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Community Policing: A Critique of Recent Proposals

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Abstract: In this article the proposals by the Association for Garda Sergeants and Inspectors, for a scheme of Community Policing, are outlined and discussed. Their innovatory nature is recognised but a number of problems – the notion of community which they use, difficulties in implementing such schemes and the question of whether they constitute a scheme of community policing – are considered. Finally the question is posed as to whether the Gardaí could make the changes required to produce genuine community policing.

I INTRODUCTION

The proposals of the Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors (AGSI) for a system of community policing are by any standards a landmark in the development of an adequate response to the problem of crime in Ireland (AGSI, 1982). They are imaginative and wide-ranging in their recognition that traditional responses to crime and traditional styles of policing may now be inadequate in a modern industrial society. If we wish to answer the crime problem, they argue, we must deal with the social and environmental conditions that produce it. The proposals are also important in the recognition which they give to the centrality of good relations between the Gardaí and the public in combating crime. Moreover they are unique in that they have been broadly welcomed by what might be regarded as representatives of two ends of the political spectrum on crime and penal

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policy in Ireland. (Compare the views of the *Cork Examiner*, 9th March 1983 and Joe Costello, 1982, p. 9).

The intention in this paper is to offer a number of criticisms of these proposals. These criticisms are offered in the spirit of contributing to public debate on how our society should be policed. They are influenced by Lord Scarman's concern (1982, p. 190) that "community policing is too important a concept to be treated as a slogan" and structured by a recognition that an adequate system of policing must be one which has the consent and support of all sections of society. The paper has two main sections. The proposals for community policing are outlined in the first section. In the second one some critical comments are developed. These relate to four aspects of the proposals: the idea of community implicit in the proposals, what community policing would be like for the Gardaí, the role of the Gardaí as community leaders and, finally, and most importantly, the question of whether these proposals offer a blueprint for genuine community policing. Overall the argument is that while these proposals are a useful first step there is a need for further discussion and clarification of the issues that a system of community policing raises.[1]

II THE PROPOSAL OUTLINED

There are two separate problems identified in the document. The first is the rising crime rate in Ireland, particularly in the cities and large towns. This, it is suggested, is related to the weakening of community stability and a breakdown in the kind of social control typical of rural areas and small towns. This decline of community is in turn related to other changes in Irish society such as "high unemployment, urban decay, migration, industrial strife, the loosening of family structures and social values" (AGSI, *op. cit.*, p. 6). Under these circumstances one of the best responses to crime is to "re-involve" the community in crime prevention. In addition, the document argues that "crime can only be prevented by a determined attack on the type of social, environmental and recreational conditions (or lack of these conditions) that encourage the development of criminal tendencies in the first place". "The prevention of crime", it concludes, "must primarily be tackled by the community as a whole. The police force acting in isolation can achieve very little" (*ibid.*, p. 9). In this way community involvement is essential to crime prevention.

The second and related problem is "a tendency for sections of the public to become alienated from the police" (*ibid.*, p. 7). Those alienated tend to

1. These proposals have already been criticised by Bennett, 1983.

be in the larger urban areas and in particular in Dublin working class and lower middle class communities. This alienation is partly produced by the shortage of manpower and resources which has forced the Gardaí to neglect issues of crime prevention and "to develop high technology responses" (*ibid.*, p. 7) to the crime problem. A system of community policing would represent a form of bridge building back to these communities.

The actual strategy of community policing has three separate levels or dimensions. The first dimension is a change from the present system of motorised patrolling to beat patrolling. Gardaí would be appointed to cover a particular "beat" area. This area would ideally be one which could be covered on foot and which would correspond to what the document describes as "a locally defined chohesive entity" (*ibid.*, p. 16). The Garda would become involved with the people of the area, through visits to houses, shops, businesses, schools, social services and voluntary bodies. He[2] would also do the routine enforcement activities of the ordinary Garda such as serving summons and making arrests. Community policing in this sense would co-exist with the other types of policing.[3]

At the second level community policing involves the setting up of crime prevention committees in selected urban areas. These committees would involve people from local government and statutory agencies, tenants associations, voluntary services, the clergy, the medical profession and of course the Gardaí. The committees would have a range of functions, two of which are particularly important. They would "identify community needs and problem areas that are providing a breeding ground for anti-social behaviour" and "encourage co-operation and joint action by the various local agencies aimed at reducing crime" (*ibid.*, p. 18).

The third level of community policing involves the expansion of the present Community Relations Office at Garda headquarters to provide back-up support for the community Gardaí and for the crime prevention committees. The support would be in the form of advice and assistance on how to liaise with various bodies, how to conduct research on crime and how to foster new crime prevention initiatives.

Two final points about the proposal on community policing should be noted. The first is the question of the organisation of community involve-

2. The use of the male pronoun "he" when referring to Gardaí is for stylistic reasons. In the document the more cumbersome "he/she" is generally used. The proposals obviously refer to both male and female members of the force.

3. This is in contrast to the system operating in London, for example. Here Community Liaison officers "have no responsibility for operational policing . . . the specialist function of 'operating good community relations' is to an extent, separated from police work itself" (Policy Studies Institute, 1983, p. 41).

ment. Here the document suggests that this role can best be performed by the Garda. "The evidence," it is proposed, "shows that each and every policeman and woman can be, and very often is, a leader of the community to which he/she belongs". "Therefore", it continues, "the potential for a central role on the part of the Gardaí, in co-ordinating the efforts of the various statutory and voluntary agencies towards the prevention of crime is clearly evident" (*ibid.*, p. 10).

The second point is the identification of areas suitable for community policing. The document suggests that a study team would try to identify those high crime areas in which there is a correlation between crime statistics and pathological forms of social organisation. The results of such studies would be presented to the local community and the proposals for the Community Garda Scheme and the Crime Prevention Committees would be introduced to see what level of support there would be for them. It is clear from the document, then, that community policing, initially at least, would be aimed at high crime areas. These would be urban in character and densely populated. Indeed it is suggested in other parts of the document that at the outset such areas would be in Dublin.

III THE PROPOSALS CRITICISED

Assumptions about Community

The notion of community is obviously central to community policing. But latent in this particular set of proposals is a common illusion about the nature of community in modern society and a misunderstanding of it which is rooted in traditional definitions of community. This is that communities are found in particular places. Community is the positive attachment of people to the places where they live. Thus the document says that communities are "locally defined cohesive units". However, such a view of community is mistaken. Communities should not be defined in such spatial terms but as Neuwirth (1969, p. 149) puts it, they "should be defined in terms of the solidarity shared by their members which forms the basis of their mutual orientation to social action" and "in the mutual feelings of belonging" that exist among groups of people.

If solidarity and feelings of belonging are the essence of community life then there is no reason why its boundaries should be territorial. There is, for example, no reason to anticipate or to argue that "feelings of mutual belonging" should exist in neighbourhoods in urban areas. Community boundaries may in certain circumstances coincide with territorial boundaries but this coincidence is not essential to the existence of a community. Equally the absence of a sense of solidarity within territorial units is not an indication of the absence of community. Neighbourhood ties may decline in importance

in urban areas but people in these areas compensate by their participation in networks of social relationships that extend beyond the geographical boundaries of their neighbourhoods (see, for example, Tsai and Sigelman, 1982).

This particular notion of community has a number of important implications for the community policing proposals. One is that to the extent that a sense of solidarity exists in a local area it may be due as much to economic constraints as to the free choice of residents. For example, the existence of substantial deprivation may force working-class people to confine their social networks to the local area. In such circumstances neighbours become important not as a matter of choice but as a matter of necessity. By contrast, middle- and upper-class people can maintain a sense of solidarity with people dispersed over wide distances through the use of the telephone and private transport. In other words they can maintain a viable set of social relations even where they are dispersed in space and across large distances.

So the sense of solidarity that exists in many deprived areas remains a fragile and delicately balanced one. Moreover, it is not immediately clear that attempts like those suggested in the document to deepen this sense of solidarity will necessarily be welcomed by the people involved. Given a realistic choice they would not choose to live where they do anyway. In these circumstances attempts at community development can represent a form of oppression of the poor. They are attempts to get them to like people with whom they have little in common except the fact of being placed beside each other by the vagaries of housing policies. Because of this, community in its traditional sense cannot necessarily provide the basis from which community organisation can proceed.

A second implication of this perspective on community is that community groups cannot claim to represent fully the interests of people living in particular areas as these peoples' interests are not bounded by the boundaries of these areas. This to a large extent explains the low levels of response to, and participation in, the activities of many community groups. There is a tendency to participate only in those activities which produce directly individual benefits, for example, sports days and outings, rather than activities which produce communal ones. Equally there is a tendency to act collectively when individual interests are threatened, for example, by urban renewal, but such action produces only a temporary sense of solidarity and one which dissipates when the threat has disappeared. As a result at politically crucial times community groups can find themselves without the necessary support from the people they claim to represent. This has obvious implications for the attempt to organise crime prevention committees in particular areas.

A third implication of this perspective on community is that while territorial units can be patrolled by "community policemen" there is nothing in the nature of the units being patrolled that would lead one to anticipate

that the wider benefits of such policing should ensue. Social and geographical mobility have both created the need for, and the possibility of, maintaining communities across territorial areas. They have created a network of social relations in society that transcends local boundaries. Such extended communities cannot be governed or limited by the informal social control that is presumed to have been typical of a somewhat older Ireland. Informal control was possible in the past because all aspects of a person's life were lived out in, and under the scrutiny of, local people and neighbours. Behaviour in one dimension of one's life had ramifications in and became a source of comment for those with whom one interacted in other dimensions of one's life. However, recent changes in Ireland have made it possible to separate out different dimensions of one's life and in the process these have acquired a degree of autonomy. Now it is possible to separate one's family and work lives so that one's behaviour in one area has no necessary implications for how one behaves or how one is judged in the other. As Norman Dennis (1968, p. 86) puts it, "it is the overlapping of various social relationships, economic and other, which is at the basis of locality social control". If such reationships do not overlap then the possibilities for local social control are correspondingly diminished. To the extent that the success of the community policing option requires the restoration of local social control, it is unlikely given the nature of contemporary society to be able to achieve it.

There is one final point that needs to be made about community. The desire to "restore" community life which is central to community policing rests on a particular view of the past in Ireland which is wrong. This is the belief that the Irish rural village or small town can be used as the model for social cohesion, community life and freedom from crime. This view represents to a large extent a nostalgia for an imaginary past because it is not clear when such villages and towns were stable and crime-free communities. The nineteenth century is not a good place to look. Rural life was in many cases disorderly and violent (see Lampson, 1907, pp. 250-254, and also O'Donnell, 1975). Acts of interpersonal violence were commonplace and many recreational pursuits, particularly faction-fighting, involved levels of violence that would reduce Hill 16 to the status of a nursery school in the art. Twenty people, for example, were reported as killed in a faction fight in Kerry in 1834. The fight itself involved, it is claimed, at least two thousand combatants. These numbers were not untypical for such fights although the number of casualties may have been (O'Donnell, *ibid.*, pp. 133-174).

If we move our attention into this century, there are also problems in discovering the idyllic crime-free community in rural areas. For example, there was considerable unrest throughout the country in the 1930s associated with the Blueshirts. In the 1940s, particularly during the Emergency, there was an increase in crime in Ireland (Rottman, 1978) while any stability in

the 1950s must be considered against the background of the demoralisation and massive emigration of the period. The evidence from the 1960s and 1970s is particularly instructive in this regard. Rottman (1980, p. 116) concludes his analysis of urban/rural differences in crime rates over this period by stating that "as a social problem increasing crime rates cannot be isolated as urban-based or even as Dublin-based". "Though the contribution made by increases in urban areas, and particularly in Dublin, to the national level trends . . . was clearly greater than that made by changes in the non-urban areas, the differential is not dramatic" (*ibid.*, p. 115).

So there is little evidence to suggest that rural Ireland is or was a notably harmonious and orderly place. To attribute current problems in the cities to "a breakdown of the social control, that was effectively exercised in the small-town environment, both rural and urban" (AGSI *op. cit.*, p. 6) seems somewhat inadequate and historical.

We have raised questions here that are central to the debate about community policing. We have questioned whether locality, as the document suggests, is central to community in modern society. If it is not then the wider benefits of community policing cannot be guaranteed. Equally if locality is central to community the existence of community in local areas does not guarantee a crime free area. Rural Ireland, as we illustrated, is a fine example of this point. However, the over-riding concern is that abstract appeals for community policing make little sense in the absence of communities that can be policed.

Community Policing as Work

In considering the question of community policing a major focus of attention must be the response of the rank and file of the Gardaí to it. It has been found in Britain (Baldwin and Kinsey, 1982, p. 249) that one of the major problems with community policing schemes is the negative response of many policemen to them. This antipathy arises from two principal sources. One is the degree to which the kind of work involved in community policing clashes with the perceptions of the police as to what "real" policework is. The second is that as community policing involves more "beat work", it is likely to be boring and monotonous. Let us examine each of these in turn.

Research on the police in Britain and the United States indicates particular and strongly held views among ordinary policemen as to what "real" policework is. This shows that "real" policework is about catching criminals. Cain (1971, p. 74) reports that "thief-catching" ranks highly in the police value system in England, a finding confirmed in the recent Policy Studies Institute's (PSI, 1983, pp. 61-66) research on the London Police (see also Holdaway, 1983). Skolnick and Woodworth (1967, p. 87) state in relation to the

American police that "when a policeman can engage in real police work – act out the symbolic rites of search, chase and capture – his self-image will be affirmed and his morale enhanced". By contrast, Manning (1977, p. 313) tells us that "human service or order maintenance", the kind of work involved to a large extent in community policing, is seen as "not being real police-work, as 'shit work', and therefore morally degrading to them as protectors of public safety". In this way the occupational culture of the police can be characterised as a "capture-culture" with the emphasis on law enforcement and arrest rates. Any proposed system of community policing must recognise the strength of this culture and it must suggest ways of loosening its hold in order to create the space within which community policing can establish itself as a legitimate dimension of police work.

The AGSI proposals suggest one way in which this could be done. They suggest (*op. cit.*, p. 17) that community policemen should be given a career structure in this type of work. But the occupational culture may not be so easily displaced or reformed to accommodate to such a change. The size of the obstacles to be overcome can be seen by the hostility, reported by Lord Scarman (1982, p. 141), between the ordinary police and community specialists in England. This antipathy was summarised in the description of community policemen as "hobby-bobbies". Similar problems have also been reported in the United States. The case of San Francisco illustrates the point. Here community relations units were labelled "Commie Relation" units (Cooper, 1975, p. 243). Almost 90 per cent of the San Francisco Police Department were opposed to these units and in 1966 they succeeded in having them closed (Sutherland and Cressey, 1978, p. 393). For them this kind of community relations work was destroying the image of the police as crime fighters. Other community ventures also met with considerable opposition from police officers (see Washnis, 1976, pp. 104-105) and for much the same reasons.

The second problem is the possibility that as community policing involves more "beat work" it may not be welcomed by the rank and file of the Garda. Cain (*op. cit.*) in her study of the English police has documented the monotonous and boring nature of beat work in urban areas (see also PSI, *op. cit.* pp. 51-56). She noted the responses of the police to this aspect of their work. The one most important response from the viewpoint of community policing was, in Cain's words (1971, p. 71), "to make the work interesting by developing contacts with shop-keepers and others on the beat". This was found to be particularly difficult. The size and changing nature of the urban population militated against it. The contacts that were developed were selected, in Cain's words (*ibid*, p. 72), "on other grounds than their strategic importance for police work". The second type of reponse was the adoption of "easing behaviour" designed to make the work more congenial. One of

the most popular of these was the use of pubs after-hours. The third way of making the work more congenial was to make marginally legitimate arrests. Some sections of the population – principally vagrants and those committing public order offences such as drunkenness and loitering – were more vulnerable than others to these activities. To the extent to which Cain's analysis is applicable in an Irish context it has important implications for community policing. Given the monotonous nature of the work it is unlikely to be greeted with any great enthusiasm by the Gardaí while its "victims" may well be minor offenders against public order.

Against this background there may well be problems both in motivating and in sustaining the level of motivation of the Garda involved. However, the research evidence from Britain suggests another answer to the motivation question (see, for example, Baldwin and Kinsey, 1982). This indicates that the attitudes of senior police officers to community policing can be crucial. In the Devon and Exeter scheme in England it was the enthusiasm of the senior officer, John Alderson, and his recognition of the value of the work in improving career prospects that motivated the rank and file to support and to work his system of community policing. Similarly a document on a community policing project in Strathclyde, Scotland, emphasised that "the community involvement posture adopted by senior officers is contagious and generally reflected in the attitudes of subordinates". "Without this whole-hearted support from the top", it continued, "any efforts at street level will fail" (quoted in Baldwin and Kinsey, *ibid.*, p. 220). In considering the possibilities for community policing in Ireland it becomes relevant to look at the attitudes of senior members of the Gardaí to the proposal. Is there any evidence of a high level of commitment among senior Gardaí to the notion of community policing?

At one level, at least, senior Gardaí have a major advantage. They recognise that their relationships with certain sectors of our society are less than ideal. Commissioner Wren has stated (1983, p. 5) that "in some large urban centres it is becoming clear that the Gardaí need to start building bridges back to the community unless we are to find ourselves in serious trouble." However, there appear to be certain differences of emphasis between the Commissioner's solution to this problem and that in the AGSI document. While he is committed to having more Gardaí on the beat, his notion of community involvement is much less radical in scope than that of the AGSI. He argues that it would be a good idea if Gardaí were "involved in community halls and local activities" (Wren, *op. cit.*, p. 5) but such ideas fall far short of the level of involvement implied by Crime Prevention Committees. There is certainly little evidence here of the kind of enthusiastic commitment to community policing of John Alderson and indeed little to encourage the rank-and-file to become enthusiastic supporters of the community policing proposals.

The Gardaí as Community Leaders

An objection to many proposals for community policing is that as they are police-initiated and police-led they are not a policing choice freely made by the community (see, for example, Bennett, 1983 on the AGSI proposals). This criticism is relevant when we consider how Crime Prevention Committees are to be organised. It can be argued that the synchronisation through such committees of social services, education, probation, clergy and local medical services will improve the quality of delivery of such services in local areas. However, it is not clear why these committees require Garda leadership, as the AGSI document suggests (*op. cit.*, p. 18), rather than simply Garda participation.

There are very good reasons why these projects should *not* be police-led. The case for Garda leadership as argued in the document is that the individual Garda is or can be a member of the community to which he belongs. But if this is true it undermines one of the basic reasons advanced for community policing namely the alienation between communities and the Gardaí. If the Gardaí are in a position to lead community policing projects then relations between the police and the public are of a quality that makes community policing unnecessary. If, on the other hand, the relationship between people and Gardaí is such as to require community policing to improve it, then they are unlikely to be readily acceptable as community leaders.

Moreover, there are good reasons why other groups – not least the social services – might see Garda leadership as an attempt by them to widen their sources of information and to gain access to information presently protected by various notions of professional ethics and as such to be resisted. Through participation in Crime Prevention Committees the community officer will, presumably, collect large amounts of information about people in the area. But the document gives no clue as to what will be done with this information. Will it be the exclusive property of the community officer? Will it be shared by him with other sections of the police force or will it be the property of the local area to be controlled by them and used at their collective discretion? The question of the "ownership" of such information is at the heart of the fear that community policing is simply a more sophisticated form of surveillance of working class areas (see, for example, Bridges and Bunyan, 1983, pp. 95-98) and it is often the basis of the resistance of welfare professionals to such policing.

There is a further aspect of the Crime Prevention Committees that needs to be considered. Part of the appeal to the Gardaí of the role of community leaders is their self-image as non-political actors in the narrow sense of being neutral on party-political issues. However, if Crime Prevention Committees are to operate in a decisive and influential fashion then this political "neutrality" may come under some strain. This can come about in the following

way. In the inner city areas in Dublin for example, the major problem is that extreme deprivation is not being adequately responded to by the State. (See Bannon, Eustace and O'Neill, 1981, for an analysis of the problem of inner city areas in Dublin). Yet as Baldwin and Kinsey (*op. cit.*, p. 257) have suggested about inner-city areas in England,

> the only real course in those circumstances is for all agencies, including the police, to stress to politicians that humane policing cannot be accomplished without substantial improvements in the social and economic conditions that prevail.

But if the Gardaí are prepared to recognise that crime can only be prevented by the alleviation of material inequalities that exist in inner city areas, are they prepared to campaign actively for the diversion of resources from better-off areas to these areas? And if they are prepared to do this, are they prepared for the consequences which inevitably flow from such a choice? Under our political system the interests of social groups, especially the better-off ones, are represented by, or through, political parties. Suggesting the diversion of resources from better-off groups could provoke a party political response and as such involve the Gardaí in the party political arena. Given the traditional antipathy of the Gardaí to party politics, this may be an unanticipated cost of community policing and a cost they may be unwilling to pay.

Community Involvement or Community Policing

The argument of the preceding section leads to what is perhaps the major criticism that can be made of these proposals. As they stand they do not represent a blueprint for genuine community policing. They simply seek to add a dimension of local involvement to the present policing system. This argument can be substantiated by considering what the key aspects of community policing are and comparing these to the proposals outlined in the AGSI document.

The essential dimensions of community policing have recently been outlined by Lord Scarman. Consultation and accountability are for him the key elements. These are, he has argued, "the mechanisms upon which we rely to ensure that the police in their policies and operations keep in touch with, and are responsible to, the communities they police". Of the two, accountability is the more important as it is "the key to successful and socially responsive policing" (1982, p. 147). When we bring this perspective to bear on the present proposals we find that the question of consultation is inadequately addressed and the question of accountability is totally neglected.

To the extent that the new system is about policing by consultation and

co-operation then it is co-operation about issues determined by the Gardaí and it is consultation on the terms set by them. For example, the terms of reference of the local crime prevention committees do not include the choice of a style of policing for the area. Community policing is to be separate from the more traditional or reactive forms of policing. Yet there is considerable evidence that one of the major causes of alienation between people and police in inner city and working class areas in Britain is the way in which reactive policing has produced a perception of police harassment in such areas. (This point is developed in detail below but see Kettle and Hodges, 1982, for a review of relevant evidence.) Any policy designed to solve conflicts between police and people must face up to this problem. As the proposals stand, this important aspect of policing will not be open to local discussion, local decision or local control. Yet as Lord Scarman has argued if a further rift is not to develop between people and police there must be some means through which the policed can be consulted on these matters (Scarman, 1982, p. 152).

A second problem with the consultation envisaged in the document is that it is not really consultation with the local area as such but with those in the area with whom the Gardaí choose to discuss problems, namely the members of the Crime Prevention Committees. For the most part these will be people who do *not* live in the local area such as social workers, probation officers and local government representatives. As such the membership will be drawn from groups who do things to the local area rather than from groups and individuals who are of the local area. So there must be a question mark over the extent to which such officials can be said to represent the interests of the area. Moreover, it may well be the case that the degree of alienation which exists between people and police in certain areas is also to be found between the people and many of the agencies and authorities from whom the commitee's membership is to be drawn. If this is so then such committees risk being perceived as an imposition on, rather than an expression of, the interests of the local area.

If the document at least recognises the problem of consultation, the wider issue of police accountability is neither mentioned nor discussed. The Gardaí are accountable in the obvious general sense that all State institutions and organisations are responsible to central government and through that, the theory goes, to the general public. However, accountability in the more specific sense of being responsible and accountable to people in local areas for policing policies and practices in those areas does not exist under the present system nor is it advocated in the proposed new one. In this way the proposals are limited in the scope they offer to local areas to control their own policing and so they lay themselves open to the criticism that they are merely cosmetic in nature. They want to add a dimension of

community involvement to the present policing system but they do not involve any more fundamental re-adjustment in the terms of the relationship between people and police.

If issues of consultation and accountability are central to a genuine system of community policing, why then are the AGSI proposals so limited in scope? One possible reason is that the Gardaí like other groups in society who lay claim to a professional expertise resist and probably resent the degree of client control that is implied by the requirements of consultation and accountability. In Britain this has certainly been a problem. Police resistance to client participation can be seen in their antipathy to Lord Scarman's proposal for statutory liaison between the police and local representatives (see Benton and Wintour, 1982).

A further reason for the limited nature of the proposals may be found in the analysis offered in the document for the alienation of people from the police. Here primary importance is accorded to the shortage of police manpower. This has forced the police to adopt more impersonal policing strategies such as the greater use of motorised patrols. Technology in this way has created a barrier between police and people. As an argument this has a certain validity. However, it does not constitute a total explanation. It fails to see the link that exists, almost inevitably, between reactive policing and public disaffection with the Gardaí.

The argument linking the two has been developed in its most sophisticated form by Lea and Young (1983). It refers to the situation in the British inner cities. With the exception of racial composition, the inner cities in Ireland and particularly in Dublin have many of the same characteristics of deprivation such as unemployment, poor housing and social stigmatisation. Indeed, the study of Bannon *et al.* (1981, p. 85) suggests a level of concentration of disadvantage in the Dublin area which is greater than parts of inner London. In such areas, Lea and Young argue, people have in the past if not accepted at least tolerated police activity and they have provided information to enable the police to catch criminals. However with the increase in unemployment generally and with its intensification in these areas the social basis of such concensus policing becomes endangered. It happens in this way: as crime rates increase, police tactics change and they begin to adopt "saturation policies" – flooding the area with large numbers of police. Such policing tends to be aimed at groups in the community rather than at particular offenders. The distinction between offender and non-offender dissolves as police suspicion falls equally on all, and in particular on young people in an area. They find themselves stopped and searched at regular intervals and generally experience what they would describe as police harassment. (For some Irish evidence on this point see Lorenz and McCullagh, 1985.)

This results in considerable alienation of young people from the police

and in turn it has negative effects on the attitudes of parents and adults to the police (see Kettle and Hodges, *op. cit.*, for a summary of research findings on this point). They all become less willing to give information to the police. To overcome this the police are forced to adopt more aggressive forms of policing. Questioning of suspects has to replace information from the public as the major source in crime detection but, as the police now lack a local data base, "suspicious individuals" are identified for questioning on the basis of police prejudice or of social stereotypes.

This in turn produces what Lea and Young call "the mobilization of bystanders". Once the police act as if all in an area are potential offenders, local people also begin to blur the distinction between the innocent and the offender but the blurring is in the opposite direction. They begin to see any attempt to arrest people in the area as an attempt to arrest innocent people. As Lea and Young (*op. cit.*, p. 12) put it:

> the community comes to see any attempt at an arrest by an officer as a symbolic attack on the community *per se*, and as a consequence, the phenomenon of collective resistance to the arrest of an individual begins to emerge.

Such policing and the resistance to it were major elements in the Brixton Riots. Lord Scarman concluded (*op. cit.*, p. 78) that the Brixton Riots "were essentially an outburst of anger and resentment by young black people against the police".

These consequences are part of "a vicious circle of cumulative causation" (Lea and Young, *op. cit.*, p. 12). A decline in the flow of information requires the use of more aggressive policing. Such policing requires a reduction in the legal constraints on the police and an increase in the powers available to them. The use of such powers, which generally involve wider and looser powers of arrest and questioning, further increases the degree of alienation of local people and further reduces the flow of information to the police. This in turn then requires more powers for the police and more aggressive and reactive policing (for an analysis of the Criminal Justice Bill in these terms, see McCullagh, 1984).

In this way there is a definite link between the alienation of people from the police and the policy of reactive policing. One feeds and depends upon the existence of the other. The major object of any police reform must be to break out of the vicious circle. In these terms community policing can only represent a solution to this problem, if it provides an alternative to reactive policing or if it at least places the question of the style of policing in a local area as an item for discussion between local people and the police. As Kettle and Hodge put it (*op. cit.*, p. 242):

> It is all very well sending officers back on the beat to win local confidence. But that work can be negated, and becomes suspected, if the old forms of policing are going merrily on in the background. One saturation operation can undo years, literally, of other work and discourage trust in the police's motives for initiating that change.

In other words community policing proposals, which do not include consultation and accountability on the full range of policing issues, are an inadequate response to the problem they are designed to solve. Without them there is little reason why people, in inner city areas or in areas where disaffection with the police is high, should accept community policing nor is there any reason why community policing should necessarily have the beneficial consequences claimed for it.

It is important to note finally that arguing for a system of local accountability does not require or imply the existence of community in the local area. The obvious model of accountability is the English system of Police Committees. These are based on local areas and while not a part of the local government structure do report to local councils. Though by no means perfect – there is an extensive debate about their role, their powers and their membership (see, for example, Benton and Wintour, *op. cit.*) – they do provide at least a rudimentary form of local accountability and their functioning does not require or depend on notions of community such as were dismissed in an earlier part of this paper.

V CONCLUSION

In this paper I have considered a number of proposals raised by the proposed scheme of community policing. I have considered a range of difficulties which both the Gardaí and people in local areas might have in accommodating to and utilising the full potential of such policing. Yet such criticisms should not disguise a fundamental truth at the heart of such proposals. This is that, as Rutherford (1983, p. 9) argues, "the crucial and fragile key foundation of police effectiveness is public confidence and consent which once eroded may be beyond restoration".

Equally, however, if this is recognised its companion truth is not so fully appreciated. This is that if the new form of policing is intended to win hearts and minds it must be a kind of policing which people can trust. In systems of democratic politics, confidence is placed in those institutions which can be made accountable to the public will. Where the police are concerned this means that "if the people are to consent to be policed, the police must consent to submit to democratic control" (Simey, 1983, p. 57). In this way a genuine system of community policing requires a much greater

degree of local control than is allowed for in the proposals of the AGSI. What these propose is participation of a limited type rather than a system of policing with local control. Unfortunately there is little reason to anticipate that the Gardaí would be prepared to consider or to agree to the extent of local control that is necessary if we wish to turn the proposed system of policing with limited public participation into a system of policing which is responsive to local needs and which is subject to considerable local influence.

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