



CHAPTER 2

STEPS TOWARDS CO-OPERATIVE POLICING

2.1 The evidence which the Inquiry heard and read during its second session about police/community relations on Broadwater Farm points to two contradictory conclusions. On the positive side, there have been many concrete developments on both sides which indicate that, objectively, the situation has been changed for the better since July 1986. On the negative side, the subjective opinion of many witnesses from the community was that nothing fundamental had changed, while from the police disappointment was expressed at not obtaining sufficient trust and co-operation. It is therefore important to put on record the positive evidence of progress before studying the problems which still remain.

2.2 First, police officers have attended at every meeting of the Broadwater Farm Sub-Committee (formerly the Broadwater Farm Panel) and have submitted written reports to each meeting on the levels of crime and on matters of concern. Bernie Grant MP who used to chair the Sub-Committee explained how the attendance of police did not necessarily produce agreement, but was undoubtedly of value in giving the opportunity for discussion. He said:-

“On one occasion the police asked to present a report on a special form of policing that they were trying to introduce to housing estates. They brought along a police officer from Scotland Yard who made a presentation to the Panel, and they were asked questions and so, at the end of it the residents felt that it was a very good discussion, but they felt that they weren't ready yet for that system of policing.

There were a lot of good points there that were raised and exchanged."

The Inquiry has no doubt that this participation by police has been valuable, and that it should continue.

2.3 Secondly, there has been effective and business-like co-operation around particular events, such as a picket held at Tottenham police station, the civil rights march held in October 1987 from Tottenham to Hyde Park, and the anti-racist festival held in Finsbury Park in the summer of 1987. In the past, events of this kind have often been marred by insensitive policing. The Inquiry pays tribute to the successful efforts made by both community leaders and police officers to ensure that the events went off without problems of disorder. In his report to the Broadwater Farm Panel in January 1987 Chief Superintendent Stainsby spoke of:-

"The very responsible attitude shown by all the community leaders on the Estate, especially those from the Broadwater Farm Youth Association, in connection with the various festivals and marches held throughout the year. In particular, the hard work put in by many people who had acted as stewards at those events has been a tremendous assistance, both to those who took part, and to the police officers involved".

2.4 Thirdly, there is no longer any question of the police numbers on the Estate being seen as excessive or oppressive, as was the case in early 1986, and the unit is no longer reinforced by officers from outside forces. On the contrary, there has been complaint that the police team assigned to the Estate, which comprises 12 constables and 1 sergeant working in shifts, is not visible enough. Around half of the officers in the Broadwater Farm Unit volunteered to undertake successive assignments there, and of these at least one is a well known face who has made a consistent effort to get to know all sections of the community.

2.5 Fourthly, the rate of crime on the Estate has been much lower than in Tottenham as a whole. The reports from the Police to the Sub-Committee provide figures for robbery, burglary and auto crime, with comments in nearly every report, apart from occasional bad periods, that the general trend was declining.

While the Inquiry was sitting it heard evidence from a number of sources that there was a marked increase in drug dealing, including dealing in cocaine. This was the subject of a letter to the Residents Association from Chief Superintendent Stacey which we comment on below. By the summer of 1988 there had been a number of arrests made, which seems to have been welcomed by the community, though the problem is far from being solved.

2.6 Fifthly, there have been no serious flare-ups between the police and community of the kind which the Inquiry deplored in its first report. Still less have there been any indications of incipient riot, in spite of a groundless report in the Sunday Express on 15th March 1987 that a major riot had been planned to coincide with the Blakelock trial verdict. In August 1986 there was an episode which caused some anger, when a sergeant, who had called up reinforcements, tried to make a provocative search of an individual for drugs. The important thing is that that incident was dealt with by the intervention of the Superintendent in charge at Tottenham, who came to the scene, discussed the incident with community leaders, and gave assurances that the provocation would be properly investigated. By the time the Inquiry heard evidence in January 1988, it was told of one other episode in which a car had been chased onto the estate and rammed, leading to numbers of police coming onto the Estate. While this does seem to have been an over-reaction, it did not provoke a major incident.

2.7 Sixthly, it seems clear that police have genuinely tried to tackle the issues raised in the Inquiry's first report. Chief Superintendent Stainsby commended the report's recommendations and ordered a large number of copies for his officers to study. Nick Wright, former head of the Council for Police Research Unit, said this to the Inquiry:-

"Judging by the number of Tottenham police officers who have come to me asking for advice on how to answer questions that have been set when they go before promotion boards, there should be a collective degree in sociology awarded to the Tottenham police, because they have really been compelled by life itself to take these questions seriously."

He thought that there had been a significant decrease in unprofessional or oppressive policing, although he pointed out that there were sharp divergencies of view within police ranks.

2.8 Seventhly, a training programme was announced by Mr Stainsby in January 1987 in these terms:-

“I have appointed a sergeant with a particular responsibility for training on this Division, and his first priority is to provide a programme of education and training to officers of all ranks at Tottenham Division, in the skills needed for co-operative policing in a multi ethnic community.”

The training in practice has been less than promised. So far there have been two one-day sessions, at which inspectors and key officers have met with a cross-section of Haringey people, with experts from Brunel University acting as facilitators. The Inquiry was told that time constraints prevented more than this. It is a start, but by no means enough.

2.9 Finally, from the Broadwater Farm community there have been a number of important initiatives. The Youth Association invited Sir Kenneth Newman, then Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, to a visit which took place on 12th September 1986. While doubts were expressed at the Inquiry as to how much the Commissioner was prepared to learn from this visit, the fact of the invitation and its acceptance is of importance in itself. When the Tottenham police station had an open day, representatives of the Youth Association attended. But undoubtedly the most striking move towards reconciliation came with the opening of the remembrance garden on 3rd July 1988. The conception of this garden, created near the spot where PC Blakelock died, to be maintained in memory of Cynthia Jarrett and Keith Blakelock, is wholly admirable. The opening brought together the police, church leaders, politicians of all political parties, the Council and local people. Mrs Marion Roe, Under-Secretary of State for the Environment, performed the opening ceremony.

2.10 These eight areas of progress represent a conscious effort by many, in and out of the police service, to work co-operatively in the interest of effective policing for the community. Even so, the relationship between the police and the community on Broadwater Farm is far from easy or relaxed. In his report of

January 1987 Mr Stainsby said that “my greatest disappointment in 1986 has been the fact that we have been unable to overcome the hostility which exists to such an extent as to take a full part in your day to day life”. His successor Mr Stacey, who took over in September 1987, in his report registered disappointment when community leaders on the Estate declined the opportunity of showing new probationary constables around the Estate. One of Mr Stacey’s first actions was to write to the Residents Association asking for help from local people in identifying drug pushers. He expressed great disappointment with their reply that “we did not think it would be in our interests to co-operate in dealing with the increase in drug traffic you allege is occurring on the Estate”.

2.11 There are a number of reasons why there should be no surprise at the distrust which is still widespread in the Broadwater Farm community. During 1986 and 1987 the trials of dozens of people arrested during disturbances were being processed through the courts. Litigation was in progress between the Fraud Squad and the Youth Association itself, over the production of financial documents which the Fraud Squad had determined to investigate. As this report is written, a prosecution is still pending against Mrs Dolly Kiffin in relation to that matter. Apart from these particular factors, Black people in Tottenham of all ages and classes have experienced racist attitudes and actions from the Metropolitan Police over many years, as the Inquiry set out in its first report. If, as the Inquiry accepts, there is a genuine commitment in the local police leadership to eradicate racist and oppressive policing, it will take time for the results of that commitment to be manifested and recognised by the community.

2.12 Trust must be earned and cannot simply be requested. An example of this is shown in the reactions of many people to the transfer of Chief Superintendent Stainsby away from Tottenham. He had taken over as senior officer in April 1986, and was transferred in September 1987. Over that short tenure of office in a difficult period, he had established a reputation as someone who “at least we could talk to”. His posting away from Tottenham was seen as having been done deliberately because he had built a good working relationship with Bernie Grant and other local leaders. The Inquiry cannot find this to be an established fact, but notes that while transfers and promotions

inevitably happen, effective senior officers in areas like Tottenham ought to be given sufficient time for lasting foundations of goodwill to be built.

2.13 Chief Superintendent Stacey, who took over from Mr Stainsby, was well known in Tottenham, where he was formerly in charge of community liaison. But as senior officer, witnesses told us that "he will have to gain respect for the people to want to deal with him". The Inquiry was assured that he would be given a fair chance. He himself has given an assurance in his report to the Broadwater Farm Sub-Committee of November 1987, that he is "completely committed to community policing", and as Mr Stainsby's deputy, agreed with all policy decisions made during that period.

2.14 Given the circumstances, the Inquiry considers that it was a misjudgment for Mr Stacey to write formally to the Residents Association asking for co-operation over drugs, and then to show their reply to the Press. The Inquiry asked Leonardo Leon on behalf of the Residents Association to comment on the negative reply. He spoke of the bitterness that his members felt about police harassment, and he said that it was the job of the police and not of themselves to deal with drug pushers. He did not express any kind of support for drug pushing, but it was clear that the Residents' Association do not wish to be seen acting as some kind of support agency for the police. Indeed, given the nature of the drugs scene, it could be dangerous for them to do so. The Inquiry's view is that if the positive policies started by Mr Stainsby are firmly continued, there will in fact be increasing understanding and co-operation.

2.15 The Inquiry believes that, in addition to the valuable initiatives mentioned above, the community organisations could take further steps. The idea that police officers newly posted to the Farm should have an introduction to the Estate from the Residents' Association is in our view sound. We have heard concern expressed from witnesses that residents' representatives on the Estate do not recognise more than one or two officers. The police officers no doubt have the same problem. The Inquiry is not suggesting that police officers should have daily access to community organisations. But it is appropriate for there to be some form of systematic exchange whereby local police officers

and residents' representatives have at least an introductory meeting with each other.

2.16 Such exchanges would help to resolve the problems caused because many officers (about half of the total unit) do not volunteer for successive periods of service on the Estate. Those who do not volunteer to return are on the Estate for only 3 months - far too short a time to get to know the Estate, especially if their minds have been prejudiced by false pictures of it. With good management, and co-operation from the community, officers should be able and willing to serve for longer periods on Broadwater Farm.

2.17 Indeed, the Inquiry expresses concern that the Broadwater Farm policing team is recruited from "volunteers", rather than from officers who are posted there because their senior officer decides that they should do that job. Being a police officer on Broadwater Farm should not be seen as an unpleasant chore which you can quit doing if you do not like it, but as a standard policing assignment, requiring dialogue and co-operation with residents who want an efficient police service but question the way it is presently provided.

2.18 To sum up, the main thrust of the recommendations in the first report was for all concerned with policing on Broadwater Farm to recognise the need for genuinely co-operative policing. There are many signs that a start has been made in this direction, and the Inquiry pays tribute to those in the community and in the police who have helped in this process. The opportunity for closer collaboration and greater trust is there, if present policies are keenly pursued; but it will take time.

2.19 The Inquiry hopes that over time Broadwater Farm will cease to be regarded, by the police or by its residents, as a place with special policing problems. Broadwater Farm is a small part of the whole of Tottenham, and Tottenham is a small part of London. Many of the changes needed such as improved training at the start of and during police careers, are needed in the whole of London. They can only be secured by the top leadership of the Metropolitan Police. The grievances which people have are not exclusive to the Estate; they should be discussed more widely than in the Broadwater Farm Sub-Committee. The Inquiry must therefore examine the arrangements for police/community consultation in Haringey as a whole.