

Pray silence for Louise

Some of the funniest episodes of *Yes, Prime Minister* involved turf wars between civil servants and Jim Hacker's "special advisers". It's uncanny how often the show's story lines have been replicated in real politics. Take the case of Ms Louise Casey, whom Tony Blair installed as his Yob Culture Tsarina. It has been reported that Charles Clarke's nose was put out of joint after Mr Blair expressed his impatience with the progress of the war on anti-social conduct and told Casey to report directly to him.

Ms Casey was an after-dinner speaker at a private seminar for senior Home Office officials, academics and chief constables at Stratford on Avon. In these Shakespearean surroundings, according to the *Daily Mail* and a tape recording, she spoke in a

vernacular more suited to Falstaff than Portia. Besides a liberal sprinkling of obscenities, she rubbished the crackdown on binge drinkers and the Government's liking for 'evidence-based' policies.

The strange thing is, the dinner took place on June 7 but a full month passed before the press ran the story, and then only after Mr Blair had ruffled feathers at Queen Anne's Gate. The Home Office announced there would be a disciplinary inquiry, but Downing Street immediately made it clear that Ms Casey would remain in her post. She comes across as a Julie Burchill type, with Bob Geldof's command of the vernacular. I warm to her. She knows the streets and uses the language of the streets. No prizes, then, for guessing who tipped off the *Mail* about her embarrassing



Tony Judge, founder of *Police* magazine in 1968

moments. Anyway, what did the mandarins expect? After all, she is the head of the anti-social unit.

Flashed down the pan?

The countless thousands of "law abiding" motorists who rage against speed cameras may take heart from learning that Stephen Ladyman, the new road safety minister who is overseeing a review of the yellow perils, has been caught three times, giving him nine points on his licence. More than two million drivers were caught last year, which seems a good way to alienate a large segment of the electorate. Small wonder that the Government has rejected more than 500 proposed new sites. ACPO says that lives may be put at risk, while opponents say that the claim that cameras save lives is based on flawed interpretation of the data. I hope that Mr Ladyman stands firm, while finding it safer to make more use of his ministerial chauffeur. With the smugness that comes with a spotless licence after forty years, I have no sympathy for the whingers.

Policing by consultants

The "New Labour Project" seeks to revolutionise the institutions of Government in every area from transport to crime. The entire public sector is in the throes of reform, with the real power in the hands of a vast army of highly paid consultants whose "blue sky" thinking creates the objectives to be achieved. The departmental civil servants, resentful as they may be, are there to do the bidding of these extremely bright young men and women, mostly from the consultancy firm, McKinsey.

The current wave of police reform follows a host of radical innovations, based on fashionable theories that had been quietly discarded just before the service heard

about them. Who can forget Policing by Objectives? Then there was "Plus" and "Sector Policing". A former McKinsey executive, Eileen Shapiro, exposed the modus operandi of management consultants in her book: Fad surfing in the boardroom. She defined fad surfing as; "riding the crest of the latest management wave and then paddling out again in time to catch the next one; always lucrative for consultants; frequently disastrous for organisations." Sounds familiar? Do not be surprised if some of the exceptionally talented people whom Mr Blair wants to add to the higher echelons of the service are McKinsey alumnae.

Mutineers in ermine

Last month, no fewer than six retired chiefs of the defence staff fired a broadside of Trafalgar proportions at the Ministry of Defence. Rising from the cross benches of the House of Lords, they lambasted the Government and its lawyers for hanging out to dry our troops on active service in Iraq. They said that prosecutions based on political correctness were undermining morale. Lord Guthrie was scathing about British solicitors who, following any shooting incident, could be found "scouring for business on the streets of Basra."

Sounds familiar? Although the noble brass hats were primarily concerned with the threat to the integrity of military discipline and the courts-martial system, their protests echoed Sir

Ian Blair's angry denunciation of moves to prosecute the Met officers involved in a fatal shooting eight years ago. The activities of the type of lawyers Lord Guthrie had in mind have brought about the current unrest among firearms officers. As with the soldiers, no one is demanding a licence-to-kill, just a grasp of realities and a common sense appreciation of the pressures of life and death decision making. The sad thing is, that in recent cases, it is more the mindset of police investigators than outside legal interference that lies at the heart of the problem. Perhaps it is time the distinguished ex-police chiefs in the House of Lords staged a similar demonstration of their solidarity with their former colleagues.