

# THE PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

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Michael S. Pike

*Foreword by*

the Rt. Hon. Lord Scarman, O.B.E.

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# Acknowledgements

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I should like to acknowledge the ready assistance given by the Commanding Officer and staff at the New York Police Academy. The social studies section of their initial training programme for recruits is the basis for much of the chapter on 'Sense and Sensitivity'.

For some other American sources, I am indebted to many of my friends and former colleagues at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, New York. In particular, I am grateful to Professor P. J. Stead, formerly Dean of Academic Studies at the Police Staff College, Bramshill, and until 1983, Dean of Graduate Studies at John Jay College, whose advice and encouragement have been much appreciated.

MICHAEL S. PIKE

# Foreword

by THE RT. HON LORD SCARMAN, O.B.E.

During the last few years police studies have come into their own as business of great social importance. It may be that the 1981 disorders in Brixton and Toxteth awoke the public conscience by the sheer surprise that such things could happen in the Britain of today.

Whatever the reason for the heightened interest in the principles and practice of policing, it is refreshing to find that not only academics and politicians but also policemen are concerned to analyse and reassess the role of the police in British society. Mr Pike's book is of absorbing interest and real value because the reader is able to appreciate the complex interaction of principle and practice. Practice modifies principle as surely as principle governs practice. The mark of the first-rate policeman is the ability to make not once but continually the correct decision when operational need appears to diverge from the requirements of principle. Here arises an important element in the policeman's discretion. Training, experience, intelligence, and character are the indispensable conditions for the proper exercise of his discretion, a word which is lawyers' jargon for the exercise of judgment in the particular circumstances of the case.

The year 1984 has posed new problems for the police in the maintenance of public order. They have had to handle the threat to public order arising from massed pickets at coal-mines and power-stations. The 1981 disorders were different in character; and perhaps a less serious threat than those of 1984 to the social acceptance of the strong arm of the police in the suppression of public disorder.

The police operations arising from the coal-strike will have to be studied and analysed. But the events of 1984 cannot be allowed to undermine the responsibility of the police to maintain public order, which includes the right of every one of us to move from one

place to another without physical hindrance. It matters not whether those who would obstruct others in their use of the highway act upon the purest of motives or merely to do mischief; they must be restrained, if they cannot be persuaded to desist. The police problem, as ever, is to act effectively but in a way which is socially acceptable, and, of course, to keep scrupulously within the law.

Voices have been heard to query whether the police have any role in an industrial dispute. The answer is that they have only if a criminal act or a breach of the peace is threatened or committed. Where that situation exists, the policeman has to intervene. The real difficulty is as to the nature and scale of his intervention. In meeting that difficulty the policeman must exercise his own independent judgment, taking care to act within the law.

Studies such as the present work assist the police to make correct decisions and the public to understand their problem. I commend this book as helpful in the search, which is never-ending, for the correct balance between effective and socially acceptable policing. If it be true that policing cannot be effective in a free society unless it is socially acceptable, then the question arises how best to ensure that the public understand what is required of them to enable the police to act effectively. There is a duty on all of us to support the police, as there is a duty upon the police to ensure that they act in a way which commands the confidence of the community which they serve. The present work makes a substantial contribution to a better understanding by police and public of what is required of each other.

# Introduction

Policing has always been a subject of interest to the public and rightly so, for the police hold a unique position in society. No other agency has such a capacity for influencing the lives of so many people from day to day and it is a reflection on the value of the police that, despite their task of regulating and controlling individual freedom, they are still held in high regard by the majority of the public. The British police and their capacity for controlling incidents of disorder without resorting to extreme measures of control have been the envy of the world and they have been regarded as a model on which policing in a democracy can be based.

In 1981, I had the privilege of representing the Police Staff College, Bramshill, as visiting lecturer at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice at the City University, New York. During the course of lecturing on comparative police systems, I had projected the British police system as an effective compromise between the centralised systems of policing found on the continent and the local and decentralised systems found in the United States. While extolling the virtues of the British system, the scenes of disorder at Brixton appeared on American television and these prompted questions from my students which had no immediate answer.

During research into certain aspects of American policing, it became clear that as a result of their own urban disturbances and race riots some years previously, they had adjusted policing methods and policies and, in particular, had introduced into their training programmes a wide range of social studies, with the objective of increasing an officer's social and human awareness. It was this social factor which had never previously featured in British police training. It formed the basis by which an officer could understand his role in society and how to perform his duties effectively.

Here was an indication of the professionalism found in many urban and other police departments in the United States, a

professionalism whereby an officer understands the origins of his profession and the role of that profession in society.

Lord Scarman's Report on the Brixton Disorders proved to be a consolidation of many of the aspects of policing I had encountered in American police training programmes and this, together with the Report of the Royal Commission on Criminal Procedure, provided a comprehensive basis for a further analysis of the policing function. The result has been this attempt to examine the principles of policing. It is essentially a post-Scarman commentary on policing which draws on a variety of sources, old and new, in order to identify those underlying principles which have stood the test of time and shaped the modern police service.

The work involved has been a personal commitment prompted by the opportunity to increase my own professional knowledge and awareness by lecturing and research in the United States. It represents a modest contribution to the continuing dialogue between the police and the public which Lord Scarman hoped would follow his report. To this extent, the book is intended for the public in order that they can increase their understanding of the traditional nature of policing and the complexities of the police role. It is also hoped that police officers may find it a useful work of reference and the basis for a greater understanding of their profession.

Much of the comment and discussion is not original and sources are acknowledged where necessary. Where my own comments and observations are included, it is emphasised that they do not necessarily represent the views of any particular police force or the police service in general.

#### *Author's Note*

Any reference to a police officer in the text naturally includes a woman officer and any reference to 'he', 'him' and 'his' should be read accordingly.

M.S.P.