

## **JOHN HARRIS MEMORIAL LECTURE 22.06.04**

### **"TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING"**

It is a real honour for me to be here tonight to give the John Harris lecture. John Harris, Lord Harris of Greenwich was a great supporter of policing in all its forms. Whether as police minister, in the House of Lords or as one of the founders of the Police Foundation his interest and commitment was substantial. The Police Foundation itself was an innovative development bringing objective and independent research to policing. As it begins another phase of development the Foundation has cause to thank those who founded it. I am delighted that Angela Harris can be with us tonight and I hope that my subject will stimulate thoughts on policing and perhaps its future.

Fate has conspired to bring me here today to make this lecture on the very day that Sir Michael Bichard has published his report. My subject was chosen some time ago and I would like to make it quite clear that my views here are expressed around an opportunity to influence the reform programme, hopefully improve it and produce a world leading service. It is about how we organise policing, how we plan, budget, set priorities and targets and how we measure performance in an imaginative and innovative way that motivates

our people. My remarks do not specifically deal with crisis issues and critical incidents of high public interest. That feels a bit like a health warning – it is not; it is a scene setter.

The world of policing is about to change again. The way we deliver our service is about to change. The way we relate to the public is about to change and even who will deliver our service is about to change. Accountability, finance, priority setting, planning, standards, a modernised workforce, all are under the microscope and will change. Yet it is only 2 years since the last round of modernisation and here we are again reworking the British system of policing. Why is this? Well it might be that we are not organised to keep up with the relentless pace of change that the 21<sup>st</sup> century seems to exhibit. Remarkably, while we feel the need to rearrange ourselves, we export policing expertise to all parts of the world and it seems to be received with an admiring response.

Tonight I would like to consider why we are in this second round and ask if, even though we are looking at fundamental changes, we are really preparing the service to face the challenges of the next decade or two. Are we really in tune with the world, the people in it, their aspirations and desires? What will motivate them? What sort of attitude and culture must our new police service develop to be world class in such a fundamentally different world.

I believe that the pace of change is such that it is our approach in these two areas that could make us world class. A traditional response may not be flexible enough, imaginative enough, attractive enough on its own to attract good people in, keep them and to combat rapidly changing challenges. We will need excellent leadership at the top of our service, in the middle of our service and at the operational level of our service. I include in these tiers those who lead in Police Authorities and Whitehall. This is about the whole policing organisation.

I believe we may be considering change that will restrict rather than energize and that our will to control, regulate and call to account at every turn may fundamentally damage our ability to win the trust and confidence of the citizen by swift, effective and appropriate police operations.

The commercial world offers a slightly more radical approach. In some of the more successful modern businesses, Easy Jet, Dell, IKEA for example. These companies have taken a radical approach to a changing market, examined how the world is and delivered a service that matches the expectations of it through a workforce recruited, designed and trained to do just that.

So why has it been necessary to use the word "reform" and set about altering the way policing has been structured for the past 40 years. I will try not to labour this argument because you all see it but obviously since the 1964 Police Act and the later 1974 amalgamations of forces the world has changed significantly. It would be remarkable if our whole system still matched the world of 2004. Of course there have been changes in that time probably the Police Act of 1994 and the Police and Criminal Evidence Act are the two main ones but few can argue that some modernisation is welcome though reform is probably the wrong description. So what has caused the society to change?

Well, initially it was growing accessibility to the motorcar, now exacerbated by ease of international travel, and a more expansive approach to consumerism as Britain emerged from the dark days following world war two. The ability to travel further for work, rest and play began to break up the extended family. Two parents working and a younger generation with greater expectation and less regard for authority. People who had worked and played locally began to move further afield and look for more exciting challenges. Consumerism significantly affected the opportunities for crime as even our youngest citizens moved up the style market.

In 1964 a child would attend primary school carrying a satchel, some books, pencils and a ruler. Now a child will attend primary school with an I-pod, a gameboy, a calculator and a significant amount of cash to buy refreshments on the way to and from school. Designer clothes are not the monopoly of the rich. The world of credit has enabled people to access consumer goods at an unparalleled rate. The growth of all types of media with recent trends to twenty-four hour news, reality TV shows and intrusive advertising more cleverly and continuously targeted at specific audiences has had major impact on the way we live our lives. Individuals are made to feel inadequate if they cannot own what others have or cannot do what others do and bad news is relived every 15 minutes 24 hours a day making a local tragedy something for all to fear whether in Inverness or Falmouth. The end result is either frustration, isolation or fear. So crime helps to shape our environment, alongside advertising and news, by providing an outlet for frustration through alcohol related violence, mindless damage or graffiti or solves the problem by providing the means to fulfil the religion of consumerism.

Of course for many the world is far better and few would want to return to 1964 except perhaps in the world of policing where Dixon remains an icon from another age.

The migration that was a feature 30 and 40 years ago is a hot topic once again. Our society is more mixed and diverse than ever. It is estimated that in Sheffield for instance there are over 80 different languages spoken and in London many more. This has brought with it a complex diversity that policing has had to learn about and respond to. You know how painful that has been. Handsworth, Toxteth, Broadwater Farm, the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the Bradford Riots, the Secret Policeman, all remind us of how difficult the change has been, still is and will remain. Our country is a far richer and more exciting place, diversity is a joy but new skills and excellent leadership are required to deal with what on the surface may seem the most simple policing incidents.

New types of crime have emerged, internet crime, international fraud, people smuggling and coercion to name a few. New attitudes to domestic violence and organised labour disputes demonstrate how the world has changed. Organised crime has variously emanated from the East End, West Indian islands, eastern European states, Russia, Turkey and Colombia to name but a few. They are aided by a growth in technology and communications, which has been unparalleled. Money can be transferred in a second, operations co-ordinated by global communications, and when allied to the smuggling of commodities a complex criminal network beginning thousands of miles away can play out its evil on the

streets of your neighbourhood. During that time there was an inexorable rise in crime and particularly property crime which led in the early 90's to the focus on vehicle crime and burglary from people's houses. The growth of a nanny state and a public which expects more from its public services plus the mantra of "I pay my taxes" has replaced a belief that conditions in our neighbourhood are the responsibility of those who live there as well as those public services.

To some degree we have been successful and indeed the reductions in these types of crime have been significant. In 2004 the fact that you have less chance of being a victim of crime than you had in 1981 carries little weight if you see anti social behaviour, drunkenness and generally a threatening world around you. People feel threatened and have a fear of crime higher than ever before. Clearly the service has lost the confidence of sectors of the community that used to be our biggest friends. And so without going into the details of those changes that most of us here have lived through it is clear that the complexity of the modern world required a different focus from policing and a different workforce with different skills.

So the problems are obvious. We need to deal with waning confidence and a perception of fear. We need to re-engage people

in policing their neighbourhoods. We need to deal with anti-social behaviour in a very local context and yet still be able to manage the organisations that deal on regional and national levels. The drug dealer or the pimp still make their money in the neighbourhoods. The migrants who are the victims of coercive migration find themselves forced into criminal activity or sweated labour in the neighbourhoods. It is obvious then that the solution is to target those problems and deal with police skills, organisation and accountability in a way that brings a focus to them. Indeed restructure, reorganise, modernise and start again. Or is it?

I would like to take a slightly different view of the world which suggests that it is our culture that must change, from Central government through Police Authorities and Chief Constables to the teams that police the neighbourhoods. While I will not argue with the premise of restructure/reorganise/modernise and start again, I would question whether the culture and strength of the organisation that results from these changes is actually going to be fit to deal with the pace of change in the modern world. Will we have the dynamic leadership at the top, in the middle, at operational level of our organisation to deliver and sustain policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

The inquiries of recent months look at our inability to deal with to change quickly enough to match its current pace. That pace will



quicken, I have not considered the pace of change, merely the type of change but our history suggests that when change is quick it is a crisis that stimulates different strategies and tactics.

We should be aiming to build an organisation with attitude, one which sees the challenge looming and gets to grips with it. I fear that we may not be giving our people that sort of freedom.

Let me first of all look at the pace of change, rather than the trends of change. For example one day of international phone calls in the year 2001 equalled all global calls made in 1981. **(1)** In 2003 there were more than 600 million people on line, **(2)** more than 1.2 billion mobile phone users and Nokia estimates that by 2008 there will be 2 billion. **(3)** More than half the households in Stockholm consist of singles. Similar trends are occurring here and in America where less than one quarter of households consist of married couples with children. **(4)** Closer to home than at least 20 % of all babies are born to single parents. 50 years ago it was 4%. In Washington DC the infant mortality rate equals that of Sri Lanka. **(5)** The number of babies born under weight in the US capital equals that of Zambia. **(6)** Some 16% of the population of Europe live on less than 60% of average income **(7)** and the enlargement of the EU will further increase the gap between the rich and the poor. The most prosperous will be ten times richer.

It is not surprising that people wish to move to improve their lot. The combined assets of the world's three leading billionaires exceeds the combined gross domestic product of all the least developed countries in the world. **(8)** That's 600 million people and the top 20% still consume 86% of all goods and services. Between 1988 and 2001 chief executives in Europe increased the earning gap with their workforces by 91% in the UK, 62% in Germany, 46% in Spain and 33% in France. **(9)** Executive pay in the US rose by 570% in the 1990's while the average worker got 37% more which just beat the average inflation rate of 32%. **(10)** And the top 1% of Americans earned as much as the 100 million lowest earning. **(11)** By 2020, 50% of Europe's population will be over 50 **(12)** and recent Big Brother votes to remove people from the household have exceeded the number of people who vote in Euro elections.

So we see a widening gap between rich and poor across the whole world, but a small world. We see a different commitment to democracy. Everyone can see what they are missing and know where to get it. They can travel to get it, qualify to get it, work hard to get it or commit crime to get it, some will choose each route. We see a breakdown of the traditional family and a huge reliance on IT and communication. All the while the population ages and their

views and stereotypes become more conservative. And all this while the economy in the Far East begins to boom with labour costs around 8 or 10% that of the western world. What does that mean, well I don't know but it surely doesn't mean more of the same.

Expertise and knowledge are clearly one route to success. In 1990 the percentage of Silicon Valley high tech entrepreneurs with PhD's or masters degree varied significantly between people with different ethnic backgrounds. 55% of all Indians had such a degree 40% of the Chinese but merely 18% of the white population. 8 years later one third of all Silicon Valley chief executive officers were Indian or Chinese! **(13)** The will to combine knowledge with innovation may be the discriminating factor in the western economy.

Of course the media grows exponentially. If you care to visit [www.live365.com](http://www.live365.com) you can listen to more than 40,000 different radio stations (if you want to). **(14)** There are 40,000 distinct items available in a large supermarket. A family only needs 150 to fill 80% of their daily needs. **(15)** All this choice in a world where a recent poll found that 37% of the British population claimed that they wanted David Beckham's portrait on a new £10 note. Is this really compatible with an ageing population?

Are the changes that we are making to policing ready to cope with the drama, complexity and speed of the modern world. Remember our public live in this world and perhaps more significantly so do organised criminals.

In the future we must be organised and equipped to identify problems on the rise or we will be swamped. Let us consider our response to the street theft of mobile phones. Or even earlier the outbreak of thefts of video recorders. We were slow to identify the threat with normal policing because we were looking elsewhere, slow to engage industry in facing their responsibilities to building security or flexible enough to tackle the problem before it was an epidemic. If we are not quicker, more nimble, in the New World that epidemic could be more damaging and more volatile. Will our new structures produce an organisation that is a world leader or a world follower.

Jonas Ridderstrale and Kjell A Nordstrom in their book "Karaoke Capitalism" **(16)** examine the impact of these changes on a competitive private sector and reach some startling conclusions for the commercial world. I have tried to apply some of their views from the private sector into the world of public service and the police. Ridderstrale points out that the future will always arise as a

surprise to some companies that see innovation as something that only relates to their products and activities within their organisation.

They will be under constant attack by competitors using the entire stage which are surprising and delighting the wider audience outside, meeting the expectation of the new generations. But this is only part of Ridderstrale and Nordstrom's theory. They take the view that society has moved from collectivism to individualism. The endless choices available whether it be in supermarkets, communication, education or travel allows more and more people to live the life they want. And that isn't by endlessly doing more of the same and trying to improve your performance as you might in a karaoke club. It means using innovation and knowledge to improve your work force, your product and your market and to step outside of the traditional.

They suggest that in the today world and the tomorrow world people will want to design their own life. Talented people will move to achieve what they want to achieve. They will want challenge and a position that fits their ambition and their skills. Everyone will be able to choose to know, go, do and be. They will have the freedom to know what they want, to do what they want, to go where they want and to be what they want. As a matter of interest in the chat rooms of the American internet, it is estimated that 18% of those

who actually enter the chat room choose to identify themselves as people of the opposite sex. Are they transvestites or just deciding who to be?

So what does the future look like, it looks mixed up and changing. It is a world where we are told the best rap artist is white; the best golfer is black. Where the French allege the British are arrogant and where the Pope has produced a rap record and is indeed producing a new version. It is in short a strange world and we must ask. Is the traditional and conservative British police service re-organising itself to deal with that world?

I am not so sure, I think we need to do more than the traditional re-organisation of roles, function and structure. If we merely design something that is monitored, regulated, performance managed to satisfy accountabilities to local, regional, national institutions we miss the trick of responding to the market and the people who live in it. In fact we put a lead weight on our people and they face inwards rather than outwards. Criminals won't have these restrictions. The real win will to be change the culture of our workforce, so dramatically that we can be a world leading police service. To do that we require a freedom and flexibility that allows it to happen but we also require an understanding of the way in which to make it happen.

Of course real accountability must remain, but at least give people freedom to make decisions in the clear knowledge of their accountability. If people are making more choices and talented people want challenge and motivation what will attract them to our service? Multiple lines of accountability, sets of targets, bureaucracy? To recruit quality staff we must offer them excitement. They need to use their talent, make a difference and quickly too or they will choose to go elsewhere. Using Ridderstrale's theory "to do something else and to be someone else."

Professionalising our workforce is the start. Traditionally the service has set about recruiting by defining roles and competencies and testing prospective candidates against them. We have reeled from various problems relating to attitudes and values among our staff. Perhaps if we concentrated more on recruiting people who have the right attitude, the type of attitude we need in a modern and diverse and complex world, we might teach them the skills that they need.

So how will we modernise our service? Well the traditional route would be to embrace and use technology, to develop and accredit staff leading to qualifications and to benchmark against other similar organisations. But technology will not make an organisation a world leader. It is an infrastructure that everybody must have. We

must have a work force and culture that wants to use it to be efficient, effective and imaginative.

Qualifications are also part of the infrastructure; they will not make the difference alone. Many organisations will have similar skills and qualities.

Benchmarking and minimum standards are similar parts of the infrastructure. Important, but only the basis, an organisation must be built around them, not reliant upon them. The only standards an organisation should aspire to are new and higher ones. We need a work force that could make such an infrastructure work. We often say that people are our most valuable asset. But that can only be true if they are the right ones. We often say that competent people are good but only if they have the right competencies and the right attitude, with a sense of action, with high energy levels and with good decision making. Things must be done now, not tomorrow. We can study and copy an idea until it becomes a bad one as one top Chief Executive said, "I don't go and meet managers to tell them what to do at each turn, I tell them to do it now! Tomorrow will be too late." Doing it now in our service is not always easy.

Our work force must be freed up from the bureaucracy that bedevils the British police and criminal justice system. In the private sector



the car industry is one of the most competitive markets. One major supplier found that it was taking 42 days from customer order to customer receiving the goods. That 42 days was made up of 2 days to make the car, 5 days to deliver it and 35 days to process the administration. 40% of those days were spent on finance, administration, backroom business. The key to competitiveness was to reduce the 35 waiting days and satisfy an impatient customer base. Of course that 40% was reduced to 10% because the staff were able to do it without looking at regulators, monitors, Inspectors, performance managers and various authorities at every turn. To make decisions without fear. We must take the same approach, that requires a change in attitude in the service itself, in the Home Office and in the Criminal Justice System.

Remember benchmarking, technology, reducing bureaucracy and modernising our workforce are all parts of an essential core infrastructure. I believe we have an opportunity to take another step, one that will allow an excellent workforce to use that infrastructure to deliver a real time, forward looking and action centred police service to the people of this country.

So what do we need to add to our reform agenda, our modernisation? Well, it is an environment, an atmosphere which will allow our talented people to make the new structures and the new

accountabilities to work. Ridderstrale points out that in the private sector to master innovation and success companies need to change from having a focus on making no mistakes to an emphasis on making new mistakes. On learning from mistakes and being courageous in the face of complexity. Policing is complex. Leaders and regulators must be failure tolerant. At IKEA mistakes are expressly allowed as they trigger learning and lead to new ideas and possibility. Tolerance of failure produces a climate of collaboration rather than competition if everyone is focused on the same outcome.

Of course in the high risk world of policing, where lives can literally be at stake, accountability has to be centre stage but still has to operate at the correct level and not at the same level in all circumstances. Remember the atmosphere I refer to is changing in the day to day world of policing, in planning, performance, management, budgeting, targeting and operational deployment. That is not to say that clarity of responsibility and accountability would not significantly improve our response in high profile cases.

Of course, in the crisis, in the critical incident, in circumstances of high public interest, responsibility has to be accepted and accountability brought to bear. The public quite rightly expect it. Police officers expect it because it is the nature of the police role to

make difficult decisions and then be scrutinised and called to account. Our people are used to it from the day they make their first court appearance and justify their evidence. However, if the high levels of scrutiny occur in a system where line management and accountability are confused then it will be difficult to assess where the buck stops.

To succeed in the policing world all future social organisations must develop the principle of trust. We aspire to collaboration and co-operation between police forces and between agencies, between neighbourhoods and police, between Government and police. Without trust organisations can't use the kind of open infrastructures that are so critical for discussion, development and real, decisive action in real time. Trust facilitates co-operation but can also reduce contract and monitoring costs. Yet policing can sometimes be paralysed by fear of accountability, complaint, performance measurement and the 9.00 O'clock shudders. That is the moment that someone arrives in a nice office at 9 o'clock in the morning and second guesses the decisions that were made the previous night by a less fortunate colleague who was making decisions in the heat of operational battle at 3 am in the freezing snow among a hostile crowd, that is when you hear the cry, "they shudder done this or they shudder done that".

Citizens used to trust authorities for no other reason than they were at the top of the system, this is no longer the case. Trust takes a long time to blossom and is easily lost but over time, people will learn to trust you for your ability. So trust can be fostered within an organisation, across organisations and across to the citizen. But there will be no trust without failure-tolerant leaders.

Other companies in the private sector look to managerial solutions embracing ISO9000 or 9001, 6 Sigma or TQM and for a short period those innovations make companies market leaders but everyone uses the same processes so when the copiers catch up, then the competitive edge has gone so how does this transpose to the public sector?

If the public sector is to be measured and monitored with a performance regime that compares similar forces urging minimum standards and continuous improvement then simply as all forces attain the new technology and the best practice a frenetic race begins to become better than the next door neighbour. If our focus is too heavily on this regime of copying and developing the ideas of others this frenetic activity can blind us to the fact that the target may well have moved.

This might explain why for seven or eight years the service has concentrated on volume crime and has developed relatively successful techniques in dealing with it. We have all been trying to reduce it and detect it and prosecute it better and faster to satisfy the most similar force comparisons and league tables but while this has happened the general public have been telling us (without us hearing) that street safety, vandalism, minor violence, drunkenness and their fear of crime are what they want us to deal with right now. It is taken us several years to hear that.

Further proof might be that the gangs who used to organise armed robberies for cash in transit moved on to drug dealing because it was more profitable. They have since moved on to smuggling people or liquor and cigarettes for the same reason. They look at fraud of all sorts. While this has been happening has the service responded to it? I am not sure we have been quick enough while criminal enterprise has moved at a pace that Dell, IKEA or Microsoft would be proud of. Of course they don't have regulation, benchmarking etc, and their performance measures are simple and direct, their discipline code obvious and lines of accountability very clear. Our new organisations need to be able to move with the opposition and preferably before the opposition. If we are seen as slow and cumbersome what price public confidence, what price our ability to recruit the best in this fast world?

Moving back to the private sector, a European company not so long ago was a respectable manufacturer of rubber boots and toilet paper. It now dominates the cellular phone industry, selling 5 phones every second. That company is Nokia. It is inventive and innovative but it saw the changing world before the competition and moved quickly.

Of course these comparisons with what's happening in the private world can go on forever. We should take notice, indeed the movement to outsourcing across the whole sector will need to be copied by the police service if we are to free up our policing mind to deal with policing problems. We must truly embrace devolution and this means at all levels. The centre must properly devolve to chief constables and authorities and the chief constables and authorities must properly devolve to the neighbourhoods and specific operations. At Wal-Mart, store managers have the power to lower prices but not to raise them, this sounds like a very trusting devolved management set-up at the heart of one of the most competitive businesses and most successful businesses in the US.

And finally a question, if Harley Davidson motorcycle manufacturer can actually get their customers to tattoo adverts on their own bodies thus winning the complete emotional battle for the hearts

and minds of their customers, can the police service stir the emotion of the average citizen and get them openly to commit to a secure and safe environment that they themselves live in. Either by enticing the best to join us or everyone to stand up and be counted.

All this happens in the world that we have to recruit our workforce from. A workforce that's free to know, go, do, & be whatever they want. Will the best want to join such an organisation? We need to free ourselves up from the bureaucracy of police regulations, the straitjacket of over regulation and too many targets set in a way that does not allow flexibility of action.

To recruit good people we must be an attractive, modern and exciting organisation. To satisfy public expectation, we must be equally exciting, imaginative, responsible and very flexible. And to beat the emerging markets of criminals in our neighbourhoods and the effects they will have there we must be ready to use technology, to use international diplomacy and co-ordinate complex operations at the drop of a hat in different countries with all the difficulties that brings. That means excellent leadership at operational and organisational level delivering real active service to the people of Britain, not by a workforce who see their focus on

monitoring, accountability and inward looking solutions which produce an accountable but cumbersome service.

Ridderstrale and Nordstrom end their book with the ten commandments for leadership, I will just quote the first,

“Thou shalt not display your feathers to demonstrate your all round brilliance and beauty”.

Great leadership should come with minimal ego, should revel in the talent of others and as Nelson Mandela points out should be like a shepherd, staying behind the flock, letting the most nimble go first but laying out the direction and providing the conditions for success and rewarding it while learning from one's mistakes.

Acknowledgements



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