


A recipe for discontent


 Sir Ian Blair, the Met commissioner, used his address to the Superintendents' Association conference last month to confirm his decision that henceforth, beat officers and CSOs will not patrol the streets in twos. His message to the force could have been expressed in song: "You'll always walk alone."

The commissioner also called for radical change in the ways that police officers all over the country are paid. He said that some are getting too little for what they do, while others are paid too much. He called for the abolition of national pay scales, to be replaced by regional negotiations in which police pay would follow the local employment market. That's fine for the Met and some other areas, but bad news for the rest of the country. This is what then Home Secretary Kenneth Clarke was after when he set up the Sheehy Inquiry in 1992.


Sir Ian admits that the Sheehy Report contained "many idiocies", notably the abolition of housing allowances, yet he wants police pay to reflect job evaluations, besides rank and length of service – a key Sheehy proposal that, thankfully, was rejected by the Police Negotiating Board. Less than five per cent of officers at that time stood to gain from the proposed job-related pay scales,


while most of the rest would have been heavy losers.

Sir Ian acknowledges that the ability to deploy officers in a vast range of situations is a huge advantage for police managers, yet he is calling for changes which would curtail such flexibility. Sir Ian betrays his own ultra-PC image when he says it is "absurd" to base pay on the fiction that all officers are liable to shift work. If he had his way, officers who work 'office hours' would be paid less than the shift workers, a proposal that would surely bring the service into conflict with Equal Opportunities law, as would his call to cut the pay of officers who, for medical reasons, are not able to perform the full range of duties.

The Federation is already thinking along the same lines as Sir Ian when it comes to whether those whom he calls 'partially warranted' staff should be eligible to join the Federation. This has already raised the wrath of trade unions that have a minority of police staff in their membership. The idea is worth exploring carefully, although it may lead, inevitably, to recognition that the roles of some support staff justify the status of auxiliary police officers. It would clear up most of the arguments about  their powers.

Open secrets


 There has been media speculation that the Special Branch is to be absorbed in a rejig of all intelligence gathering bodies. I recall that twenty years ago, at the height of the miners strike, Sir Charles MacLachlan, the chief constable of Nottinghamshire, asked an inspector to provide him with intelligence so that he could anticipate the next moves of the militant miners who were creating havoc in the county. Each


day, the inspector submitted a surprisingly accurate forecast of where the next spot of mass picketing would erupt. The inspector, who happened to be a senior Federation member, told me that his secret information came from the *Morning Star*, then the organ of the Communist Party. His copy came every morning, via the Special Branch, in a plain brown envelope. 




Tony Judge, founder of *Police* magazine in 1968

Roger and out

 The latest twist in the troubled saga of Airwave says just about everything we need to know about the foresight of our top-level decision makers in this country. Airwave, you may recall, was announced to the public, as "the 21st century tool to fight 21st century crime." Not below street level, it isn't. This glaring omission was revealed some time ago

and only seized upon by the media at large after the July bombings in the Underground. It is reported that it will cost over £10 million to enable Met officers to use the radio system underground, and the most optimistic date for this to happen is 2007. Still, let's not blame anyone: who would have thought that terrorists  would attack the Tube?

Can you hear us?

 There are so many "cop shows" on TV these days, with most of the fly-on-the-wall reality programmes making no effort to put the incidents they film in a balanced perspective, that the arrival of a new series may have provoked yawns among viewers sated with scenes of drunken yobs and fighting neighbours. This one, *Murder Blues*, was different, thanks largely to executive producer Roger Graef, the greatly respected doyen of the police documentary. Years ago, his series on Thames Valley police shamed the service into transforming its chauvinistic approach to rape victims and restored women officers to an area from which, astonishingly, they had been virtually excluded.

Murder Blues was a three part examination of Operation Trident, the Met's response to the epidemic of black-on-black shootings that has devastated families and neighbourhoods all over the capital. It showed the extent of the problems facing the police, but emphasised the remarkable successes they are achieving, contrary to the wilder reporting in the media. The programme gained added integrity through Graef's long standing involvement as a founder member of the Independent Advisory Group which works with the Met in seeking to find the answers to issues between the police and ethnic minorities. 