



# Bulletin

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## THE POLICE IN A CONFRONTATION SOCIETY

*The following passages are from a recent speech by the Minister of Justice, Mr. John Turner, to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police in London, Ontario:*

We are witnesses today to a crisis between freedom and authority. In this crisis, law plays a dual role. Law is both the symbol of authority and the guaranty of freedom. The dynamics of rapid change in the values that our society chooses to honour, produce a conflict and a confrontation. Demands for larger freedom collide with the claims for authority. In this conflict, the policeman has become the man in the middle, caught between his duty to enforce the law and his social responsibility to be responsive to calls for personal liberty.

Those of us in government must bear much of the responsibility and the challenge of formulating broad areas of social and economic policy that respond to the prevailing value norms that exist in society. But there will always be a disagreement between what people think the law ought to be and what in

reality it is; only when this distinction is reduced to a minimum can there be complete trust in the law and the kind of stable society that results from a respect for the rule of law.

While it is the legislator's role to reform the law to try to meet the needs of a changing society, it falls to the police forces of this country to enforce the law as it exists. It is one thing to discuss the problems of a confrontation society in the isolation booth of a departmental drafting office; it is quite another to face the reality of actual physical confrontation in the context of labour disputes, rock festivals and civil disobedience. You and I may argue whose job is the more difficult. One thing is clear: our responsibilities are complementary.

The two roles we have to play are closely related. Legislative reform accomplishes nothing unless the practical problems of administrative reform and enforcement are solved. What we need is a co-ordinated and combined effort on the part of legislatures and enforcement agencies to bring about the enactment of credible laws that can be and are enforced in a credible manner. The role of the legislator is to enact credible laws; the role of the prosecutor and the police is to enforce those laws in a credible manner. The enforcement of credible laws in a credible manner: that's the key to a just society. It is unfair to expect the police to enforce laws that have lost the respect of the public. For, in so doing the police become the butt of public criticism — criticism that should be directed at the legislator.

### WINNING PUBLIC SUPPORT

How best can we together meet this goal: credible laws enforced in a credible manner? First, and perhaps most important, we must win public support for law reform and an understanding of the role of the police and law enforcement agencies. This will require public education programs about the service given to the community by law enforcement agencies. Too often police forces have been reluctant to publi-

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