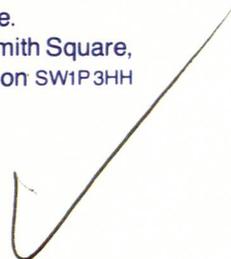




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RT HON LEON BRITTAN QC MP

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Extracts from a speech by the Rt Hon Leon Brittan QC MP (Richmond, Yorks), Home Secretary, to the Newcastle University Conservative Association in the faculty of law, at Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, on Friday 8th June 1984.

#### PAYING FOR POLICING THE MINERS' DISPUTE

In Britain we have a locally based police force which has on occasions to deal with nation-wide problems. During the present coal miners' dispute, Chief Constables have been co-operating skilfully and with great success to ensure that police strengths at any location are sufficient to ensure that those who wish to go to work or go otherwise about their business without intimidation are able to do so. The scale of police operations has been very great - because the challenge to the rule of law and to individual liberty has been correspondingly great.

We have had for many years in Britain a well tried system whereby the Chief Officer of one police force can provide assistance to another when the need, for whatever reason, arises. In line with the essentially local basis of policing, the force which receives such assistance is required to pay for help from the other force on a basis agreed between them. This system of 'mutual aid' allows us to combine local accountability, national effectiveness and maximum flexibility in our policing operations.

But what is new in the present dispute is the scale and duration of the deployment of police resources required to maintain order and uphold the law in the face of concerted and often violent attempts to close down the whole coal field as well as other sites.

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On occasions, some 7,000 police officers have been involved. The cost to the police authorities and to their rate payers is large and growing.

For that reason, I have announced that central government is making special financial assistance available. It is important that everyone should realise just how considerable this help will be.

Half of all police expenditure is already met by police grant from the Home Office. Now a further 40% of gross approved additional spending incurred on policing the miners' dispute above the level of the yield of penny rate will be provided by the Government.

In other words, above that level central government will be providing 90p in every pound spent. The remaining 10p will be provided by the police authority, so adhering to the principle that some contribution to and so responsibility for even this exceptional extra expenditure should be locally retained. We have also made it clear that the additional spending incurred by local authorities as a result of policing the dispute will be exempt from the penalties of grant hold back which would otherwise apply.

It is certainly reasonable that local authorities should have to make an initial contribution. The exceptional payment by central government of 90% of all further expenditure shows the government's readiness to accept the argument that this is not a policing problem that can simply be financed where the burden happens to fall.

It is never cheap and rarely painless to uphold the law of the land against those who are determined on its overthrow. But freedom is always worth its price. The very substantial extra sums which we will be providing to assist with the cost of policing this dispute are the clearest possible proof of our determination to support the communities and the police who are bearing the brunt of the struggle to keep the peace.