

Tony Judge

## A question of priorities?

Last month, Dr Derrick Campbell, of the National Advisory Group on the Criminal Use of Firearms, launched a tirade against the government, suggesting that ministers accepted black-on-black gang murders, with victims seen as ‘just another one we don’t have to worry about’. He went on to complain that the murder of little Rhys Jones in Liverpool received more media attention than similar killings of black youths. It appears that Dr Campbell’s outburst arose from alleged cuts in grants to “community cohesion projects”. If there is an iota of truth in the allegation that the government is indifferent to the killing of black youths, it would be a national scandal. Let us be generous and say that Dr Campbell, who with his colleagues has done remarkable work alongside the police and other bodies to combat gun crime, blew his top out of frustration.

As for the ill-conceived comparison with the outpouring of national sympathy that followed the horrific killing of Rhys, was this any different from the public’s reaction to the murder of Damilola Taylor, or that of Stephen Lawrence at the hands of white racists?

I do not doubt that the budgets of groups that aim to help to combat gun and knife crime are feeling the current economic pinch. However, we have witnessed the spectacle of millions being spent by the previous Mayor of London’s administration on race-related projects in London that appear to have achieved next to nothing in community gains. Like it or not, taxpayers’ expenditure on combating crime and disorder has to be subject to the same scrutiny that applies, or should apply, to all areas of government spending. I have more sympathy with patients who are suffering from life-threatening illnesses who are faced with postcode rationing or the refusal of the NHS to pay for expensive drugs that hold out the prospect of saving or extending lives. This is where the exercise of cost-effectiveness has painful and sometimes heart wrenching consequences. The same can be said of recent examples of cuts in compensation to victims of crimes, and the shabby treatment of wounded servicemen and women.

In the language of priorities, the alleged deprivation of young men of any colour, who roam the streets with guns and knives, is at the back of a very long queue. It might, however, squeeze in front of the former Nationalist internees (or patriots as they would call themselves) who are threatening to sue our government for the deprivation of their liberties during “the Troubles” in Ulster. I can just imagine the reaction of the families of murdered or wounded RUC officers to this brazen example of milking the bottomless pit of compensation to all and sundry who can wrap themselves in the civil liberty shroud.

And Finally

No doubt readers will have taken note of the excellent pay and fringe benefits that Bob Crow achieved for all his members working on the London Underground, enabling him to call off the threat of crippling strikes. I’ll bet he’s glad he didn’t win an arbitration case!

*Tony Judge has been involved with the Police Federation for 50 years. He was the youngest police officer on the Joint Central Committee and founded *Police* magazine in 1968.*