



# NEWS BULLETIN

## Public & Private Sector Edition

### Clarke Overturns Old Tory Policy

*Coalition Justice Minister, Ken Clarke is about to turn penal policy on its troubled head. Departing radically from the old, if not ancient, Tory doctrine of “hang ‘em and flog ‘em”, Mr Clarke now announces a “rehabilitation revolution.” What might it mean to you and to your employer?*

Quite properly, Kenneth Clarke is critical of the growth in the prison population which has, more or less, doubled in the last twenty years to its present level of more than 85,000. He says that locking people up for the sake of it was a waste of public funds. In our opinion, there are few, if any, offenders locked-up for the sake of it. Our experience is that judges and magistrates examine every possible alternative to imprisonment before sending anyone down. So much so do they look for alternatives, it is often a source of great annoyance to see nuisance offenders appearing in our Courts time after time after time. The lives of the law-abiding citizens are too often blighted by the continued presence of petty criminals on our streets.

Our escalating prison population is a scandal, but it is pointless to try and draw comparisons with most other countries. In Britain we differ because we suffer from more criminal and anti-social activity per head of population than do most other countries in the civilised world, certainly much more than do almost all of our European neighbours. Few others, anywhere in the world, are silly enough to tolerate the antics of the petty offenders like we do. So, like us, do you detect a little political dishonesty coming to the fore? A Prime Minister and Chancellor demanding massive cuts in all Government departments, the £4 billion prison building programme under threat from the Lib-Dem influence in the Coalition and, coincidentally we’re sure, the Justice Minister deciding that prison no longer works?

Having said that, the Justice Secretary does have some incredibly amazing and novel ideas in respect of rehabilitation. He said that he is examining ways in which voluntary groups and private firms can assist; paying such organisations according to how many people they rehabilitate. Well, now we’ll see the whites of their eyes! How many companies or cash-strapped charities are going to gamble on that one? The over-liberal but well-meaning do-gooders might discover, for the first time, the radical difference between what offenders say, what they really mean, and what they actually do.

Writing in *The Guardian* political commentator, Deborah Orr, said “The increase in prison numbers under Labour - up to nearly 85,00 has been a nightmare.

*Continued over/...*

### World Cup Madness?

Forget what we said last month - Rio lifting the cup and all that. We didn’t mean it anyway! The only way that the England team were going to lift any trophy was by nicking one from the local jewelers. By the way, anyone want to buy some flags?

### Still Breathtaking

In May we reported on the breathtaking pay hike taken by Serco Supremo, Chris Hyman - a whopping 33%, taking his salary to a modest £1.5 million. (Mind you, that is for a full year). You may recall that we dared Mr Hyman to provide us with some answers.

Surprise, surprise, the silence has been deafening.

We don’t really care what Chris Hyman takes whilst limiting his staff to 1%, we’ve become hardened to that sort of hypocrisy. But a decent employer perhaps owes some sort of explanation to his loyal employees. His continued failure to do so may mean that the ‘loyal’ tag will disappear, and rightly so! There again, perhaps he’s taken a leaf out of the book of his other “employer,” HRH The Prince of Wales. Surely not! we hear you say.



*Clarke Does An About-Turn from page 1...*

*The recidivism rate - 95% for young adult males is a sick joke. The Youth Justice Board - Labour's invention - has been a disaster." [we'll drink to that Deborah]. Miss Orr went on to say "Mind you, Clarke's rhetoric is as much about saving money as it is about saving futures. Frankly, the very best thing he could do now is to announce that he'll be cutting his own entire department, and his own job. The youth justice stuff, and much of the business of rehabilitation, needs to be integrated into the department of education, and the rest needs to return to the Home Office. The same goes to many other ministries that have proliferated over the last 30 years and now need to be got rid of again."*

Those last points bring us very neatly to the other, potentially devastating, side of the argument. If Clarke really is going to bring an end to the imprisonment of petty and minor offenders, what will happen to the extravagantly expensive prison building programme? Will prison staff numbers be slashed? Already Mr Clarke has said that he is investigating the closure of large numbers of courts. It's a fair bet that modern technology, in the form of CCTV, will play a much greater role in alleviating the necessity for so many 'productions.' With projected cuts of 20 - 25% in the budget of the Justice Department, it would be naive of us to imagine that there will be no job losses. And this will not be unique to either the public or private sectors. To be fair to the Minister, he hasn't mentioned prison closures and he does say that he wants prisons to be "places of education, hard work and change..." Few of us would argue with that aspiration.

Nevertheless, we can't help musing that cracking-down harder on so-called petty offenders - the jobs that make us all feel so unsafe in town centres, would be a more appropriate place to start. Ignore the misguided do-gooders and introduce a dose of zero-tolerance policing, supported by a more robust approach to offending than that currently displayed by our judiciary. Surely that's better than the usual, futile attempts at rehabilitation once the offender is inside?

Remember, most prisoners have, by the time they arrive in your custody, been right through the entire gamut of 'soft' sentencing. Fines, probation, community service, suspended sentences - all to no avail.

Whatever approach is eventually adopted by the Government, our role as a trade union must be directed towards the preservation of employment of our members. What will we do?

**We will:**

- **Lobby Ministers and M.P.'s on your behalf;**
- **Continually remind the general public that our challenging industry is already under-staffed;**
- **Place jobs above everything else in our pay and other negotiations;**
- **Direct all available resources to that quest. □**

**New PSU Website**

Our website has been updated and looks sharper and cleaner. Have a look! There is quite a lot of information that may, from time to time, be of interest to you.

**PSU Rule Changes**

It's now six years since we updated the PSU Rules. Work has been underway for quite some time on this onerous task. As with all organisations, rules quickly become inadequate to cope with the problems and it is all too easy to become embroiled in silly, legal arguments when

that happens. The Executive Council will be spending further time on the task later this month. Hopefully, a draft can then be posted to the website

and our local officials for your approval, prior to the intended implementation in January of next year.



**Wheatley Retires**

Noms Chief Executive, Phil Wheatley retired last month. He is succeeded by Michael Spurr.

Phil Wheatley C.B had a glittering career spanning more than 40 years in H.M. Prison Service. Admittedly, Phil made a number of enemies along the way but he was once a good Officer and a damn good, no nonsense, straight-talking governor. It was perhaps those particular, enviable qualities that alienated both the POA and a number of staff during his tenure as Director General of H.M. Prison Service and, latterly, C.E.O. of NOMS.

Those of us fortunate enough to have served with Phil were always impressed by his innate sense of fairness with staff and prisoners alike. When off-duty he endeared himself to colleagues of all ranks. Many disagreed with him but his integrity was above reproach. Others are perhaps better qualified to judge his performance as the head of such a vast organisation. Certainly, he'll be a hard act for anyone to follow.

We wish Phil Wheatley well for a long and happy retirement. Equally, we wish Phil's successor, Michael Spurr every success in his new role. □