

Mr Phillips (received 25/9/79)
F4 Division

cc DAC Bryan
Sys Officer

SPECIAL BRANCH

- 1954
1. I refer to your note of 20 August and the accompanying copy of a letter addressed by you to DAC Bryan, NSY, on the same date.
 2. The issues raised have been discussed with Mr Bryan and Sys Officer of the Security Service, and Mr Bryan has been good enough to let me have a copy of his reply to you dated 6 September.
 3. I agree with Mr Bryan that it would be helpful if a basic document about the role of Special Branches were to be circulated to chief officers. It would also be of value to Ministers and their advisers, but for the very reasons advanced both by you and Mr Bryan, I consider, on balance, that it would not be prudent to publish what is bound to be a sensitive document however carefully it is drafted. I would go so far as to say that to certain pressure groups it would be emotive or even provocative and would inevitably stimulate even more questions about the Special Branch and possibly the Security Service itself. Indeed, the reason for publication would be open to suspicion.
 4. Like Mr Bryan I would be opposed to the inclusion of the section in the draft document headed 'Tasks'. It should be sufficient to outline objectives without attempting to spell out how these objectives are to be achieved, whether the document is for public or private consumption. It would be inviting trouble to mention threats to public order posed by pickets and the undermining of parliamentary democracy by industrial means.
 5. You will be aware that the then HMCIC included a section on Special Branches in England and Wales (excluding the MPD) in his report for 1978 (page 42), and that the Commissioner included a brief reference (Page 50 - 51) in his report for the same year. I would have thought that these references, together with comment in Chief Constables' annual reports meet any reasonable requirement for public

information. I am aware of the fact that not all annual reports for 1978 included references to Special Branches and HMIs are reminding Chief Constables, where necessary, of the desirability of including such references. Publication of a document on the lines suggested to chief officers will probably help in the formulation of appropriate comment in annual reports.

6. So far as internal guidance to Special Branches is concerned, I agree that the ACPO Council (Crime) Committee (formerly the CID Committee), should be consulted early in the drafting stage. Whether the ultimate revised terms of reference should be issued by Home Office, the Security Service or through the General Secretary of ACPO is a matter which can be resolved by discussion.

7. The training provided jointly by the Metropolitan Police and the Security Service is effective. The six initial courses for newly appointed SB officers cater for approximately 168 officers per year and should provide for adequate early training, and there is no reason to believe that 56 places on advanced courses for experienced officers is not satisfactory. If HMIs find to the contrary on their inspections they will report accordingly and representations will be made for additional courses.

8. It is part of the inspectorate duty to ensure that there is adequate supervision and control over the work of SB officers in forces in England and Wales, outside the MPD, including the Port Units, and their reports on individual forces have contained no adverse comment.

9. It is only fair to point out, however, that with 74 Port Units in England and Wales it is not possible for HMIs to give as much close attention as they would wish to this important aspect of their duties during the normal course of force inspections.

10. On 2 October I shall discuss with them the possibility of arranging a systematic, planned inspection of all HQ SB Units and selected Port Units, assisted by my Assistant (Crime) and a senior representative of the National Ports Office. This suggestion has the support of DAC Bryan and if HMIs consider that it has merit I shall raise the matter at the subsequent meeting with Heads of Divisions which I hope you will be able to attend. The next in the sequence of events would be discussion with AC'C' at New Scotland Yard and the ACPO Council (Crime) Committee.


HMCIC

18 September 1979