

An International Perspective —What is Happening in the Rest of the World

Cleve COOPER*

It is a privilege for me to be here today to introduce our speakers from England, Australia and Toronto who will be giving us an international perspective on restorative justice — at least in two cases from the police point of view.

The police play a pivotal role in the criminal justice system, not only in the current retributive system — but as I see it, an even greater potential role can be played by the police in restorative justice.

The police role, evolving as it is from the traditional or professional model to the community- based model which we are well into across Canada, will be extremely important where we are asking the police to exercise a much wider, but wiser use of discretion to use alternatives rather than simply, by rote, putting all offenders into the criminal justice system.

The importance of underscoring the use of police discretion, to invoke or not to invoke the formal process, cannot be overstated.

From our first speaker, you will hear a presentation entitled "From Problem Solving Policing to Problem Solving Justice". Charles Pollard, Chief Constable of Thames Valley, has a very interesting curriculum vitae which I would invite you all to read, but in the interest of time, I will simply say that he has been in policing and an important police leader for nearly 31 years. He has a law degree and has a distinguished career in England with the Metropolitan Police, better known to us as Scotland Yard — Sussex Police and, of course, Thames Valley.

Our second speaker, Professor Doob of the Centre of Criminology at the University of Toronto, as an academic has also had a significant impact on policing. One of his important published works, which he edited in 1993, at the University of Toronto is a book entitled "Thinking about Police Resources", which resulted from a workshop he organized on that subject.

When addressing the very important subject of police resources, Professor Doob said "[...] in order to think about police budgets, we have to first think about police function and policing philosophy". Professor Doob, in his preface also added : "a government official said, '[...] the problem with consulting academics about police budgets is that they would not be able to answer the questions he had' — i.e. how much should we

* Assistant Commissioner, Director, Community, Contract & Aboriginal Policing Services, R.C.M.P., Ottawa, Ontario.

spend on policing in a community". His retort was, "[...] the academics were not necessarily the best and should not be seen as the only people to consult on these matters [...] such decisions are community or political questions — not research questions".

After the "what" questions of policing are answered then one can ask the "how" and "how much". One can certainly agree with Professor Doob on that. He will speak to us today on the topic of "What Can Canada Learn from Sentencing Reforms in Other Countries".

Our last speaker on the panel will be another exemplary police leader from New South Wales, Australia. A prolific writer and researcher, as well as police leader is Senior Sergeant Terry O'Connell. In fact, the C.B.C. had him down to their studios at 7:00 a.m. this morning to give a quick overview on this conference and family group conferencing, a subject dear to his heart and one he will cover under the heading "Conferencing and Community Empowerment — Rediscovering the Human Face of Justice".

The Canadian policing community is deeply indebted to the committed police officers who are leading the policing world in explaining our opportunities for doing business differently under a restorative justice philosophy.

Senior Constable O'Connell will also share with us some new and enlightening results of a research project called R.I.S.E. for restorative community policing which compares dealing with impaired drivers in the traditional court process and the family group conferencing.

Chief Justice Bayda in his remarks this morning commented on incremental change and I agreed fully with what he said. But in many cases, Ministries of Justice, Provincial and Territorial and at the federal level, are playing catch up to where many communities and police are in the implementation process.

We are in need of some formal recognition of restorative justice processes, not to bureaucratize or inhibit them, but to simply validate and recognize them as positive steps in the right direction.