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SPECIAL BRANCH

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You will recall the discussions with Sir Robert Armstrong last year about terms of reference for Special Branches. We have now drafted a first revision of the terms of reference issued by ACPO on 15 June 1970, and I enclose a copy. The form is changed, but little of the substance other than incorporations from the Security Service circulars of 29 May 1974 and 16 December 1975 and some obvious updatings (e.g. on the Prevention of Terrorism legislation).

I should draw your attention to two phrases taken over from the existing guidance which I think are now questionable. The first is the phrase "potentially subversive" in paragraph 5. If this means simply those organisations whose long-term aim, rather than short-term tactics, is subversive, then it seems redundant in the light of the definition in the preceding paragraph. If it is different from this, then I think we shall need to make a clear case for retaining these words, given the sensitivity in this field. The second is the word "political" in paragraph 6. Might this be omitted?

In the comment accompanying paragraph 8, we have suggested a slight change of emphasis, steering clear of a definition of industrial militancy, avoiding the word "political" and seeking to tie the point where militancy becomes subversive to the definition of subversion.

I am sending copies of the draft to Bob Bryan (MPSB) and to HMCIC, and when I have received your comments the four of us might meet. The next step would be to approach ACPO so that the CID Committee can be brought into the discussions and, as before, act as the channel for communication to chief officers.

We have also been looking at the question of training of Special Branch officers, in the belief that paper guidance is no substitute for good supervision and experience on the job. The training which you and the Met. provide clearly plays an important part. Bob Bryan has given us outline information (which he sent at the time to [redacted] SyS Officer [redacted]) on the MPSB's training courses for Special Branch officers, and I should be grateful if you too could give us something on the courses you run for them: a very broad outline of what they cover, the numbers trained each year and the ranks involved. I would also welcome your thoughts generally on training for SB officers and whether you think improvements are needed.

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