

engineering craftsman's apprenticeship. Most, however, do not.

What can be done to reverse the disturbing decline in Britain's industrial skills? There are certain short-run measures that would help to alleviate the situation, but the radical answers lie in fundamental changes to our system of education and training. In the short run, YTS should become a two-year scheme, of which the first year would be a foundation year of training for all school leavers, whether unemployed or not. Young people should not normally enter the labour market before the age of 17. The second YTS year would be a more specialised training in the families of skills or "skill clusters" appropriate to the area of work chosen by the trainee, and could be combined with work experience, or with a starter job shared with another trainee—real work for real wages, but on a half-time basis.

Crucial to the short-term response is the granting and recognition of credit. Trainees who satisfactorily complete a two-year course should gain credit towards qualifying as technicians or craftsmen and women, shortening the time required to complete these more advanced courses. Similarly, technician courses should open a route all the way up to degree level for those qualified by motivation and ability, a parallel ladder to the conventional rung of A level examinations. Credit recognition entails a high and consistent quality of training, and that in turn means

that courses need to be monitored and inspected. But much of the monitoring can, in fact, be done by industry itself.

The government's specific scheme for training young people in new technology was the establishment of Information Technology Centres, or ITECS, which train them in the programming and use of computers. Government funding has been based on a once-for-all grant of £75,000 per centre, plus the normal managing agency fee and trainee allowances under the YTS. The grants have been spent on equipping the centres, and to help meet trainers' salaries. A number of early information technology centres now face a crisis, since they have exhausted the initial grant, and cannot finance themselves out of revenue from consultancy and contract work for local firms.

It cannot be sensible to allow the ITECS to collapse. The government may reasonably require them to seek private sector contracts, but it cannot seriously expect those in inner-city areas or in areas of severe recession and high unemployment to be able to finance themselves. A second infusion of public money is essential for their survival.

A permanent answer to Britain's skills crisis, however, lies much deeper than extending the YTS or reviving the ITECS. The cause lies deep in an education and training system that, for all its traditional strengths, cannot meet the demands of the information age.

This article is based on Shirley Williams's book, *A Job to Live: the impact of tomorrow's technology on work and society*, which is published next week by Penguin

HOW YOUNG BLACKS SEE THE POLICE

GEORGE GASKELL AND PATTEN SMITH

The latest tensions in Toxteth have led to comparisons with the summer of 1981. But the conventional wisdom about young blacks' hostility to the police does not tell the whole story, as new research shows.

THIS summer has seen trouble on the streets of Toxteth again, just four years after they were the scene of some of the worst civil unrest in mainland Britain in modern times. Three weeks ago, 100 black youths fought with police in an incident over a stolen motorcycle; on another occasion a police car was stoned in Granby Street, in the heart of Liverpool 8.

Does this mean that history is repeating itself? On one level it is unlikely, since the police have honed up their mob control tactics, particularly since the miners' strike. But on another level—in their relationships with young black people—they may have learnt less.

There has been a good deal of research since the 1981 riots, notably the Scarman report and the major survey of Londoners carried out by the Policy Studies Institute (*Police and People in London*, 1983). And there have been several explanations of young blacks' hostility to the police. Probably the most popular of these—held by both the Policy Studies Institute and the Home Office—attributes it to a general disaffection with a white society which subjects black people to widespread prejudice and discrimination.

If this explanation is true, then there is little the police can do to improve matters. And since the position of young blacks has not changed—except, in

terms of jobs, for the worse—since the riots of 1980 and 1981, we have no reason not to expect more of the same in the years to come. But is this view of the origins of anti-police attitudes valid? Or could the hostility to the police be, so to speak, "self-contained." In other words, does it have its own specific causes, which are not necessarily related to young blacks' views of other institutions in British society?

Our team of researchers set out to investigate this by carrying out personal interviews in one south London borough, among a sample of black (of West Indian origin) and white youngsters, who had all left school at the age of 16, two years before the survey (which took place in 1983). We interviewed 96 blacks and 108 whites.

In terms of the overall attitude to the police our research paralleled other findings. A noticeable difference between blacks and whites was found. In all, 60 per cent of the whites held the view that the police are "good" or "very good," by comparison with only 30 per cent of blacks. By contrast, 41 per cent of blacks, as against 16 per cent of whites felt that the police were "bad" or "very bad." We asked what people felt about using violence to bring about political change, and their views of the urban riots of 1981. Two in five blacks, as against one in five whites, believed that violence was sometimes justified in

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bringing about political change. But they were no more likely than whites to think that violence could change society *for the better*. Three out of four blacks expressed some support for those who took part in the riots; but under a quarter thought the riots were a good thing. Not surprisingly, only half that proportion of whites expressed support for the rioters, and only 8 per cent thought the riots a good thing.

Young blacks, then, are anti-police and pro-militancy. This is not news. But is this a symptom of a more general disaffection from institutions and groups in British society? To investigate this, we sought respondents' attitudes to eleven major social institutions, including politics, education, employment and the legal system. Our comparisons between blacks and whites showed only one statistically significant difference: the blacks felt more hostile to the army than whites did. Even the Conservative Party and employers, who might well be seen by blacks as racially biased, were not viewed in a particularly poor light. There was no evidence of a wholesale rejection of white society.

We turned, therefore, to another plausible explanation, which was developed by the Policy Studies Institute researchers, among others.

The suggestion here is that young blacks are more hostile to the police simply because they have more frequent negative contacts with them such as stops, searches or arrests. The table shows what had happened to the blacks and whites in our sample:

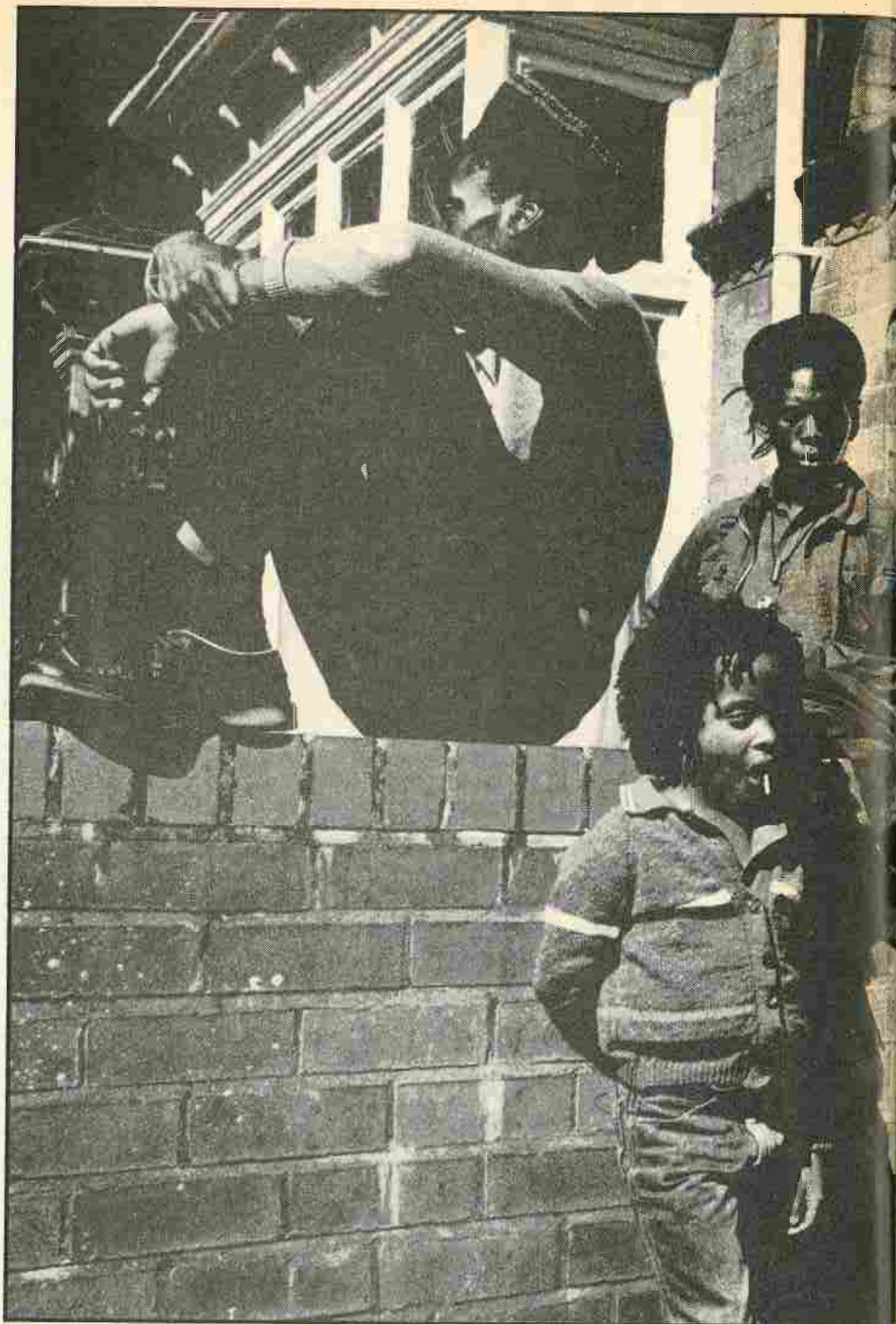
Negative contacts between police and blacks or whites

contact	blacks	whites
foot stops		
% stopped in last year	56	39
mean No. of foot stops in last year	2.9	2.6
mean No. of searches	2.1	0.8
car stops		
% stopped in last year	64	66
mean No. of stops in last year	2.7	4.8
mean No. of searches	1.6	1.0
all stops (car and foot)		
% stopped in last year	82	75
mean No. of stops	5.6	6.7
% reported or charged for motoring offence	9	23
% taken to police station or arrested	34	20

There are two interesting points to be made about the figures. First, there are high numbers in all categories, regardless of the person's colour. This points to very concentrated policing, which can hardly be expected to help good relations with youth, black or white. Secondly, there are few differences between the experiences of blacks and whites. By comparison with whites, blacks were more likely to be stopped on foot, more likely to be searched (but not significantly so), more likely to be arrested and taken to a police station. But they were less likely to be charged with a motoring offence. The differences almost certainly explain some of the black-white differences in hostility (the differential rates for stops and arrests may be of particular importance). But we question whether they are enough to give the whole story.

It occurred to us that it might be not so much the quantity as the *quality* of contacts with the police which were more unfavourable for blacks. So we asked our respondents to tell us what they thought were the good and bad points about the police.

It is noteworthy that they were not unequivocally

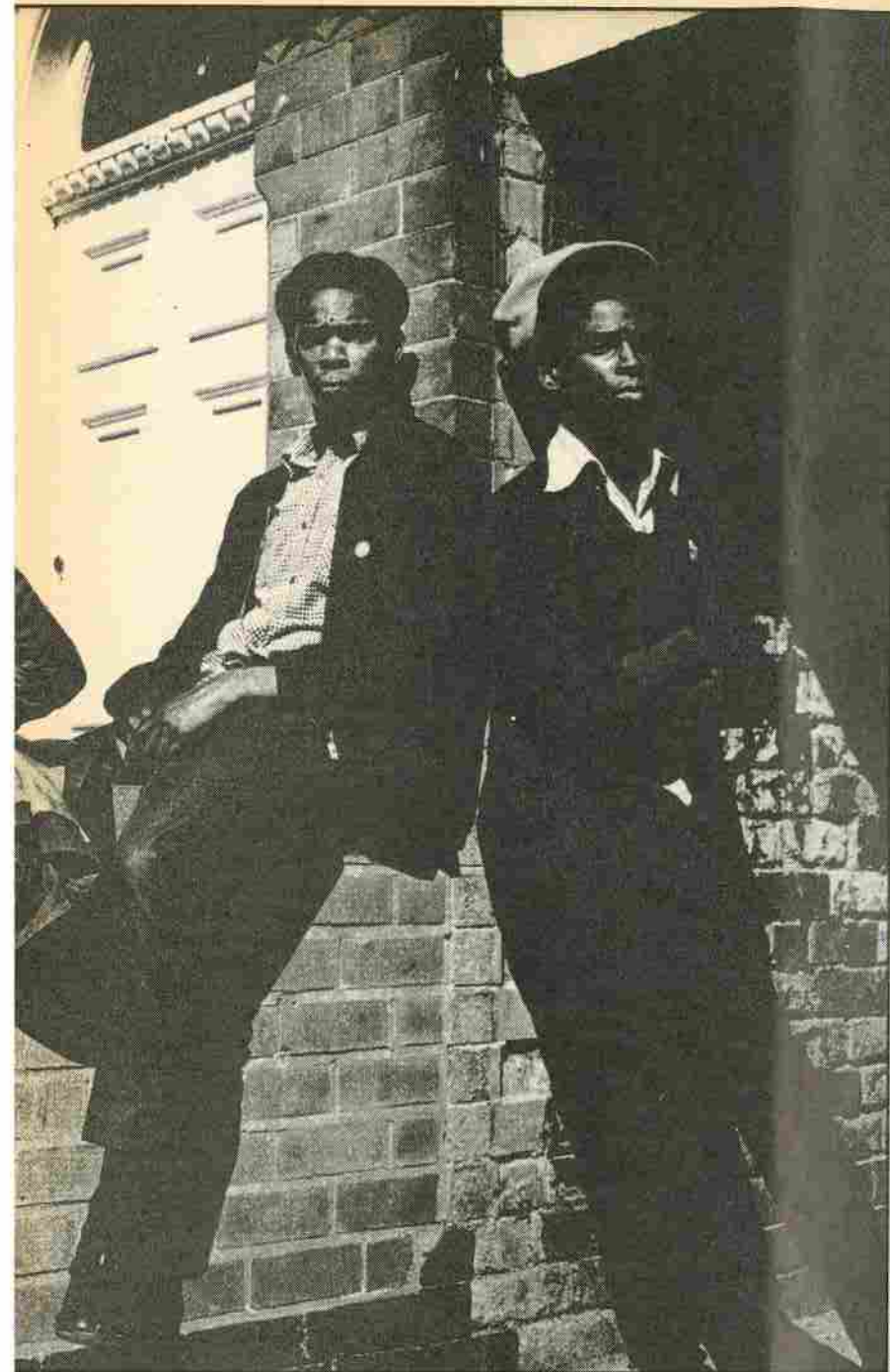


critical of the police. We found that 78 per cent of blacks (and 88 per cent of whites) mentioned at least one good point. That said, the general attitude of policemen—harassment and their provocative and aggressive manner—were often mentioned as bad points by *all* our respondents. The blacks were more likely to accuse the police of racialism and of exceeding their powers. We admit that this evidence does not allow us to draw firm conclusions. But it may be indicative of poorer quality interactions between police and black youngsters.

All the same, neither the quality nor the quantity of contacts seemed to be the whole explanation. If bad contacts with the police were the main factor, people who had not been stopped or arrested should have a fairly good opinion of the police. More crucially, blacks and whites in this category would not differ in their views.

Yet our data suggest that this is not so. Even blacks

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John Reardon

Handsworth, Birmingham. The prospects for young blacks in the inner cities remain bleak

who had *not* been stopped and who had *not* been arrested were more likely to say that the police were bad or very bad than their white counterparts. Furthermore, 76 per cent of these blacks said that they had been annoyed by police at some time, in contrast to only 25 per cent of the whites. Significantly, too, 89 per cent of them mentioned one or more bad points about the police, while only 67 per cent of the whites did so. This suggests that while the number and nature of stops are related to youngsters' attitudes to the police, they are not the sole influence at work. Other factors clearly must be involved.

It is often claimed that unemployment, with its related deprivation, tends to encourage hostility to the police and to make people more inclined towards militant action. This was one of the explanations of the riots in the United States in the 1960s. Certainly, the rate of unemployment among the blacks in our sample was far greater than that of white youngsters

(55 per cent and 20 per cent respectively). What's more, the unemployed were more negative about the police than the employed.

We looked at the possibility that different unemployment rates, in combination with the other factors already discussed, might explain black-white differences in hostility to the police. We tried to see whether these differences in attitude could be accounted for in terms of a number of individual characteristics: whether a person was employed or not, black or white, arrested or not arrested, number of stops in the last year and, finally, general social attitudes.

We found the ones who were stopped the most and those with the most negative social attitudes were more likely to be negative to the police. However, when we took all the variables into account, the unemployed were *not* significantly more hostile to the police. Even more importantly, taking statistical account of all these variables still left blacks considerably more hostile to the police than whites.

So what do these findings tell us about the origins of hostile attitudes? First, our evidence suggests that blacks are not hostile to the police because they are somehow seen as symbols of an oppressive white society; and nor are they more hostile because of higher unemployment. Second, while we found that black youngsters were more hostile to the police and more likely to support militant action, this can only be explained in part by the number of negative contacts. We also obtained some slight evidence that blacks were more critical of the way the police treated them, but again this is not the whole story.

We believe that another factor is involved—that blacks feel police hostility as a kind of group experience. This view is supported by the PSI study, which showed the extent to which racialism is fashionable in the police. Stephen Small, a black PSI researcher, graphically described the circumstances of his arrest and treatment while working on the project. Lord Scarman was sufficiently concerned to propose that racial discrimination should be a reason for dismissal of a police officer.

What almost amounts to a "folk history" of unpleasant, perhaps frightening, experiences with the police has worked its way into the shared beliefs of black youngsters. Even without direct personal experience, young blacks evoke an unpleasant stereotype about the police, and this, of course, affects any contact they have with them. In part, the verbal support we found in our survey for the rioters of 1981, and for militant action, are expressions of this anti-police stereotype. Yet at the same time, young blacks do plainly see some good points about the police. They recognise the need for policing, but object to the way it is done.

If these "folk beliefs" are to be changed, and the relations between police and black communities improved, the police must reconsider the way they handle young blacks. Can it be justified to stop six in ten young blacks in the street in one year and to stop them repeatedly? When stops are made, the police must avoid anything which smacks of racialism and provocation. The current emphasis on human awareness training is a change in the right direction. But it is important to remember that even if the police do change their behaviour, it will be some time before the climate of black opinion takes account of this. There are few blacks in Brixton or Toxteth who, for all the community policing experiments since, do not remember the events leading up to the summer of 1981.