



# Making monkeys out of police chiefs?

 As if Labour's plans for the police were not enough to worry about, the Tories have come up with a notion that is both daft and dangerous. If they get in, they will scrap all police authorities and make chief officers answerable to an elected commissioner.

When Michael Howard was Home Secretary, he wanted to appoint his own nominees as salaried chairmen of police authorities. This would have given the Home Office more direct control over forces than at any time in history. The plan, part of the 1994 Police Bill, was scuppered, thanks to the opposition of the late Willie Whitelaw and other former Home Secretaries in the Lords.


What if these people's commissioners had been in place when Cleveland Police was enmeshed in the squalid Mallon affair? Ray Mallon would have run for the job, on a zero tolerance

platform and he would have won by a mile. This half-baked recipe for trouble at the top of every force could lead to the BNP and Muslim fundamentalist groups battling to decide who gives orders to the police. Don't scoff: electors who return monkeys as Mayors, which happened in Hartlepool when a man dressed as a monkey won on a promise of 'more bananas for school children' are capable of anything. The police authorities, which, after all, are Mr Howard's creation, aren't perfect, but they are more representative than the political cabals that used to be a thorn in the sides of chief officers. By and large they are doing a good job. Mr Howard cites the partnership of Giuliani and Bratton in New York as the kind of "dream ticket" he wants here. Doesn't he know that Giuliani ousted Bratton because the police chief was getting most of the credit for NYPD's achievements? 



Tony Judge, founder of *Police* magazine in 1968

## All together now

 I am quietly confident in making this prediction: after the election has been and gone, Blair will still be in control, with no intention of retiring for at least five years. I refer, of course, to Sir Ian of that ilk. No sooner had Sir John Stevens left New Scotland Yard to spend more time in Paris, probing into the death of Princess Diana, than the new man in command hit the ground spinning. And promptly scored a couple of spectacular own goals.

First, there was the new logo. The media went to town on the cost of changing "Working for a safer London" to "Working together for a safer London". Yes, the six-figure sum involved may be peanuts when you are running a multi-billion organisation, but how does this gel with Sir Ian's announcement that he is going to save many millions with

a war on bureaucracy? To judge from local radio phone-ins, Sir Ian and the public aren't "together" on this one. Perhaps taken aback by the adverse reaction, the commissioner said he had ordered the change because the original was set in italics, which made it hard for shortsighted people to read. Come to that, the entire initiative seems to have been remarkably shortsighted. The average citizen puts Bobbies on the beat streets ahead of slogans. Nor were hard pressed council taxpayers over impressed by a full-page advertisement in every local paper in London, which introduced the new commissioner to his admiring public.

This business of force logos started some years ago, when the service began to worry about its image. I'm not aware of how successful they have been in terms of getting the public to

identify with the mission statement of the local police. They may represent the corporate thinking of some of the most expensive creative minds in our finest advertising agencies, or they may result from a rare flash of inspiration from an ACPO rank, but does anyone care? To me, they all seem to be statements of the glaringly obvious. We used to have a universal logo. Everyone knew what it signified and it was rather a good brand name. Just one word – POLICE.

I think the very first logo in policing came from the FBI. J. Edgar Hoover wanted a motto that epitomised the elite status of his crime-busting empire. From all those submitted, he chose "Fidelity – Bravery – Integrity", not only for the obvious reason that it used the Bureau's famed initials, but because "Fidelity" happened to

be the name of the FBI's own Masonic lodge. Now that's what I call "togetherness".

Sir Ian Blair may be hoping that his initial self-promoting salvo will do something to offset that unfortunate label that some papers have bestowed on him: "Britain's most PC top cop". It wasn't his fault that the *Sunday Times* delved into his background for anything unusual and discovered that while at Oxford he directed student plays, enabling them to call him a "luvvie" – not quite the makeover that Sir Ian is looking for.

Relax, commissioner. You are probably the most cerebral and imaginative police officer to head the Met since Sir Robert Mark. Just remember, it's not about you, it's about everyone who works (together) to make London safer. 