On April 14, 1981, William Whitelaw appointed Lord Scarman to inquire into the serious disorder on 10–12 April 1981 and to report with the power to make recommendations. When Scarman reported, everyone—government, police and media—welcomed his report almost uncritically, at least in public. The male, white, seventy-year-old Lord and judge provided, they said, something for everybody. British fair play and commonsense shone through in every carefully written page.

In reality, the issues involved in, and the pressures surrounding the publication of Scarman's report were much more complex, involving a number of different, often contradictory, groups and strands within the British state. From the point of view of the police, for example, any proposals for reform, however liberal, as was the case with Scarman, were regarded as a threat to their power base and autonomy. This power base had been built throughout the 1970s and was constantly being legitimated by their more powerful and often eloquent spokespersons. Any challenge to them was therefore likely to meet with stiff resistance and outright hostility.

At another level, Scarman's report was also overtaken by the announcement, in October, that the police already had new riot equipment including CS gas and plastic bullets available. This process in the militarisation of the police had a long history preceding Scarman and is examined in greater detail below. What it meant was that Scarman's proposal which followed the next month for a greater emphasis on community policing was usurped and became a secondary appendage to the technological imperatives of the force.

Another issue involves Whitelaw himself. Before Scarman reported Whitelaw had made moves to set up voluntary liaison committees between local community groups and the police. Scarman was to recommend that such groups were to be on a statutory basis. Whitelaw did not accept this, hence he moved before the report was published and took the initiative in establishing contacts between police and public. These committees were to be very much on the police's terms. Geoffrey Dear, an Assistant Deputy Commissioner at Scotland Yard was also promoted and put in charge of personnel and training and was expected to put greater emphasis on 'human awareness' training. Whitelaw could point to this the next
month when Scarman recommended changes in police training methods.

Much of what Scarman had to say therefore was redundant when he did report, and dead before his document saw the light of day. It is not the intention here to discuss the complexities surrounding the setting up of an inquiry such as Scarman's, nor the power struggles within the state between different interest groups to harness such inquiries for their own ends. Rather we wish to pinpoint the role of the police (despite the contradictions in the force) in undermining Scarman's proposals for limited change in their policing methods and structure of accountability. In doing this they picked up on some of the processes which had been in motion before he reported. They also utilised and emphasised one crucial factor, their belief that black people were disproportionately involved in street robbery. As we saw above, the force had been pushing this line since the early 1970s. Scarman, himself, in the construction of his report, left the door open for the force. It was an opportunity that the police, and in particular the Metropolitan Police (the Met), were not to pass up.

Scarman and Black Crime
Scarman's Inquiry centred on the events of the week-end of April 10–12 1981. During the course of the inquiry, other disturbances broke out throughout the country. In response to this, the government asked Scarman to take these disturbances into account when he came to prepare his report. This request was not evident in the final draft. Scarman mainly concentrated on the first Brixton disturbance and generally ignored those in other areas and regions of the country. Furthermore, although Scarman conducted the inquiry in two phases they were not equally divided in the time allotted to them. The first phase lasted for 20 days. In that time the immediate causes and the events surrounding the first Brixton disturbance were examined. Phase two was to examine underlying social conditions, including the policing of the area. Significantly, this phase lasted for only six days 'and the bulk of this time was spent in cross-examination of two senior police officers responsible for operations, recruitment and training. Once these officers had been cross-examined the Inquiry came speedily to final speeches from represented parties. This bias is reflected in the construction of the Report'.

The bias towards the police evidence was evident in Scarman's discussion of criminal statistics. In paragraphs 4.11–4.15 of the report, Scarman discussed the question of crime in Lambeth, focussing particularly on street crime in Brixton. While he acknowledged some of the methodological problems surrounding the usefulness of official criminal statistics as a reliable measure of the level of crime in a given area, he concluded that the submissions which highlighted these problems 'do not explain away the practical impact nor the seriousness of the crime problem as it
presented itself to Commander Adams and, subsequently to Commander Fairbairn.

According to the police, Brixton was the centre of a particular crime, street robbery, known colloquially as 'mugging'. This crime itself was associated with one group—the Afro-Caribbean male youth. Scarman noted that 'Brixton...faced a particularly high level of street crime and one in which black people were disproportionately involved.' In making this statement Scarman ignored the evidence of groups such as Concern and the study by the Home Office based researchers, Stevens and Willis, whose work indicated that black people were not disproportionately involved in street crime. The key to understanding the disproportionate number of black people in the official criminal statistics could be found in the practices of the Met both bureaucratically and on the streets. By concentrating both manpower and resources in areas such as Brixton, the police were likely to pick up more black people, especially the black youth who spent much of their time on the streets. This group then found their way into the criminal statistics thus leading to an even greater police and media concentration on the activities of black people. This, in turn, led again to more of them being picked up. In this way, in an ever-increasing spiral, the racist self-fulfilling prophecy was complete; the black criminal mugger existed, the cold, hard, objective criminal statistics told the public so.

While accepting the police's version about the nature of crime in Brixton, Scarman did have a number of criticisms to make about the policing of the metropolis. It is important, however, to contextualise these criticisms within the overall thrust and tenor of the report. As Nick Blake maintains: 'Scarman seems more concerned with restrained and tactful language than with reflecting the grave consequences of the broken responsibilities of Brixton police officers.' Blake goes on to point out that in a number of crucial areas Scarman failed to make any criticism of police misconduct; the failure to mention the 'ace of spades' tie brazenly worn by certain Brixton detectives; the failure to make any finding on the clearest evidence of three responsible journalists, and of photographs, of 'plain clothes officers carrying barbarous unauthorised weapons from Brixton police station during the disturbances under the noses of senior officers. No comment is made on the later punitive police raids in Railton Road which caused much damage and resentment.' Scarman recognised that some police officers were racially prejudiced in their dealings with black people. He denied however, the strong evidence that racism was institutionalised in the structure of the Met itself. His answer to individual examples of racist behaviour was to recommend that such behaviour should merit dismissal from the force. Scarman also recommended that there should be a statutory duty imposed on chief officers and police authorities to establish local consultative or liaison committees between the community and the police. This link would, in
his view, bring the police and the public closer together. His other major recommendations were made with this objective in mind; the establishment of an independent police complaints procedure, the appointment of lay visitors to visit randomly police stations and the re-examination of policing methods used, particularly in the inner city areas. There should be more emphasis, he maintained, on 'community' and 'home-beat' policing methods. If these recommendations were implemented, then the historical relationship between the police and the public based on consent and mutual respect—an idea which in many areas of Britain was based on fantasy rather than on any historical fact—would, in Scarman's view, return. The benevolent status quo would be restored.

In making these recommendations, Scarman made a fundamental error. He failed to recognise within the police force the institutionalised antagonism towards any kind of proposed change which challenged their power base and autonomy. Even proposals as liberal as Scarman's were a threat. Indeed, the police through spokespersons such as Mark, Jardine and Anderton, openly despised the introduction of liberal police reforms. They were often belligerent in defence not only of their own position but of the criminal justice system in general. Throughout the 1970s they were in the forefront of the argument (often setting the parameters within which the debate was conducted) about the tightening up of both the criminal law and the laws governing moral behaviour. They were, in Stuart Hall's terms 'a sort of vanguard in this process.

Thus, while Sir David McNee called Scarman's report 'fair and thorough' the Association of Chief Police Officers called it an 'objective study' and the Police Federation said it was 'a historic document' in reality, the police immediately mobilised and set in motion a campaign to undermine Scarman's principal recommendations. The key to their strategy would be to concentrate on the alleged rise in crime particularly street crime in the black areas of the inner cities. They would focus attention on the force's very own folk-devil—the black, male mugger. Scarman himself, by pinpointing black areas as places of criminal activity, had given them the ammunition and legitimation that they needed. It was this spectre—black, violent and unpredictable—which was to haunt the pages of the press in the months after Scarman reported.

Undermining Scarman

Scarman reported on 25 November 1981. By mid-January, Scotland Yard had embarked on the campaign which was designed to undermine the report's major recommendations regarding accountability. The campaign was conducted in collaboration with particular newspapers and selected television programmes. This gave the different senior policemen who spoke for the Yard the platform they needed to put forward their views. Generally, these views went unchallenged.
The basis of the Yard's campaign was an alleged, dramatic increase in the crime rate in general and street crime, 'muggings', in particular. According to the police, it was black youths, living in the inner-city areas, who were responsible for the majority of these crimes. It was on this group that the Yard focussed the attention of the media.

On 21 January, Peter Burden, The Daily Mail's chief crime correspondent discussed violent street crime in London in 1981. The crime rate he maintained, had 'broken all records. His report, More and More Muggers But The Yard Fights Back, described how Scotland Yard's Assistant Commissioner, Gilbert Kelland, had held a conference of top officers who came from areas where the Yard alleged that a major increase in crime had taken place—Lambeth, Hackney, Lewisham, Wembley, Tottenham and Battersea. Kelland told those present that there should be no scaling down of operations because of Scarman's criticism of policing operations in Brixton. Burden reported that although, 'Yard figures do not break down the race of muggers senior detectives say case files show that in some areas such as Lambeth and Lewisham most attacks are carried out by young blacks'. Burden also reported that the previous evening James Jardine, the Chairperson of the Police Federation had told a meeting in Guildford that Scarman had failed to provide a satisfactory answer to the level of street crime in the inner city. Two weeks later, The Daily Telegraph carried a similar story. 'Muggings of Women Double', said the paper's headline. Citing 'community police sources' the story described how 'the number of women mugged by roaming groups of black youths has almost doubled in many parts of London since last April's Brixton riots'. The report went on to describe how a police squad had been set up in Lewisham 'to trace black youths who mugged 14 people—13 of them women—over a week-end'. Nicholas Bennett, Lewisham Council's Conservative Police Liaison Committee spokesperson, said that reports showed that 'crimes are committed by West Indian youths between 14 and 21 years old against young and elderly, white and Asian women'. The next day The Sun's editorial spoke of Britain's 'Danger Street' and two weeks later, on 18 February, it ran a double page spread on 'The Menace of the Muggers'. The next day it was The Daily Mirror's turn. Mugging was 'Britain's top crime' the newspaper claimed.

Support for the police's campaign was not confined solely to the pages of the press. Members of Parliament also spoke about the increase in crime in areas populated by black people. In January, Harvey Proctor, the Conservative MP for Basildon, had set the tone for what was to come by arguing that the growth in Britain's non-white population would lead 'within a few years to no-go areas' which would necessitate 'the deployment of army units on the streets of our capital and other big cities and the imposition of night curfews and other profoundly un-English authoritarian measures'. A week later, another Conservative MP, Tony Marlow,
asked the Home Secretary, William Whitelaw, whether 'street crime in Brixton had increased since the ending of the riots and if so by what extent'. In February, Alan Clark, the Conservative MP for Plymouth, referred in Parliament to an article in *The Times* which had stated that figures for muggings were up by 50 per cent in certain inner city areas. Clark cited police sources who claimed that 'these offences are becoming increasing2 brazen with gangs of up to 50 young blacks looting in broad daylight'.

At the end of the month the police intervened more directly. On 26 February, Deputy Assistant Commissioner Leslie Walker told Independent Television's *The London Programme* that most muggings are committed by blacks. 'That is a fact... with street robberies they're disproportionate to white people in the amount of robberies that are committed.' Walker also maintained that the *Scarman* report had placed the police in a dilemma between the prevention of crime and the preservation of public order. 'What I would like to see his Lordship say is what he thinks we should do when the sheer weight of crime itself is threatening public tranquility.'

*The Standard*, one of the newspapers which carried the story informed its readers that there were 80 muggings a week in Brixton. The following day, *The Daily Mail* reported Walker's remarks. The newspaper also devoted space to the comments of two anonymous senior police officers 'operating in London's worst mugging areas'. One officer commented that 'mugging is primarily an immigrant offence. The serious crime undertaken by blacks is out of all proportion to their numbers in the community'. The other officer—a commander—agreed. 'The muggers are in the main black who cause havoc with the crime figures.' Both agreed that the white community 'is screaming at us to do something'.

On 10 March, Scotland Yard were due to release their yearly review of crime in London. This review, which was mainly in the form of statistics, was intended to highlight some of the trends with regard to a whole range of crimes and offences against public order. As usual, this exercise was strictly controlled by the Yard. It was they who decided not only what information should be released and the manner in which it should be presented, but also who was to attend the press conference at which the review would take place. The week before the conference, the press and media campaign became more intense as reporters and commentators continued to identify black areas as major centres and hiding places for the muggers. On 4 March *The Standard* cited, 'confidential figures' which the Yard were to release, 'in a few days time'. These figures showed a 96 per cent increase in muggings. The former Conservative leader of Lewisham Council, Nicholas Bennett, knew where the cause of this increase lay, '97 per cent of the attackers were West Indian', he said. Bennett criticised *Scarman*, whose report, he claimed, had hampered an effective police clampdown on muggers. In the next few days, several
newspapers were quick to pick up the theme. 'Muggings in London Now Top 50 A Day' said *The Sunday Telegraph*, At least 56 'Crimes an hour in London' reported *The Times* on the same day. These reports were also critical of the record of William Whitelaw on law and order. They saw the mugging statistics as indicative of Whitelaw's failure not only to come to grips with the problems of law and order but also to comprehend fully the problem of race relations. On 8 March *The Daily Mail* carried a major article by Andrew Alexander entitled 'Why the public should not trust this man'. Alexander attacked Whitelaw for his record on street crime claiming that this crime had increased from 13,000 in 1980 to 18,000 in 1981. Whitelaw's 'softly softly' approach to crime, he argued, was the root cause of this increase and was tied in with his approach to race, on which Whitelaw was 'not so much soft as positively liquid. . . his desire to appease the race relations industry is at once all consuming and pathetic'. Once again, with the help of some 'anonymous' Scotland Yard detectives, Alexander was quick to make the connection between race and the apparent rise in the level of street crime. 'How can you not be conscious of black crime, it's overwhelming?' one detective had told him. In Brixton, the coloured population was 36 per cent 'yet blacks are responsible for about 80 per cent of crime', the detective went on. The report concluded that 'most reported cases are of muggings by blacks of whites, especially of women'. The next day, at a meeting of the Home Affairs Committee of Conservative MPs, it was decided to summon Whitelaw to discuss the situation. Lord Scarman was in attendance at the same meeting. He was bitterly criticised for himself criticising policing methods in Brixton and for turning 'a straightforward issue of crime into one of race relations'. When Scotland Yard held a press conference the following day, the press and media were primed and ready to hear the news about black muggers. For their part, the Yard were also ready. By using the crime figures, built around the stereotype of the black male mugger, they were about to confront Scarman's challenge to their power and autonomy.

*Black Crime: The Alarming Figures* So the *Daily Mail* headlined their front page story on Scotland Yard's press conference. At the conference, the Yard, for the first time, produced a breakdown of street crimes committed by blacks and whites. Of the 18,763 offences of robbery and other violent theft reported by London's police in 1981, the Yard alleged that 10,399 had been carried out by 'non-whites'. Announcing the figures, Assistant Commissioner Gilbert Kelland, commented that the racial breakdown had been given 'to prevent gossip, rumour, and miscalculations and to set the record straight. There is a demand, police feel, for this information from the public and the media'. Kelland omitted to mention that the demand from the media had been instigated by the police themselves. As Gareth Pierce explained,
what had preceded the release of the statistics was, 'the strongest weapon in the police arsenal which was not CS gas or plastic bullets, the deployment of which causes some public concern, but effective control of a willing and uncritical press which causes none'.

While newspapers such as *The Guardian*, and to a lesser extent, *The Sunday Times* and *The Observer* attempted to contextualise and critically evaluate the statistical basis of the Met's analysis, the rest of the press and media uncritically accepted their version of events. Photographs of black muggers stared menacingly out of the tabloid's pages. Cartoons depicted them in action. Capital Radio's *London Programme* devoted the first 15 minutes of their early evening show to the figures. William Whitelaw and a senior police officer were the sole contributors. *The Daily Express* headlined its editorial 'Whitelaw the Weak'. 'Crime is not only booming it is becoming racial—just as a great deal of rioting is racial' it commented. *The Daily Mail* used the figures to attack the black community in general. Their report argued that 'the ordinary, decent black citizen of this country will see it as simply not his business that most of the mugging, most of the violence in inner London, is committed by young blacks... the reaction to the evidence that the old, the frail and alone among us are living in terror, will include no note of black concern... no cry of black compassion'. The *Mail* was clear in its support for Scotland Yard who 'by deciding after so many years to give boldly the facts... have ended a conspiracy of silence, compounded of white feelings of guilt, black feelings of persecution, police doubts about their role and Lord Scarman's certainty about nothing'. The next day, the newspaper repeated its call for William Whitelaw's removal to the House of Lords.

Reactions to the statistics from outside the media were equally severe. Jill Knight, the Tory MP for Edgbaston declared that the figures were 'intolerable'. After a meeting with Whitelaw she indicated that she had received a clear assurance that where serious criminals could be deported back to their countries of origin they would be. Her Parliamentary colleague, Ivor Stanbrook, supported this line of action. He commented that 'in the face of overwhelming evidence that instant crime has grown in immigrant areas, the Government has a duty to reconsider its immigration policy'. The day following the publication of the statistics, the Association of British Ex-Servicemen (ABEX) announced that they planned to patrol the streets of Brixton on the following week-end. The organisation maintained that members of ABEX, 'will be patrolling the streets of London as vigilantes and making citizens' arrests on black youths who are seen to be interfering with white pensioners in anyway whatsoever'. It was reported that senior officers from Scotland Yard visited the leaders of the group and had a two hour meeting with them which left the group 'in no doubt that the police would not stand by and let people take the law into their own hands'. 
It was difficult to imagine senior policemen meeting left-wing groups to discuss plans for community defence organisations. More fundamentally, it was the police who had clearly defined the parameters within which the debate about crime and law and order was to take place. In presenting the racial background of those alleged to have been involved in street robberies (the identification of whom was based, in the majority of cases, on very quick half-sightings, by the victim), Scotland Yard underlined the racial stereotype that had been built up since the early 1970s and which they themselves had been instrumental in propagating. Every young West Indian male was a potential mugger. Black communities had therefore to be watched and kept under surveillance so that they could be caught. Furthermore, any black person caught committing any crime, never mind a mugging, was to be dealt with severely. At Croydon Crown Court on 12 March, the presiding judge, Clay, duly obliged. Carl Williams, a British-born West Indian was found guilty of stealing from shops during a disturbance at Clapham Junction in the summer of 1981. Judge Clay indicated that he was considering a custodial sentence but when he heard that Williams had intended to go to Jamaica with his family, on a holiday, he bound him over on condition that he left Britain for five years. The judge, had, in effect, imposed a limited deportation order on Williams using powers enshrined in the Justices of the Peace Act 1361 and the Magistrates Court Act 1980. As the National Council for Civil Liberties commented, 'It is inconceivable that such an order would ever be made against a white British-born citizen whose parents had migrated here. The Lord Chancellor must condemn Judge Clay’s openly racist behaviour and make it clear that such activities will not be tolerated.'

The Lord Chancellor failed to make any such condemnation. On the contrary, the controversy about black muggers, crime and criminal statistics continued and underpinned what became a full-blown debate about law and order. The police, and their spokespersons, were at the centre of the debate. The next stage in their efforts to jettison Scarman was about to happen.

'A Dangerous, Insidious and Ruthless Enemy'
The release of the criminal statistics gave a clear indication of the police backlash to Scarman. In the following weeks that backlash was to intensify. It gained momentum as the force translated its hostility to Scarman's report into a debate about law and order and the integrity of the police. By playing their favourite law and order card, the police were making sure that the deck was heavily stacked against those who questioned their authority and autonomy. This, of course, included Scarman.

On 17 March, the Police Federation launched a £30,000 advertising campaign which called for the return of capital punishment. The Federation placed advertisements in five national newspapers. The advertisements demanded the return of the death penalty for the murder of police people,
prison officers and for 'terrorist killers'. More than 80 Conservative MPs signed a Commons motion supporting the Federation's position. Alongside the Federation's campaign, impassioned speeches were made both by MPs and senior policemen describing the horrors of the rising crime rate particularly in the inner cities.

On the same day that the Federation launched their campaign, James Anderton, the Chief Constable of Greater Manchester released the text of a speech that he was to make two days later. In it he criticised the attempts being made by individuals and groups, including Scarman, to make the police force more democratically accountable to local communities. While recognising Scarman's desire for 'responsible communications' between police and public, Anderton nevertheless repudiated many of the proposals which had been put forward as models for accountability. He argued that 'if some of the proposals were introduced the character of the British police would be changed for ever and life in this country would never be the same again'. He went on to say that the police were now a prime target for subversion and demoralisation, that there was a danger that they would be turned into the exclusive agency of a one-party state and that the only defence against this process was to abolish police committees and run a totally independent police force. 'I sense and see, in our midst, an enemy more dangerous, insidious and ruthless than any faced since the Second World War.' To combat this danger Anderton maintained that he and a handful of police chiefs were, 'the just men and saviours of Britain... The future of this country will be determined on an economic, racial, social and political basis by what happens in the major conurbations. There is no doubt of that. It is also self-evident that the success or failure of the police forces and chief constables in these crucial areas will determine how well the country survives'. The chairperson of Greater Manchester's police committee, the Labour Councillor Peter Kelly dismissed Anderton's views as 'daft'. However, James Jardine, immediately issued a statement supporting Anderton's position. Clearly for the 100,000 members in the Federation for whom Jardine spoke, Anderton's views were not as 'daft' or unrepresentative of the police as Kelly seemed to think.

In Parliament, the Home Secretary was under daily pressure from his critics to produce something hard and constructive to deal with the problem of law and order. This pressure had increased with the release of the National Crime Statistics, three days after the Met's. These figures indicated that recorded crime in 1981 had jumped by 10 per cent from the preceding year. Some Conservative MPs called on Margaret Thatcher to appoint a 'get tough Minister for Crime'. Their chosen candidate was the hard-line disciplinarian Dr Rhodes Boyson. In one Parliamentary answer Thatcher herself had implicitly backed Anderton's remarks. Clearly, police pressure was beginning to pay off. On 18 March Whitelaw hinted
that their campaign was indeed paying dividends. In reply to a question by Eldon Griffiths the Police Federation’s Parliamentary spokesperson, Whitelaw intimated that he, 'hoped to be able to bring forward proposals that will implement some part of the plans of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure dealing with police powers'. Within two weeks, the nature of these proposals was to become clear.

The police were now on the offensive. In a speech to police officers in Cardiff, James Jardine called on them 'to go to war' with criminals and criticised the abolition of the 'sus' law. In a critique of Scarman's proposals for consultation between police and public, Jardine maintained that genuine consultation was all to the good 'providing the people you consult with are on the same side and there is goodwill and a willingness to cooperate in maintaining the rule of law'. Critics of the police were therefore to be marginalised and omitted from any consultative machinery in favour of those who in taking part in consultation procedures were 'on the same side' as the police. Scarman's proposal for a limited critical dialogue between the police and the public was cast aside. In the same speech Jardine also attacked Paul Boateng, the chairperson of the Greater London Council’s Police Committee, which had been set up by the GLC to campaign for a democratically elected police authority for London. Boateng had maintained that the Metropolitan Police was 'riddled with racists' and that he agreed with Lord Scarman that any police officer found guilty of racist behaviour should be dismissed from the force. The Police Federation opposed this recommendation. Jardine was unmoved by Boateng's remarks. On the contrary, they gave him another chance to attack Scarman's report. Thus, he maintained 'that after Lord Scarman's report the accent was on consultation with the public. So far it looks as if all the effort is on one side, the police side, because there has been no let up in the trend of abuse and criticism of the police. We have the chairman of the GLC’s so-called Police Committee ranting on about police racism and, at the same time, demanding that he should be put in charge of the Metropolitan Police. God forbid'.

Boateng's speech indicated that the police were not having it all their own way. The General Secretary of the West Indian Standing Conference asked the Commission for Racial Equality about the possibility of taking legal action against the Metropolitan Police following the release of the criminal statistics. They hoped to do this under a section of the 1976 Race Relations Act. The Labour Party, in the form of James Callaghan, broke slightly with the incestuous and bipartisan approach to the policing of London by proposing a new London police authority made up of representatives from local authorities as well as the Home Office. The Met., he said, should no longer be accountable solely to the Home Secretary. The Labour Party's North West regional conference called for a public inquiry into the conduct of James Anderton. Within the police
themselves there was conflict. John Alderson, the Chief Constable of Devon and Cornwall criticised Anderton’s suggestion that the 43 police forces in England and Wales should be rationalised and collapsed into ten regional forces. These forces would be under the direct control of regional police commissioners. Alderson maintained that such theories about national police forces were 'based not so much on what is good for the people as what is good for the police'.

These criticisms, while important, appeared to make little impact on the thrust of the debate. The police had constructed a campaign which had aimed to outmanoeuvre and undermine those who challenged their authority. At the same time in their speeches and comments they continually legitimated their own position as defenders of the rule of law and as the apolitical guardians of British democracy. They had used the crime statistics, and the public's fear of crime to achieve this goal. In their eyes it was they, and not Lord Scarman who should be dictating the direction and operational duties of the force.

The significance of the events of the previous weeks was spotted by two writers in a contribution to The New Statesman. They argued that in what had recently happened 'one can hardly see conspiracy, merely sequence. But there is a certain coherence to it. What we are witnessing is the police backlash against the Scarman report. It comes now because many of the reforms proposed by Scarman, such as an independent police complaints procedure, and police community liaison committees are now close to implementation. In particular, the Met.'s decision to leak its deeply misleading statistics on black crime in London is an attempt to regain the initiative lost by Scarman's imputation of racism in the force'.

It was now up to Whitelaw to act. When he did, the police were not to be disappointed.

**Police Powers: The Great Leap Forward**

The week beginning 21 March was a crucial one for Whitelaw and, as it transpired, for the police too. The Home Secretary was due to attend a number of meetings where he would face his critics in the Conservative Party. He would have to answer their questions about his apparent failure to control crime and maintain public order. In answering them, he was also answering Margaret Thatcher, who appeared to be asking the same critical questions.

Whitelaw had started the week on a positive note. Sir Kenneth Newman, the former chief of the Royal Ulster Constabulary had accepted the invitation to become the next Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police in succession to Sir David McNee. The appointment was vociferously condemned most notably by Ken Livingstone the Labour Leader of the Greater London Council. Livingstone argued that if Newman employed his Ulster-style policing methods on the mainland then the working class
areas of London would be devastated within five years. Whitelaw stood firm. Newman would start on schedule on 1 October 1982. The hard man of Ulster was to be allowed to bring his own brand of policing to the streets of the nation's capital.

The Home Secretary's first meeting was with 115 backbench Conservative MPs, some of whom had been amongst his most severe critics. At the meeting he strongly defended his policies on law and order and ran through the familiar list of programmes which the Tories had introduced into the criminal justice system since their election victory in May 1979. The police force had increased in strength by 8,000. Expenditure had more than doubled in four years. Police pay was at an all-time high. There was to be a £500 million prison building and repair programme. New prisons were to be built at the rate of two per year over the next four years. The short sharp shock in detention centre regimes for young offenders was to become shorter and sharper. All of these, Whitelaw pointed out, were in fulfilment of the Conservative Party's election manifesto. As Home Secretary in the party committed to upholding the rule of law he had not failed—at least, not on paper. By the end of the meeting Whitelaw had pulled the Tory ranks in behind him. Although there were still the odd hard-line dissenters, Edward Gardner, the chairperson of the Conservative Backbench Committee described the meeting as 'the most remarkable demonstration for a Home Secretary one can remember'.

Whitelaw had achieved his success in two ways. First, he revealed that the government and the police were preparing for a renewed outbreak of public disorder which was designed to mark the first anniversary of the 1981 street disturbances. The police, Whitelaw said, would 'go in hard' if such disturbances occurred. They would use the 'Snatch Squad' techniques utilised on the streets of Northern Ireland to identify and pull in those targeted as the ring-leaders. He reminded his audience that he was once Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and that the danger of further disturbances in London and elsewhere lay in what he called the 'anniversary technique' which the IRA employed there to mark significant political events. If this was to be the case on the mainland then the police would react accordingly. Clearly the lessons he had learned in policing Ulster were not to be forgotten when it came to maintaining public order on the mainland.

Whitelaw's second tactic was to indicate that he intended to give more powers to the police. He gave no precise details as to what these new powers would be. His speech, however, was enough for James Jardine to comment that 'we would welcome anything the Home Secretary will do in legislation to strengthen the hand of the police'. Eldon Griffiths, intimated that he had been given 'more than a hint that we will have a bill'. Three days later Griffith's 'hints' had become facts as Whitelaw announced during a Parliamentary debate on law and order the exact
nature and extent of the new police powers.

In the debate the Home Secretary said that he accepted the case put forward by the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure for the extension of police powers. In particular, he proposed to give the police the power to stop and search individuals for offensive weapons. Furthermore, he intended to rationalise existing powers to stop and search for stolen goods. The police would also be able to search premises for evidence in what he loosely described as 'difficult cases'. They would be able to act in cases where they believed that there were 'reasonable grounds' for suspecting that stolen goods were concealed or that suspects had materials, the possession of which involved a criminal offence. These materials included drugs, firearms or housebreaking equipment. Further to this he proposed to give the police power to search premises without a search warrant providing that there was authorisation by a police officer of at least uniformed superintendent rank. This new power overturned the existing law which stated that the police, at least in theory, had to obtain a search warrant before taking action. Finally, Whitelaw proposed to exclude from jury service anyone convicted of an imprisonable offence within the previous ten years. This was to be done even if no immediate sentence of imprisonment had been imposed on the individual accused. This change, which the government was subsequently to postpone until a later sitting of Parliament, had been principally advocated not only by judges who sat in the courts but by police chiefs as well. It meant, in practice, that literally millions of individuals would be excluded from jury service as many minor offences such as stealing a milk bottle or carving a name on a park bench were still liable for imprisonment. As such, 'to have excluded all these people from jury service would have meant disqualifying millions because every year over two million people aged over 17 are found guilty of indictable or summary offences'.

In basing the extension of police powers on the recommendations of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, Whitelaw had done what many critics of the Commission had feared. He had picked up the strand in the Commission's thought which had argued for the extension of police powers. However, as the critics pointed out, the Commission had not provided sufficient countervailing rights for either those accused or those suspected of committing a crime. Here, too, the hand of the police had been at work for the deliberations of the Commission itself have 'been accompanied by a concerted police campaign for further powers. McNee, the Metropolitan Police Chief, argued in his memorandum for a general power to hold suspects for 72 hours before charging, with the option of a further 72 hours with the agreement of a single magistrate. McNee's other demands had included the abolition of cautionings, an end to the right of silence during interrogation, a general power for the police to set up roadblocks in local areas and the compulsory
fingerprinting of whole communities.\textsuperscript{105}

\textbf{McNee’s} proposals were probably representative of the thinking of the vast majority of police men and women in Britain. When the Commission finally reported in January 1981, many saw it as a triumph for the police. The evidence which the force had presented had won the day. Prophetically, a barrister, Paddy O’Connor, warned that with the publication of the report ‘there is much to fear from the future’.\textsuperscript{106} Another critic, Paddy Hillyard, was more direct, ‘in place of the existing confusion concerning the extent of police powers, the Commission has introduced more confusion but only after extending police powers. . . the package will establish in England and Wales a far more repressive and professionalised and bureaucratis'ed criminal justice system similar to the system in Northern Ireland’.\textsuperscript{107}

Whitelaw’s implementation of the Royal Commission’s proposals was therefore an important success for the police. They were now to add significant new powers to the extensive ones which they already had available. In the Commons the Home Secretary’s plans were supported by the Police Federation’s Parliamentary voice, Eldon Griffiths. They were, he said, ‘welcome steps forward’.\textsuperscript{108}

Whitelaw’s announcement coincided with the publication by the Law Commission of a working paper which called on the government to toughen up the law on public order. The paper argued that a riot should now be defined as ‘three or more persons present together in public or private, engaged in an unlawful course of violent conduct’. The new statutory crime the Law Commission proposed which would take the place of the old common law offence against public order would carry a maximum jail sentence of 14 years. Unlawful assembly and affray would also cease to be common law offences and instead would have a new statutory basis. Any individual convicted of affray would be jailed for ten years; for unlawful assembly the penalty would be five years. At the same time as these proposals were put forward Conservative MP Nicholas Lyell, proposed that the courts should be empowered to order a curfew on young offenders aged between ten and 21. For individuals in that age-group the courts could order them to stay at home, indoors, from 6 pm to 6 am during the week and from noon to 6 am at weekends. This proposal was eventually to receive government backing and was introduced as a clause in the Criminal Justice Bill which was in its committee stage in Parliament. The Bill, itself, was designed to give more powers to the courts. In particular, the courts would be given the power to order parents or guardians to pay fines, compensation and costs incurred by their children or young people in their care. Clearly, the state was now turning the screw.

The success of the police force in their campaign to challenge \textbf{Scarman} meant that the Home Secretary ignored some of his report’s most pointed
criticisms of police operational practices. This was especially true of their stop-and-search operations. Scarman had criticised the police for their stop-and-search 'Swamp 81' operation in Brixton which was conducted prior to the disturbances. He called it a 'serious mistake' and saw it as a major factor in the escalation of hostilities between the police and the local community, particularly, the black youth. Whitelaw disregarded this criticism. The rising crime rate and the maintenance of public order had taken precedence in Whitelaw's mind over Scarman's recommendations. The police had effectively marginalised Scarman's report through their law and order campaign. In the coming weeks, other proposals made by Scarman in the areas of police accountability and community relations were to receive the same treatment. Where Scarman had recommended statutory liaison committees between the police and local communities as one method of securing, in his view, some degree of accountability, Whitelaw introduced liaison committees in local areas which had no statutory basis. This left the police free to implement critical operational policies, such as the introduction of the Special Patrol Group into an area, without the possibility of any discussions between themselves and representatives of the area.

Scarman had also indicated that riot control equipment such as water cannon, CS gas and plastic bullets should be available in reserve for the police but that such equipment 'should not be used except in grave emergency'. Again, however, the police were putting pressure on the Home Secretary to ignore these proposals. At the Scottish Police Federation Conference police leaders called for riot squads, armed with plastic bullets and armour-plated vehicles to be available in Scotland. While Scarman felt that probationary and in-service training for police officers was both too short and inadequate from the point of view of teaching officers to be skilful and courteous in their relationship with the public, the Federation, in a gross distortion of Scarman's recommendations indicated they would submit training requirements for the riot squads to a committee which had been set up by the Scottish Home and Health Department 'to review police training after the report of Lord Scarman on the Brixton riots'. At the beginning of May, Whitelaw himself told the Police Superintendent’s Association meeting in Torquay that they could no longer afford to be without water cannon, CS gas or plastic bullets. In the middle of the month the Home Office invited tenders for a prototype water cannon to be used by the Metropolitan police. At the same time, four West German police officers started a two week training programme for British police officers. The German officers were to instruct their British counterparts how to use the water cannon on board the two vehicles which were on loan from Germany. These officers would then 'instruct forces throughout the country'.

Finally, during this period, the Police Federation in England and
Wales were holding their annual conference at Scarborough. In his final speech before retiring James Jardine gave the Federation's qualified support to Scarman's report. He intimated, however, that there were 'one or two points on which we have reservations'. These reservations, in fact, were substantial and involved some of the central recommendations in the report. The Federation, he said, totally opposed the suggestion that racial discrimination should become a specific offence under the Police Discipline Code.

They were also opposed to changes in the police complaints procedure. While Scarman had proposed an independent element in the complaints procedure, Jardine argued that it would be against the wishes of the Police Federation if an independent assessor was introduced to deal with serious complaints. Jardine supported Scarman's view that there should be better consultation between the police and the local community. There were qualifications here too. The police, he said, would be willing to consult with the public 'provided that the people with whom we consult are genuine representatives of the public and share our wish to maintain the rule of law'. Once again, Jardine had reiterated the force's belief that it was only those who observed the 'rule of law', that is those who were uncritical of police practices, who should be allowed to participate in consultation between police and public.

Basil Griffiths, the Federation's vice-chairperson, supported Jardine's criticisms. Some of the recommendations made by Scarman, he said, were 'arrant nonsense'. He maintained that areas such as Brixton were bound to be criminal because many of those who lived there came originally from Jamaica where, 'it is notoriously the case that it is unsafe to walk the streets alone at any time of the day or night because of the danger of assault and robbery'. Given this situation, Griffiths concluded that, 'amongst any immigrant population there will be imported into the host country, a significant measure of the typical style of criminal behaviour in the country of origin'. As if to back up his claims he also pointed out that 'the overwhelming majority of those who took part in [the] riots were black youths of West Indian descent'.

Finally, the Conference heard from Fred Jones, a Merseyside policeman, who called for a new Riot Act to replace the one repealed in 1967. Jones maintained that the Act was needed to protect police officers in a riot situation. In saying this, he also attacked Scarman; 'It is all right for Lord Scarman to say that there is no need for a Riot Act. Lord Scarman is not out there. He lives in the cloistered seclusion of the Inns of Court.' Once the Act had been read out publicly by a Chief Constable or magistrate then if people got hurt it would be 'their hard luck'. On that note, the Conference ended. The police wheel had come full circle.

Thus, in the six months since Scarman had published his report, the police had successfully conducted a campaign aimed at undermining the
challenge to their power base posed by his major recommendations. Together with an uncritical press, an acquiescent Home Secretary and a largely impotent Labour opposition, they had, for the most part succeeded. In the course of this campaign, built around a set of highly dubious criminal statistics, and a readiness to foster the racist stereotype of the black, male mugger, police powers had been extended, riot equipment had been made available on a scale hitherto unknown and the threat of Scarman had been effectively neutralised. His report, from which everyone was eager to quote, was already gathering dust on the shelves of the Home Office by the time the Police Federation met at Scarborough. Scarman's notion that the report would be a blueprint for the future policing of the nation had proved to be fallacious. On the contrary, the politics of policing the future and maintaining social order would be a question to be determined principally by an increasingly authoritarian state mediating its policies through an equally repressive criminal justice and welfare system. The police, it would appear, seem destined to play a pivotal role in that process.

NOTES

3. The Sun, 13 Sept. 1978, is typical of the imagery referred to, there are many other examples.
9. Sir Kenneth Newman's views on the biological base of West Indian anti-authoritarianism can be found in the American Police magazine for January 1982 (Vol 5 no. 1). See also speech by Basil Griffiths vice-chairman of the Police Federation reported in Police Review, 28 May 1982.
12. Gus John and Derek Humphry, Police Power and Black People, Pan


15. Gilroy, *op. cit.*


27. One instance of this is the way in which Alderson was interviewed in *Marxism Today*, April 1982. Also M. Kettle, *Marxism Today*, October 1980.

28. The case of David Brooke is particularly interesting, see *Guardian*, 12 May 1981.

29. See Alderson's evidence to the Scarman Inquiry, 'The Case For Community Policing', p. xii.


32. Scarman Inquiry, Day 6, 22 May 1981.


34. Scarman Report, para 8.63.

35. See note 23.

36. Webb, *op. cit*.


41. *Race Today* is the best single source of information on these confrontations for Southall see CARF, *Southall the Birth of a Black Community*, IRR 1981.

42. The examples of BASH (Blacks Against State Harrassment) and Southall's People Unite are the most obvious, Sivanandan cites numerous others in his, *Resistance to Rebellion*.


51. Clarke and Heal (eds.). The Effectiveness of Policing, Gower, 1980.
52. For example. David Jones, Crime, Protest, Community and Police in Nineteenth Century Britain, RKP, 1982.
54. See note 24.
58. Ibid., para. 4.13.
60. P. Stevens and C. Willis, Race, Crime and Arrests, Home Office Research Study No. 58 HMSO.
62. Ibid.
72. Daily Mail, 27 Feb. 1982. At this time the press were also covering the Terry May trial. Seven black youths were accused of murdering a crippled white youth, Terry May, during what the Daily Mail described as 'a revenge hunt for skinheads who had attacked black youths at Thornton Heath, South London'. The newspapers graphically described witnesses' accounts of black youths 'swarming' over the dead boy's body. Comparison between this coverage and the coverage given to attacks by white youths on black people is illuminating.
73. The Standard, 4 March 1982.
75. The Telegraph, 8 March 1982.
76. The Times 8 March 1982.
77. Daily Mail, 8 March 1982.
78. Ibid., 9 March 1982.
79. Ibid., 11 March 1982.
82. There are major methodological problems with police criminal statistics. Some policepeople are beginning to recognise this (see above). The Lord Chief Justice and, a bit too late, Lord Scarman also touched upon the problems surrounding these statistics in the House of Lords debate on law and order in March. These serious problems are, however, rarely highlighted, least of all by the majority of policemen and policewomen.
The police were already carrying out some of these practices. In January 1982, more than 20,000 police officers carried out a nine week exercise in which every garage in London and the Home Counties was searched ostensibly to look for an alleged cache of IRA explosives. Not a single trace was found (Sunday Telegraph, 17 Jan. 1982).