheral specialism of low status and interest when placed alongside crime-fighting (Graef 1989; Byrne and Pease this volume). However, as crime continued to rise, despite the increase in resources devoted to policing in the early 1980s, one of the key messages emanating from the police was they could not be expected to carry responsibility for the prevention of crime unaided. Beginning with the Ditchley Circular (211/78), increasing emphasis came to be placed upon the 'community' in relation to policing and, later, upon what has since become known as 'inter' or 'multi-agency co-operation'.

This has broadened further more recently, and during the course of the 1990s the stock of what is now generally referred to as 'community safety' rose (Crawford 1998; Hughes 2007). In 1990, the Morgan Committee – an inquiry established by the Standing Conference on Crime Prevention – had recommended the imposition of a statutory requirement on local authorities to stimulate crime prevention and community safety programmes at a local level (Standing Conference on Crime Prevention 1991). There was no reform until after the 1997 General Election, however, when the Labour Party's manifesto commitment to implement the Morgan Committee recommendations was acted upon. In fact what was included in the Crime and Disorder Bill was a variant on the Morgan proposals, the compromise being a provision to give local authorities *and* the police new duties to develop statutory partnerships to help prevent and reduce crime. Such language has subsequently been replaced by the vocabulary of 'crime and disorder reduction'.

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 placed a statutory duty on chief police officers and local authorities, in co-operation with police authorities, probation committees and health authorities, to formulate and implement a 'strategy for the reduction of crime and disorder in the area', including undertaking and publishing an 'audit' of levels and patterns of crime locally. The language of the late 1990s was dominated by talk of 'partnership', of multi-agency working and of joint responsibilities, and it was in the area of community safety that this was perhaps most visibly seen. The largely 'service-based, consumerist' view of policing espoused by many police managers by the early 1990s (Reiner 1991) certainly held sway within the police service by the end of the century with, for example, the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police recommending a return to 'Dixon of Dock Green-style bobbies on the beat' (*Guardian* 28 February 2003). Policing, of course, is not like other public services and the nature of the relationship between it and the communities it 'serves' can never be as entirely straightforward as notions of 'service delivery' can make it sound. Nowhere is this clearer than in the relationship between the police and Britain's minority ethnic communities. Responses to the perceived problems of police-community relations have led to calls for significant reform of the police service – by and large from a liberal-idealist position. An exception, this time from the right, has come recently from Hitchens (2003) who, in a critique of contemporary criminal justice, identifies what he feels has been a profound cultural shift in policing as part of a broader trend in which the moral certainties of the immediate post-war period have been replaced by a system in which authority has been undermined and moral relativism rules. The result, in his view, has been that the 'best police force in the world has been

reduced to bureaucratic uselessness' (2003: 17). Though not alone in identifying problems in contemporary policing, Hitchens' diagnosis is unusual, indeed a throw-back to previous times, arguing that what is required is a moral counter-revolution reversing the tide of what he perceives to be the broad sweep of liberal progressive reformism in the past 40 years. Many are blamed by Hitchens for the current failings of policing; key, however, among those he holds responsible are Lord Scarman and Sir William Macpherson.

From Scarman to Stephen Lawrence

In the aftermath of the 1981 riots Lord Scarman was appointed to inquire into the causes of the unrest in Brixton and to make recommendations (Scarman 1982). Scarman was critical of the policing of Brixton and especially the heavy-handed 'Swamp 81' 'street saturation' operation. Almost 950 'stops' had been made in the course of this operation, resulting in 118 arrests. More than half the people stopped were black. A total of 75 charges were brought, though only one was for robbery, one for attempted burglary and 20 for theft or attempted theft. As a result of his inquiry, Scarman concluded that the lack of consultation with community representatives prior to 'Swamp 81' was 'an error of judgement' (Scarman 1982: 4.73), that the whole operation 'was a serious mistake, given the tension which existed between the police and local community' (1982: 4.76) and that 'had policing attitudes and methods been adjusted to deal fully with the problems of a multi-racial society, there would have been a review in depth of the public order implications of the operation, which would have included local consultation'.

Scarman's recommendations as a result of the inquiry were wide ranging and took in such diverse areas as recruitment of ethnic minorities to the police, increasing consultation through the introduction of statutory liaison committees, the introduction of lay visiting to police stations, the independent review of complaints against the police and the tightening of regulations regarding racially prejudiced behaviour by officers. In relation to the nature of the policing service being delivered to minority communities, Scarman explicitly rejected 'institutional racism' as an explanation for the problems that had precipitated the inquiry. However, in the careful language of an eminent lawyer, he went on to note that if 'the suggestion being made is that practices may be adopted by public bodies as well as private individuals which are *unwittingly discriminatory* against black people, then this is an allegation which deserves serious consideration, and, where proved, swift remedy' (Scarman 1982, emphasis added). As Stuart Hall noted at the time (1982: 68),

the idea that oppressive policing is not a set of fortuitous events but a process, a structural condition, is beyond [Scarman's] grasp. The concept of "institutional racism" is not merely repugnant to his sympathies. It is unthinkable within his discourse. This is one limit-point to his reformism.

Nevertheless, the report emphasised the need for change and, despite its limitations, 'was the trigger for a reorientation of policing on a wide front.

Indeed by the late 1980s, [Scarman's] ideas had become the predominant conception of policing philosophy amongst Chief Constables' (Reiner 1991).

A little over a decade after the Scarman Inquiry – on 22 April 1993 – 18-year-old Stephen Lawrence was stabbed to death in Eltham, South London, giving rise, albeit over four years later, to another significant inquiry into policing. There are many differences between the Scarman and Stephen Lawrence Inquiries – in terms of the incidents that gave rise to them, the speed with which they were called and their recommendations (Bowling 1999) – but both left a lasting impression on the British policing landscape. On that evening in April 1993, Stephen Lawrence had been standing at a bus stop with a friend, Duwayne Brooks, when they were approached by a small group of clearly hostile and abusive white youths. Though Brooks was able to escape and call for help, Stephen Lawrence was stabbed twice and died within a short period of time. As the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, established by Jack Straw in the aftermath of the 1997 General Election, put it (Macpherson 1999: para. 2.1): 'those violent seconds in 1993 have been followed by extraordinary activity, without satisfactory result'. The police investigation found no witnesses to the attack other than Duwayne Brooks and 'other sound evidence against the prime suspects [was] conspicuous by its absence' (1999: para. 2.2). A private prosecution was launched against five suspects in 1996 but failed because of lack of evidence (two suspects were discharged at the committal stage and the other three, who went to trial, were acquitted). Ominously the verdict of the inquest jury was that 'Stephen Lawrence was unlawfully killed in a completely unprovoked racist attack by five white youths'. The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry concluded memorably, and in contrast with Scarman, that: 'There is no doubt but that there were fundamental errors. The investigation was marred by a combination of professional incompetence, *institutional racism* and a failure of leadership by senior officers' (1999: para. 46.1, emphasis added).

The 'professional incompetence' included a lack of direction and organisation in the hours after the murder, little or no pursuit of the suspects, insensitive treatment of both the Lawrence family and Duwayne Brooks (Brooks and Hattenstone 2003), inadequate processing of intelligence, ill thought-out surveillance and inadequate searches. However, the inquiry concluded that incompetence alone could not account for police failures and it suggested that the very fact that the victim was black led directly to less competent behaviour on the part of officers, in particular with regard to their actions at the scene of the crime, in connection with family liaison, the treatment of Duwayne Brooks and in the use of inappropriate and offensive language. The service, the inquiry suggested, was 'institutionally racist'. This it defined (Macpherson 1999: para. 6.34) as:

The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people. (for a critique see Lea 2000; Tonry 2004)



The inquiry made 70 recommendations which covered: the monitoring and assessment of police performance; the reporting and recording of racist incidents and crimes; the investigation and prosecution of racist crime; family liaison; the treatment of victims and witnesses; first aid; training; employment, discipline and complaints; stop and search; and recruitment and retention. These recommendations amounted 'to the most extensive programme of reform in the history of the relationship between the police and ethnic minority communities' (Bowling and Phillips 2002: 16). At the centre of the recommendations was a proposed ministerial priority for the police to seek to 'increase trust and confidence in policing among minority ethnic communities'. As Reiner (2000: 211) suggests,

the Macpherson Report ... has transformed the terms of the political debate about black people and criminal justice ... what had not [previously] featured in public awareness and political debate was the disproportionate rate at which black people suffered as victims of crime.

In this, the Macpherson Inquiry achieved something that Scarman hadn't. Moreover, as Bowling and Phillips (2002: 18) note:

Where Scarman was hesitant on the question of accountability, Macpherson was strident. Since the Lawrence Inquiry had concluded that the failings of the police were systemic and the result of insufficient accountability, it recommended the introduction of lay oversight into all areas of police work, and the creation of a fully independent complaints system. Crucially, the Inquiry recommended bringing the police into the ambit of race relations law, a proposal that had been roundly rejected two decades earlier.

The nature of police relationships with, and the policing of, minority ethnic communities has been the subject of considerable attention, and no little controversy, in the period since the publication of the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry (see Rowe 2007; Bowling *et al.*, this volume). One of the key issues raised by both Scarman and the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry concerns the nature of the relationship between the police, government and local communities and, more particularly, how the police service is effectively to be made accountable.

Centralisation and control

In some respects the most obvious and consistent trend in the history of policing since 1829 is the gradual centralisation of control as government, largely through the Home Office, established greater control over chief officers and their constabularies (see Chapter 4). There are at least four major ways in which this process of centralisation may be seen in the post-war years:

1. The progressive reduction in the number of police forces in England and Wales (and increased government powers of amalgamation).



2. The increased ability of police forces to co-ordinate their activities across force boundaries together with the formation of new, powerful national policing organisations such as the National Crime Intelligence Service (NCIS) and the National Crime Squad (NCS).
3. The formalisation of the activities of police representative bodies such as the Police Federation and, in particular, ACPO.

And perhaps most significantly,

4. The increase in government oversight of, and influence over, policing via legislative change and new managerial reforms.

Since 1945 increasing centralisation has seen the amalgamation of forces in England and Wales, and their reduction from almost 200 in 1945 to their current level of 43 (see Chapter 8). These changes were initially brought about by the Police Act 1946 which gave the Home Secretary power compulsorily to amalgamate police forces with populations below 100,000. As a result of the 1946 Act the number of forces was reduced to 125 by 1949, and then was further reduced by 1964 to 117. In its consideration of police governance, the Royal Commission gave serious thought to the possibility of 'nationalisation'. As we know, nationalisation didn't occur, though Stevenson and Bottoms (1989: 10–11) conclude that 'Overall, one is left with the clear impression of a Commission impressed with some of the logic of the nationalisers' case, but regarding it as simply too radical in the context of the times'. Despite rejection, as its secretary put it, 'the Commission came near to the brink' (Critchley 1967: 282). The trend was unmistakably towards fewer and bigger forces. In the aftermath of the Police Act 1964 there was a very substantial period of consolidation, and the number of forces was reduced to its current level in 1974. Further amalgamations appeared likely in the early 1990s, particularly during the period of Michael Howard's tenure as Home Secretary. New provisions were included in the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994, giving the Home Secretary powers to order force amalgamations without having any form of local inquiry, as would have been the case under the Police Act 1964. The provisions contained no requirement on him to justify his plans before an independent inspector, or even to do more than give reasons to those that have objections to his proposals. More recently, during the period of the second Labour administration of recent times (2001–05), proposals for further amalgamation were being actively considered within Downing Street policy units and the Home Office. The 2004 White Paper (Home Office 2004) had raised the issue and a subsequent thematic report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC 2006) reiterated the case for the restructuring of policing. Indeed, a number of forces signalled their willingness to amalgamate. In the event a combination of factors – most notably a number of 'crises' affecting the Home Office, resistance to amalgamation in some police circles together with growing financial restrictions affecting government across the board – led to the abandonment of such plans.

The second aspect of centralisation concerns the increased ability of forces to work across boundaries in support of each other, together with the creation

or reinforcement of national policing bodies. The Police Act 1964 provided the basis for the establishment of regional crime squads (RCSs) and within a year nine RCSs had been established. The squads grew in size significantly during the 1970s and 1980s, though their number was reduced from nine to six in the early 1990s.

The policing of the miners' strike in 1984 focused attention on the increasingly 'national' nature of policing in Britain. In 1972, the National Reporting Centre (NRC) was established as a system for co-ordinating and managing mutual aid between forces in times of emergency. It had been used on a relatively small number of occasions prior to the miners' dispute, but during the strike was utilised on a hitherto unprecedented scale – the 'high point in the national co-ordination of policing public order' (Reiner 1991: 191). The perception that this vast policing operation was too obviously acting on behalf of government – perhaps the primary fear about the consequence of nationalising policing – left many chief constables feeling uncomfortable, though it appears many also believed that 'it had averted rather than precipitated the formation of a national police force' (Reiner 1991: 188).

Plans for a National Criminal Intelligence Service (NCIS) got underway in 1990, the intention being to integrate the work of the existing National Football Intelligence Unit, the Art and Antiques Squad, the National Drugs Intelligence Unit, the regional criminal intelligence offices and a variety of other bodies. NCIS was established in 1992. Growing awareness of crime problems that crossed national borders, and the need to liaise effectively with international policing organisations such as Europol and Interpol, was a significant pressure towards the development of formal national policing bodies. At the 1995 Conservative Party conference the Home Secretary announced that he intended creating an operational National Crime Squad (NCS) to deal with serious crimes, a proposition implicitly endorsed by the Home Affairs Committee in its 1995 report on organised crime. This was put into effect by the Police Act 1997 and the NCS came into operation on 1 April 1998. The Director General of the NCS effectively took control of the RCSs which were absorbed into the structure of the NCS. The formation of national squads is indicative of creeping centralisation in British policing and some commentators see this as presaging the eventual nationalisation of policing (see Uglow and Trelford 1997).

In 2003, the government's Green Paper, *Policing: Building Safer Communities Together* (Home Office 2003) proposed the idea of a dedicated, national organised crime policing unit and the subsequent Serious, Organised Crime and Police Act 2005 made this a reality, establishing the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA). The Agency, established initially with 4,200 staff, amalgamated the functions of NCIS and NCS, together with the investigative branches from the Immigration Service and the Revenue and Customs Service. SOCA has a number of other important characteristics that set it apart from the main constabularies in the UK. Although SOCA's first Director General was drawn from the police service, having previously headed up the NCS, its first chair, Sir Stephen Lander, was previously the Head of MI5, indicating the emergence of a hybrid agency working as a policing body but specialising in covert and intelligence-gathering activity. SOCA will have officers permanent-

ly stationed abroad working with and within intelligence agencies in other jurisdictions and similarly will house investigators from other agencies within the UK. SOCA is a non-departmental public body (NDPB), not a police force, and its staff is civilian not police officers, although they have considerable designated powers. As a NDPB it is governed by a Board with a majority of non-executive members and, unlike the majority of police forces, is answerable directly to the Home Secretary rather than to a police authority.

In terms of national co-ordination of policing, one of the most significant developments in the post-war period has been the remarkable transformation of police representative organisations and, most especially, ACPO. Prior to the establishment of ACPO in 1948, chief officers had been represented by the County Chief Constables' Club and the Chief Constables' Association of England and Wales (for the city and borough forces). Most commentators describe the activities of these organisations as being more like clubs than policy-making or pressure groups (ACPO 1998). Indeed, there is little evidence that ACPO was much different in the first two decades or so of its existence (Savage *et al.* 2000). For the bulk of this period, the impression that the police service was somehow outside politics was successfully maintained. The politicisation of 'law and order' from the late 1960s onwards is by now well documented (see Downes and Morgan 2002, 2007). The growing visibility of the police in 'political' debates can be seen both in the changing role of ACPO and in the activities of the Police Federation, beginning in the 1960s with campaigns for better pay. From that point onward, the Police Federation became a relatively vocal and influential pressure group, even going so far as to place an advertisement in the national newspapers in the run-up to the 1979 General Election, linking rising crime with the failure of the Labour administration's policies (McLaughlin and Murji 1998). The crucial development which saw the police thrust into the centre of political controversy was the election of the radical Thatcher government and, most obviously, the role undertaken by the police in support – as it appeared to some at least – of government attempts to undermine the miners' strike. In the period since then, and encouraged in many respects by the Home Office, ACPO has become a highly organised and effective national coordinating body. It has, less happily for the Home Office, also become a supremely effective lobbying organisation. As comfortable working in the public eye as behind the scenes in the Home Office and Parliament, it is now one of the most important influences on contemporary policing in Britain.

The formidable power of ACPO was successfully exercised in the early 1990s when, beginning with Kenneth Clarke and continuing under Michael Howard, the Conservative government attempted to engineer radical reforms in policing and, in particular, to increase central control dramatically and to begin a process of partial privatisation, 'hiving off' or 'contracting out'. A series of inquiries, including the Sheehy Inquiry into Police Responsibilities and Rewards, and the Core and Ancillary Tasks Review (the Posen Inquiry), together with the first drafts of the Police and Magistrates' Courts (PMC) Bill, appeared to herald the possibility of a new era in policing; one in which policing was redefined largely as 'crime fighting', with other functions contracted out, and where government had significantly enhanced powers to hire and fire officers and to manage local policing delivery. That the Posen

Inquiry resulted in almost no change at all, that the Sheehy Inquiry had much less impact than had been anticipated in some quarters and that elements of the PMC Bill were successfully resisted is in no small measure due to the influence of ACPO. The erstwhile head of the Audit Commission, Howard Davies, once noted that the police was the least affected of all public services by 'the Thatcher revolution' (McLaughlin and Murji 1993: 95). This has not been because of a perception that the police were somehow less in need of reform but rather that successive Home Secretaries up to and including the present incumbent have ultimately fought shy of taking on ACPO; for the Thatcher administration partly because of the 'debt' owed in aftermath of the miners' strike; for later administrations more because of the increasing influence and leverage exercised by ACPO. Radical reform of the police service remains a very dim prospect in the absence of a Home Secretary truly willing to confront the association.

Despite the now very powerful position occupied by ACPO, the clearest element of the long-term centralisation of British policing has been the gradual accretion of power over policing by government. This can be seen in two key respects: successive reforms to the tripartite structure for police governance which have progressively enhanced central powers; and the growth of a form of centralised managerialism which seeks to regulate policing primarily by means of performance assessment but which, under New Labour, shows every sign of becoming a form of fairly direct government micro-management. In the post-war period, police governance and accountability were defined and shaped by the Royal Commission on the Police and the subsequent Police Act 1964. The Police Act sought to define, effectively for the first time, the respective roles of the Home Secretary, chief constables and police authorities. It replaced the old system of watch committees and standing joint committees with a single system of police authorities. These authorities were placed under a duty to secure the maintenance of an 'adequate and efficient' force for their area, though these terms were undefined. In terms of governance, the Royal Commission's recommendations, and the Act that followed, were based on the principle that 'there should be stronger central control' (Critchley 1967: 286) and the 1964 Act reinforced the powers of the Home Office and chief constables at the expense of local authorities (Marshall 1978). One of the major changes made by the Act was the enshrining in statute of the fact that supreme responsibility for local policing lay with chief constables, each force thenceforward being 'under the direction and control' of its chief officer. In order to do this the chief officer was empowered by the Act to appoint, promote and discipline all officers up to the rank of chief superintendent. The Home Secretary was given the power to call for reports from chief constables, to approve the appointment of senior officers and to compel the retirement of an inefficient chief constable. Such a description, however, does scant justice to the degree of influence that was exercised even then by the Home Office over policing. As Lustgarten (1986: 100) puts it, 'practice in this area embodies to an extreme degree a notable feature of British politics: its informality and preference for behind the scenes influence, quiet words in ears, and careful selection of key people who can be trusted to share fundamental norms'. The basic structure established by the 1964 Act – and which concentrated greatest

powers in the hands of the Home Office and chief constables at the expense of local police authorities – remained the basis of police governance for 30 years until the Police and Magistrates' Courts Act 1994 (for a more extended discussion, see Jones, this volume).

The initial proposals in the PMC Bill to establish police authorities independent of local councils, yet subject to significant oversight by the Home Office, prompted Vernon Bogdanor to claim that 'the Bill establishes a national police force under the control of the Home Secretary' (*The Times* 19 January 1994) and the then President of ACPO, Sir John Smith, to comment, 'I am inclined to the view that we are witnessing a move, perhaps unintended, for national control of the police by central government' (cited in Jones and Newburn 1995: 448). As has already been suggested, the original proposals were considerably amended during their passage through Parliament, partly as a result of ACPO's lobbying efforts. In the event, depoliticisation was one of the most visible consequences of the Act. The influence of party politics generally, and the political complexion of authorities in particular, clearly diminished significantly as a result of the reforms (Jones and Newburn 1997). If anything, it was the power of chief constables that was reinforced by the reforms, though there was the potential to reinvigorate police authorities, certainly with regard to financial oversight of local policing.

As far as central control was concerned, though not especially dramatic at that stage, it was the introduction of national objectives for policing that was the clearest illustration of the future direction of change. The growing emphasis on the key elements of 'new public management' (see Golding and Savage, this volume), and the increasing influence of the Audit Commission were, among other developments, indicators of a shift towards what Reiner called 'calculative and contractual' accountability (1993: 19–20) in which performance is 'judged according to the achievement of a limited range of performance indicators'. Central control through such means was most clearly and most recently articulated in the establishment of the Police Standards Unit.

Its focus is on the management of 'performance' and spreading 'best practice' via the quantitative measurement of police activities and the publication and comparison of results, not just between individual forces but between basic command units. In addition, the Police Reform Act 2002 introduced an Annual Policing Plan, provided powers to promote consistency across police forces through the introduction of statutory codes of practice and introduced new powers to require police forces to take remedial action where they are judged to be inefficient or ineffective by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary (HMIC).

The most vivid illustration of what I have called the current trend towards government 'micro-management' of policing is what became known as the 'street crimes initiative'. As a result of growing concern in government about levels of recorded street crime in 2000–1 and 2001–2, and the perceived failure of the police service to respond adequately, there was direct intervention in local policing strategies. A Downing Street 'summit' on street crime resulted in the identification of 10 forces in which the greatest street crime problems were believed to exist. For the following six months these 10 forces provided weekly crime figures to a designated government minister. At the end of this

period of close scrutiny, and after the injection of considerable extra resources to support enhanced police operations within the 10 forces, success was claimed for the Prime Minister's promise to have street crime 'under control by September [2002]' (*Police Review* 26 July 2002). The success or otherwise of the initiative is not the issue here. Its importance for policing lies in the extraordinary level of control, and the unusually hands-on manner, exercised by central government, and by the Prime Minister in particular. That government should have deemed this to be necessary, and now be defining it as a success, is likely to mean more of the same in the future.

Although centralisation is *the* dominant trend in post-war British policing, recent years have seen increasing emphasis, at least at a rhetorical level, placed on the importance of localism. This can be seen most visibly in what has become known as 'neighbourhood policing', a set of reforms designed to respond to what has been perceived as a growing 'reassurance gap' (Crawford 2007). A significant reassurance policing programme was established between 2003 and 2005, arising in part from survey research which showed that despite year-on-year falls in crime since the mid-1990s a significant proportion of the public continued to believe that crime was still rising. In parallel with this, at the same time there was also political concern that despite dropping crime levels there were continued demands in many communities for tough and more visible action against a range of activities – some criminal, some not. In response, the government's 'antisocial behaviour agenda' developed strongly from about 2000 onward and, in due course, fed into the emerging reassurance policing experiment.

In 2005, the government introduced the 'Neighbourhood Policing' programme to develop neighbourhood policing teams that work closely with local communities (Home Office 2005). By the end of 2008, all local areas will have a local team consisting of police officers and Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs), possibly together with Special Constables, local authority wardens, volunteers and partners (see Crawford, this volume). The aim is to provide citizens with access to local policing services through a named point of contact, giving them an opportunity to exert influence over policing priorities in their neighbourhood, to facilitate the effective development and implementation of joint action to reduce crime and disorder with key partners and the public, and to provide clear accountability and feedback to local people about what is being done in their area. At one stage, there was speculation that the government was planning to introduce elected 'community boards' at the level of the neighbourhood, to whom the neighbourhood policing teams would be accountable. However, in the event, the government retreated from this position, demonstrating a continued reluctance to devolve too much power to local communities (McLaughlin 2006). For this reason, it appears that the long-term trend towards greater central control of policing is, on current evidence, unlikely to be reversed.

Policing and the police

The other most significant changes affecting policing in the post-war period are in some ways difficult to characterise. Put crudely they concern a set of

processes that have had the consequence of 'pluralising' the provision of policing. At the beginning of the twenty-first century we find ourselves confronted by what often appears to be a bewildering array of organisations that might broadly be thought of as policing bodies (for a discussion see, for example, chapters by Walker and Crawford, this volume). Indeed, so significant do the changes appear to have been that two influential criminologists have argued that 'future generations will look back on our era as a time when one system of policing ended and another took its place' (Bayley and Shearing 1996: 585). A central strand of Bayley and Shearing's argument concerns what they term the 'end of a monopoly' by the public police; something they allege has occurred since the mid-1960s. Though the accuracy of this claim has been contested (see Jones and Newburn 2002), what seems undeniably the case is that the 'policing division of labour' has become more highly differentiated and more complex in recent times.

Thinking more directly about public policing – the primary focus of this chapter – a number of distinct processes can be identified. These include: the imposition of tighter financial controls over the police; the related questioning of the appropriateness and effectiveness of the public sector in delivering particular policing functions; and the stimulation of alternative forms of provision through increasing emphasis on partnerships and related forms of citizen 'responsibilisation'. The Metropolitan Police Act 1829 recognised that the commissioner could employ civilian clerks, and indeed this happened from the early days of the force. Furthermore, there was a 'civilian' influence in senior positions prior to the 1950s with a number of commissioners being appointed from outside the service (Loveday 1993). By and large, however, most civilian appointments were confined to clerical or ancillary posts, and it was not until after 1945 that the main expansion in civilian employment took place (Jones *et al.* 1994). There was a very rapid expansion in civilian employment between 1945 and 1975, some slowing during the remainder of the 1970s and then increasing interest in a policy of civilianisation from the Conservative government in the 1980s, supported by bodies like the Audit Commission. The pressures stimulating increasing employment of civilians changed during the post-war period, from a concern initially with ensuring that officers were available for mainstream police duties to a more fiscally driven concern from the 1970s onwards focusing on 'economy' (police expenditure), 'efficiency and effectiveness' (specialist civilian staff in specialist support posts). Whatever the impetus, the policy of civilianisation has had a marked impact on British policing since 1945.

The era of tighter financial control in policing followed hot on the heels of one of the most significant increases in expenditure on policing. In 1979, part of the Conservative Party's 'law and order' election promises concerned a pay deal for the police, and an increase in police numbers. In the five years to 1984 public expenditure on the police doubled from £1,644 million to £3,358 million. A rather naive belief that this would yield positive results was quickly dashed and recorded crime predictably continued to rise despite the vastly increased financial commitment. Government ministers were deeply unhappy at what they perceived to be a lack of return on their expenditure and from approximately 1982–83 onwards the government began vigorously to pursue

its 'Financial Management Initiative' (FMI). This was designed to encourage efficiency and cost savings by applying private sector management methods to the public sector, and imposing market disciplines on them. Home Office Circular 114/1983 (and later the even tougher 106/1988), produced largely without consultation with police representative bodies, signalled that the financial climate had changed. The circular outlined potential new management strategies for the police – now generally referred to as 'policing by objectives' (PBO). Though Kenneth Newman had introduced very similar initiatives into the Metropolitan Police before the circular was published, both ACPO and the Police Federation were often very hostile to the new emphasis on 'value for money', largely because of the potential consequences for the terms and conditions of employment.

In addition to the problem of rising crime, the other major reason that the Conservative government felt able to adopt a stringent financial policy, particularly in its second term of office, was that recorded levels of public satisfaction with the police had been declining for some years (Skogan 1990). The Thatcher administrations of the 1980s were deeply sceptical about both the effectiveness and the efficiency of public services, and placed much greater faith in the efficacy of markets and in the ability of the private sector to deliver services economically. As a consequence, this period saw increased emphasis placed on market pressures and the beginnings of a flirtation with the idea of privatisation in the policing arena. The size and significance of the private security sector were anyway on the increase (Jones and Newburn 1998), there was, as we have seen, increasing civilianisation (and use of 'specials') within the police (Jones *et al.* 1994), and plans were floated to privatise the Police National Computer and to formalise a customer-contractor relationship between police forces and the Forensic Science Service, each of which gave rise to police fears that more widespread privatisation was possible.

The impact of both financial constraint and the spectre of privatisation was to open up a debate about the future shape of policing in Britain. This debate continued into the 1990s and was given further impetus by the establishment of the Sheehy and Posen Inquiries. From the very outset the Sheehy Inquiry was controversial. It was announced to general surprise at the Police Federation conference in May 1992, and was chaired by Sir Patrick Sheehy, the chairman of BAT industries; neither he nor any of its four other members had any experience of policing. The inquiry reported in July 1993 (Home Office 1993) just two days after the publication of the white paper on police reform. Its 272 recommendations were designed to 'reward good performance and penalise bad' and included fixed-term contracts for new recruits, the introduction of a severance programme for middle-ranking and senior officers, and performance-related pay for chief constables and their assistants.

The Posen Inquiry, established at roughly the same time as Sheehy, had a very specific 'contracting out' focus. Its terms of reference were 'To examine the services provided by the police, to make recommendations about the most cost-effective way of delivering core police services and to assess the scope for relinquishing ancillary tasks' (Posen 1994). The review team suggested that 'some of the resources needed to improve performance in core areas of work supporting key and national objectives will have to be found by releasing

resources currently absorbed by peripheral non-essential tasks or by finding more cost-effective ways of delivering core tasks'. The inquiry was, in essence, a further step along the road towards potential privatisation of certain police functions. Though the final report was a damp squib, it reinforced the view that the government was increasingly concerned to ensure value for money from the police and also that it was actively considering how the private sector could play a greater role in policing.

There have been a number of more recent developments that either have had, or are likely to have, an effect on the policing division of labour. New Labour's Crime and Disorder Act 1998 raised a host of issues for policing and how it is to be delivered (for a review, see Newburn 2002). Perhaps the most important – even though it is not a simple, direct or even intended consequence of the Act – concerns the implications for the 'role' of the police in the delivery of 'policing'. Crucially, it appears that the logic of the Crime and Disorder Act is likely to lead, at least in the long term, to further pluralisation of policing. There are a number of reasons for this. First, the Act places a significantly increased emphasis on the identification of local problems and local responses to them. Secondly, it encourages local choice and is likely therefore to stimulate competition. Thirdly, it explicitly encourages partnerships between public, private and municipal providers. And, finally, Best Value requirements are likely further to reinforce this 'marketisation' of criminal justice. Perhaps crucially in this regard, Best Value requires reviews of service provision to be undertaken according to what are known as the 'four Cs': *challenge* why and how a service is being provided; *invite comparison* with others' performance across a range of relevant indicators, taking into account the views of both service users and potential suppliers; *consult* with local taxpayers, service users and the wider business community in the setting of new performance targets; and *embrace fair competition* as a means of securing efficient and effective services (see Chapter 25). Together, the Crime and Disorder Act and Best Value make explicit the impossibility of a 'police solution' to policing and are likely to stimulate increased competition and further change.

Of all the recent inquiries into policing, the most explicit recognition of the increasingly 'plural' nature of policing and security provision was contained in the proposals advanced by the Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland (the Patten Inquiry) (1999) which was set up as part of the Good Friday Agreement (10 April 1998). The Patten Commission's role was to examine policing in Northern Ireland and to make proposals for future policing structures and arrangements, including means of encouraging widespread community support. It recommended a radical overhaul of accountability structures, including the introduction of a Police Ombudsman and a new Policing Board (not *Police* Board) to replace the largely discredited Police Authority. Beneath the Policing Board it recommended the establishment of District Policing Partnership Boards (DPPB) as a committee of the district council with a majority elected membership. In particular, it was envisaged that these boards would have responsibility for promoting partnership of community and police in the collective delivery of community safety. Perhaps most radically in this regard the Inquiry recommended that district councils

should have the power to contribute an amount initially up to the equivalent of a rate of three pence in the pound towards the improved policing of the district. This could enable DPPBs to purchase additional services from the police or other statutory agencies, or indeed from the private sector. Critics suggested that this would be exploited in such a way as to enable services involving, or even controlled by, paramilitaries to be purchased by DPPBs. Though by no means enacted in full in Northern Ireland (McEvoy *et al.* 2002; Mulcahy, this volume), and unlikely to be enacted on the mainland in the near future given the police reform programme that is underway, none the less the Patten Inquiry outlined an approach to policing and to police accountability that has the potential to transform policing in England and Wales in important ways, and may yet be seen as a model for reform in the future.

Finally in this regard there are the developments associated with what now appears to be referred to as the 'extended police family' and, more particularly, the increasing visibility of alternative forms of 'police patrol' (see Crawford, this volume). Of all the elements of the Police Reform Act 2002, it was the proposals for the introduction of community support officers that were most radical, though the idea was by no means a new one. Almost a decade earlier, a committee established by the Police Foundation and the Policy Studies Institute had recommended experimentation with alternative forms of police patrol (Police Foundation/PSI 1994; see also Morgan and Newburn 1997), only to be roundly criticised by ACPO and by New Labour in opposition for recommending 'policing on the cheap'. By 2002, however, the fiscal realities were such that it was difficult for any politician to avoid the conclusion that the level of policing seemingly demanded by the public could not easily be provided from within the public purse. A form of public-private partnership was proposed – not that such language was used. Using the more mellifluous idea of 'an extended police family', and underpinned by the 'broken windows' philosophy (Wilson and Kelling 1982), the White Paper included, and the Police Reform Act incorporated, proposals that agents and agencies such as neighbourhood and street wardens, security guards in shopping centres, park keepers and 'other authority figures' (Home Office 2001: para. 2.31) could be accredited by, and work alongside, the police in a formal capacity. More controversially, the government proposed a power to enable chief constables to appoint support staff to provide a visible presence (i.e. to patrol) in the community. These 'community support officers' were to be under the control of the chief constable and have limited powers to detain suspects, to stop vehicles and to issue fixed-penalty notices. The Home Office was primarily responding to the problem of limited resources in making such a proposal. While much of the police service appeared sceptical at best, and somewhat hostile in many cases, the Metropolitan Police – also subject to considerable resource pressures – was at the forefront of taking the idea of community support officers forward – the first of the new officers patrolling the capital from late 2002. By the end of 2007 there were 16,000 PCSOs in constabularies within England and Wales with government plans to extend the numbers further to at least 24,000 (Crawford, this volume). As such, this represents one of the most substantial changes to the landscape of British policing in recent years.

Directly and indirectly, through a number of its measures, New Labour has stimulated further moves in the direction of a more complex and fragmented policing division of labour. The Police Reform Act, via the creation of community support officers and the accreditation of extended police family members, is the most visible of the measures. Arguably, however, the Crime and Disorder Act, in conjunction with Best Value and the increasing emphasis placed upon consumer demand, will prove to be just as important in the process of formalising the mixed economy of policing. In outlining Bayley and Shearing's (1996) argument about profound systemic change in the nature of policing systems, I drew attention to the fact that they argued that central to this transformation has been the ending of the public police's monopoly on policing. Of course, in reality, no such monopoly ever existed (Jones and Newburn 2002). Nevertheless, in the not-too-distant past it was at least plausible to talk about the police as if they were synonymous with policing. Perhaps the best measure of the change that has taken place since the Second World War is the impossibility of making such an assumption now.

Conclusion

In attempting to bring some order to half a century of police history, and a period of rapid social change, I have suggested that four sets of issues or trends can be seen to have been dominant in this period. First, I suggested that in some respects the role of the police has expanded – or at least become more complex as the world being policed becomes more complex. At least as importantly, the image of the police has fundamentally altered and, in particular, we are now some distance from the high point of police legitimacy in the early years after the Second World War (Reiner 2000). As a consequence, the very idea of 'policing by consent' is now significantly more problematic than was the case 50 years ago. The result has been an almost continuous debate about the past decade over the 'proper' role and function of the police. The symbolic image of Dixon of Dock Green continues to reappear, serving to define a sense of what has been lost and, in the eyes of commentators such as the Commissioner and Deputy Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police and the journalist Peter Hitchens, what now needs to be regained. For the senior management of the Metropolitan Police (*Guardian*, 28 February 2003), the era of Dixon has been invoked in the hope that government and the public can be persuaded that significant increases in police officer numbers are necessary. For Hitchens (2003), Dixon represents a period of policing prior to the damaging changes brought about by 'social liberalism'. In an argument resonant of the critics of 'permissiveness' in the 1960s (Newburn 1992), Hitchens suggests that, as a result of a cultural campaign by the liberal elite, the police are now hamstrung by rules that have transformed them from an 'effective police force into [an] ineffectual police service' (2003: 291). For government, neighbourhood policing represents in modern form an attempt to recapture what is perceived to have been the positive and close relationship between police and community characteristic of the early post-war years.

Indeed, the nature of the relationships between the police and the communities they serve is the focus of the second set of concerns. This can be seen most clearly in relation to police–minority ethnic community relations. Late twentieth-century Britain witnessed a remarkable growth of cultural pluralism. Whereas for much of the post-war period the key sources of social and political identity were based around economic class divisions, we now live in a society in which these are allegedly less important. Though concerns about the policing of a diverse society are not new, the apparent gulf between the police and minority ethnic communities has been increasingly visible since at least the time of Lord Scarman’s inquiry in the early 1980s, culminating in the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry’s description of the Metropolitan Police as ‘institutionally racist’. With the addition of ‘new’ social issues such as asylum and mass immigration, and international terrorism (Innes and Thiel, this volume), policing diversity is set to remain a key theme in the coming decades.

The third theme concerns police governance and has been characterised by the progressive neutering of local authorities, the emergence of a form of managerialism that involves ever-closer scrutiny of police performance, the growing authority and influence of police representative bodies and, arguably most important of all, the ever-increasing power and influence of central government in policing. The creation of new national policing bodies, the increasing visibility of a national senior police officer elite, the increasingly powerful and vocal role taken by ACPO, and the growing influence of central government in policing all suggest that a slow process of nationalisation of policing may be underway. And yet there are countervailing trends. The expressed desire of government to stimulate local responsiveness and local democratic influence, together with the continuing differences between individual forces in relation to the most basic aspects of policing, such as crime recording (HMIC 1996) and levels of patrol service (Audit Commission 1996), should at least make one pause before assuming that the creation of a national force by default is an inevitability (even if it appears increasingly likely). Indeed, alongside the centralising tendencies in contemporary policing, there have been simultaneous pressures towards localisation and fragmentation. Indeed, policing appears to be becoming increasingly pluralised. The private sector continues to expand, public–private partnership working is no longer unusual and an array of other policing bodies – ranging from parks police and neighbourhood wardens to community support officers – are now part of the security patchwork (Newburn 2001). The police service’s broad mandate as an emergency service largely remains, but it is undertaken within a context in which they have to compete with providers who are functionally, geographically and legally limited and, therefore, potentially economically advantaged in the policing marketplace.

I suggested earlier that the period covered by this chapter has been one of rapid social change. As Rod Morgan and I noted a few years ago, ‘were we to resuscitate PC George Dixon he would find his surroundings somewhat strange’ (Morgan and Newburn 1997: 11). Yet in surveying the changing nature of British policing here I have made little reference to any of the specific areas of social and cultural change. Space precluded any particular mention, for example, of the changing distribution of income and wealth, the changing

nature of employment and of education and training. Nor have I discussed in any detail the very significant changes to the ethnic composition of the British population or to the changing nature of the family, though no doubt each, and all, of these has had an important impact on policing. I can do little more here than make note of this, with perhaps one exception. Numerous commentators (though see in particular Reiner 1992a) have noted the parallels between the changing nature of the social order being policed and the changing nature of policing itself. In this view, social order is in essence 'postmodern' and by implication so is policing (Reiner 1991; Johnston 2000). The impact of these changes can be seen in a number of ways: the fact that the police as a body with an omnibus mandate, symbolising order, seems increasingly anachronistic (Reiner 2000); that the provision of security is increasingly commodified (Johnston and Shearing 2003); and that policing bodies are simultaneously stretched globally and locally. There is one further aspect of 'late modernity', however, that is noteworthy in this regard. We live in increasingly reflexive times and this basic social fact has a potentially profound impact on all our social institutions, including the police. And it is this reflexivity which underpins and influences so much that has happened in the field of policing in the last half century. We are now more critical of policing and the police. We ask for more yet, given the greater visibility of the belly of the beast, feel we receive less. We are more demanding and less trusting, and this makes the role of the police under late modernity particularly difficult to define and to manage. It remains, however, a crucial task at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Though using different language, Sir Robert Mark recognised this over a quarter of a century ago, and perceptively noted the changes and consequences that it meant for the service he led:

For over a century we have been an artisan service trained to uphold a social system but not to think too much about it whilst doing so . . . The very nature of our role in a society which is better equipped to think for itself, to question custom and precedent, to demand greater equality of opportunity and above all to ask those who govern it the question 'Why?' requires that we ourselves should exercise the same curiosity about our role and the motives and justification for what we do. (1977: 117–18)

Note

- 1 A phrase used by many politicians. See, for example, David Cameron, at: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/opinion/main.jhtml?xml=/opinion/2006/01/05/do0502.xml>.

Selected further reading

Robert Reiner's *The Politics of the Police* (2000 – now in its third edition) remains the most comprehensive and finest book on British policing in the post-war period. Sociologically informed and historically detailed, it should be the starting point for

anyone interested in this period in the history of policing. Clive Emsley's *The English Police: A Political and Social History* (1996) provides a longer historical introduction. This reading is then best supported with the detailed work in Bottoms and Stevenson's (1992) chapter in *Unravelling Criminal Justice*, and 'insider accounts' of various types, including Critchley's *A History of the Police in England and Wales, 900–1966* (1967), Robert Mark's *Policing a Perplexed Society* (1977), and John Alderson's *Law and Disorder* (1984). A recent, very fine overview of changing police styles, structures and politics is to be found in Stephen Savage's *Police Reform* (2007). Other recent developments are well charted in Ben Bowling and Coretta Phillips' *Racism, Crime and Justice* (2002) and Jones and Newburn's *Private Security and Public Policing* (1998). There are a number of official reports on policing that, in their different ways, have important things to say, and which should be read in detail. Among the most important in the last decade are the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report (Macpherson 1999) and the Patten Report (Independent Commission on Policing in Northern Ireland 1999).

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