the Howard League for Penal Reform

In praise of fire brigade policing: Contra common sense conceptions of the police role

By Professor Robert Reiner

London School of Economics

WHAT IF...?

Series of challenging pamphlets

LSE Mannheim Centre for CRIMINOLOGY

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Foreword

This is the first pamphlet in the What if…? Series of challenging pamphlets. The pamphlet series is the product of a partnership between the Howard League for Penal Reform and the Mannheim Centre at the London School of Economics. This partnership emerged out of the desire both to challenge conventional thinking on penal issues, perhaps to think the unthinkable and build on the tradition of the Howard League and the LSE to be radical.

The series aims to work with established and well thought of thinkers, academics and practitioners to develop innovative, and perhaps controversial, ideas that can work as a stimulus to new policy initiatives and ultimately achieve change.

We have developed a process that culminates in a pamphlet whereby we ask that the author put the ideas they wish to promulgate to the test. In order to do this each pamphlet idea is subjected to a peer review seminar. Here, the author's ideas are scrutinised by discussants and the expert audience.

In this case, Professor Robert Reiner's thesis was put to the test by Sir Denis O'Connor CBE QPM, the Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Baroness Hamwee, the Co-Chair of the Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Party Committee on Home Affairs, Justice and Equalities. We would like to thank them both for their contributions, as well as the learned audience at the seminar, and wonder how, if at all, their views may have contributed to the final argument presented here.

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Introduction: Policing in its place

'Crime isn't a disease, it's a symptom. Cops are like a doctor that gives you aspirin for a brain tumour.' (Raymond Chandler).

The basic thesis of this pamphlet is that public and political discourse about the role of policing has changed fundamentally over the last thirty years, very much for the worse! In a nutshell, over the last twenty years in official policy discourse, and among many academics, two propositions have become axiomatic, so taken for granted that they are rarely explicitly stated: a) crime fighting is the central police task; b) the police are central to the control and reduction of crime. These are of course the commonsense view of both popular and police rank-and-file culture. But official and research discourse used to see that as problematic, empirically and analytically. The police role was seen as much wider than a force combating crime, and often regarded as primarily a social service. I will argue that this force vs. service polarity poses a false dichotomy: the crucial work of policing is maintaining order, on both the grand social scale and micro-social levels, using their specialised resource, the potential deployment of legitimate force (as Egon Bittner first showed forty years ago). But historically, empirically, and theoretically, the commonsense conception of police as primarily crime-fighters must be deconstructed, as earlier generations of researchers and policy-makers once accepted.

The change in discourse about policing is a crucial aspect of the transformation of the politics and practices of criminal justice that has been variously dubbed the culture of control (Garland 2001), governing through crime (Simon 2007), neoliberal law and order (Reiner 2007), and the breakdown of the pseudo-pacification process (Hall et al 2008).

The basic driver is the broader transformation of culture, political economy and social structure associated with the shift from Keynesian social democratic welfarism to globalised neo-liberalism (Harvey 2005; Judt 2010). Whilst the pernicious effects of this in the economic, political and cultural spheres are coming to be recognised increasingly widely, it is still largely absent from debates about criminal justice.

The old official view was that policing and criminal justice were marginal to the control of overall crime levels, and had a primarily symbolic role representing the importance of seeking justice in individual cases. Perhaps the quintessential statement of this was in the 1967 US Presidential Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice, which argued (p.13):

'there is a widespread popular conception of the police, supported by the news and entertainment media. Through these, the police have come to be viewed as continually engaged in the exciting, dangerous, and competitive enterprise of apprehending and prosecuting criminals. Emphasis upon this one aspect of police functioning has led to a tendency on the part of both the public and the police to underestimate the range and complexity of the total police task.

A police officer assigned to patrol duties in a large city is typically confronted with at most a few serious crimes in the course of a single tour of duty. He tends to view such involvement as constituting real police work. But it is apparent that he spends considerably more time keeping order, settling disputes, finding missing children, and helping drunks, than he does in responding to criminal conduct which is serious enough to call for arrest, prosecution, and conviction. This does not mean that serious crime is unimportant to the policeman… But it does mean that he performs a wide range of other functions which are of a highly complex nature and which often involve difficult social, behavioural and political problems.'

Current official thinking sees policing and crime control as essentially synonymous. ' The key priority is for the police to cut crime' (Policing in the 21st Century 2010 p.9). This is precisely the popular cultural view that was criticised in the older official conception, but is now embraced as commonsense policing.
This paper will argue for the validity of the older position, and analyse how and why it was discarded with the advent of neo-liberalism. Whilst achieving justice in as many cases of crime as possible is entirely welcome, this is not the main task of the police, and even the best policing remains marginal to the protection of the public from criminal victimisation. Policing is an essential emergency service, with a remit that includes crime but also much more. The much maligned notion of fire brigade policing is closer to the mark than the crime control conception that has become dominant.

This pamphlet will elaborate the concept of fire brigade policing in the next section. This will be followed by reviews of the debates about the police role, and the crime control capacities of the police. The rise of the crime control conception of policing will then be explained and assessed. Finally the conception of policing as an emergency service, analogous to and alongside the fire brigade and ambulance services, will be defended.

What is fire brigade policing?

The label ‘fire brigade’ policing originated in the 1970s, and was invariably used as a pejorative term. It referred to a set of changes in policing styles that were seen as damaging to a consensual police-public relationship. I castigated it thus: ‘The technology of fast cars, sirens and flashing blue lights… accentuated the constables’ action-centred perspective on policing’ (Reiner 1985 p.64).

In the 1970s and 80s fire brigade policing was commonly identified across the political spectrum as a key factor in the de-legitimisation of policing since the 1950s. On the right it was seen as having hammered a technological wedge into the harmonious police-public relations associated with images of a cosily consensual Dixon era. On the left it was seen as the everyday edge of a broader shift to a more coercive and militaristic policing style.

There is some confusion between practice and purpose in these criticisms. Fire brigade policing is a reactive practice ‘in which police actions are geared to responding to emergency calls for service’ (Reiner 1985 p.221). What attracted criticism was not the practice of reactive response to emergency calls, but the purposes to which the new technology was put. In the 1970s and 80s, as law and order became increasingly politicised, fire brigade policing was geared to the purposes of more coercive and militaristic suppression of disorder and crime.

The unacceptable face of fire brigade policing is its Starsky and Hutch incarnation as action heroes fighting crime, using the rapid response technology of sirens, speeding cars, and flashing blue lights. I would argue these are the bright, noisy but superficial trappings of fire-brigade policing.

The baby I want to rescue from that bathwater is the idea of the police role as centrally an emergency service against a sea of troubles, including but not primarily, controlling crime. This can be clarified by reviewing some long-standing debates about the nature of the police role.

Force or service? Analysing the police role

Arguments about what the role of policing is can be derived from at least five different sources:

- **History:** what is the original raison d'etre of policing?
- **Authority:** how is the police role specified in contemporary official policy statements?
- **Empirical:** what is it that police are actually called for and do in practice?
- **Populism:** what do people want from the police, as expressed in the abstract in public opinion surveys, or as embodied in effective demand: why people call police?
- **Democracy**: how do democratic governance institutions shape policing?
- **Theoretical critique:** All the above sources see the police role in terms of overall social function(s) they serve, although taking different views on what these are, as exemplified by the force or service debate. Following the influential critique of this by the late Egon Bittner (1974), it will be argued below that the police role should be understood not so much in terms of functions served as the specific capacities they are endowed with.

These diverse sources suggest rather different conceptions of the police role:

Historical origins

There is much talk in celebratory discussions of policing of Peel and Mayne's Nine Principles of Policing (e.g. accessed 20/11/11, www.magnacartaplus.org/briefings/nine_police_principles/.htm). These were supposedly coined by Sir Robert Peel, founder of the Metropolitan Police, and Richard Mayne, one of the two Commissioners he appointed in 1829. The principles are arguably an invention of 20th century historians like Charles Reith (Reith 1940, 1956 Appendix), embroidering Peel's briefer Instructions to the first Met recruits (Lentz and Chaires 2007).

What is beyond doubt is that Peel emphasised 'prevention of crime' as the key role of the New Police. But this meant a much broader and looser remit than the contemporary idea of crime reduction or control. It was captured best by Mayne's formulation of preserving 'public tranquillity', the phrase appropriated famously by Lord Scarman in his 1981 Report on the Brixton Disorders, where he specifically prioritised it over 'law enforcement'. In this conception, public support is crucial, and a service role was encouraged to ensure this. Law enforcement and criminal catching were explicitly downplayed. To Peel crime detection was ipso facto a sign of police failure to do what they were supposed to do – prevent crime in the first place.

It is crucial to recall the historical context for Peel's instructions. This was the hugely controversial foundation of the New Police, which took nearly half a century from Pitt's abortive attempt in 1785 until Peel's success in 1829 (with a quarter of a century more before the police was spread across the country). There is little doubt that a key motive of police reformers was safeguarding political threats to public order, but Peel soft-pedalled this to get the 1829 Act passed by emphasising the problem of mundane crime.

The intellectual prophets of the modern police, from Adam Smith to Patrick Colquhoun, saw police as only a minor part of preventing crime. These exponents of a 'science of police' saw political economy and culture as basic to the preservation of order and security. They advocated formation of a specialised police institution, but envisaged its contribution as much in symbolic as practical terms. This philosophy was echoed by most official pronouncements (in recent times most notably by Scarman), up to the 1990s neoliberal triumph of law and order politics, although it was always disregarded by the popular and rank-and-file police cultural conception of real policing as thief-taking.

Authority/Fiat: Contemporary official statements on the police role

There was a clear and marked shift in official pronouncements about policing following the politicisation of law and order in 1970s by Thatcher's Conservatives. For all the fire and brimstone of the Iron Lady's speeches on the subject, however, the Home Secretaries appointed by Thatcher were generally liberal and evidence-led. With the important exception of the militarisation of public order policing, the Thatcher governments waged a 'phoney war' on crime, much fiercer in bark than bite (Reiner 2007 pp. 129-31). The toughening of law and order policies in practice only became embedded after 1993, when Tony Blair pledged New Labour would be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime', and Michael Howard responded with his 'prison works' speech.

This initiated an arms race of ever tougher law and order. The police priority was unambiguously specified as law enforcement, and the police became the crucial instrument of crime control and public security. This was made absolutely explicit in the 1993 Police Reform White Paper s2.2 (Home Office 1993), the crucial landmark in the advent of neo-liberal policing: 'The main job of the police is to catch criminals'. It is not usual for a document to immediately supply evidence refuting its central contention, but this one did, in the very next sentence: 'In a typical day, however, only about 18% of calls to the police are about crime'.
The focus on crime control in the narrowest sense of thief-taking continued throughout the New Labour years. Despite the liberal noises on criminal justice

when David Cameron sought to detoxify the Tory brand as the 'nasty party', and the initial gestures (in particular from Kenneth Clarke's Ministry of Justice) to continue this liberalism in office, the Conservative-led Coalition has rapidly reverted to Tory type. Its Policing in the 21st Century consultation document paid the conventional lip service to Peel's principles and their preventive priority, but focused primarily on 'putting the public in the driver's seat' in order to cut crime through 'common sense' policing to be driven through by the Police and Crime Commissioners due to be elected later this year.

Empirical evidence on the police role in practice

When empirical studies of police practice began in the early 1960s, on both sides of the Atlantic, a key focus was what they revealed about the police role in practice. The way these studies presented their findings can be seen as following a dialectic pattern (Shearing and Leon 1977). The implicit thesis of this dialectic was the popular cultural conception of police as crime busters. Against this, early research postulated an antithesis: the empirical 'discovery' that the police were not crime-fighters, but provided an astonishingly wide range of services that people in trouble called upon them for. The police acted primarily as 'peace' not 'law' officers; as 'philosopher, guide and friend', and were best described as the 'secret social service' (Banton 1964; Cumming et al 1965; Punch 1979). More recent research has suggested a synthesis of what used to be debated as the force vs. service conceptions of the police role. Most police work seeks to keep order in emergency conflict situations, in which there may be potential crimes, and is neither pure consensual service delivery nor unequivocal law enforcement (Shapland and Vagg 1988; Reiner 2010 pp.141-7). 'Force is part of the service', as a 1992 episode of The Bill put it succinctly.

The post-93 fiat maintains that despite the research, the police are primarily crime-fighters. In this climate, there has been no official need for data from government or academic researchers assessing the nature of calls to police in recent years (since Waddington 1993). The focus of policy, research and public political debate has been crime and its control. Nonetheless it is clear that only a minority of calls are clearly crime related. The British Crime Survey finds that only about half of contacts initiated by the public unequivocally concern crimes. Unequivocal service contacts are about 10%, with the majority being ambiguous mixes of service/order maintenance/potential crime. This was indicated vividly last year by the Greater Manchester Police when they published on Twitter all calls over a 24-hour period (twitter.com/#!/gmp24_2, accessed 20/11/11).

Populism

Abstract public demand for policing tends to be crime focused. Surveys of public opinion and of media content suggest that popular views echo the crime control priorities of recent official statements. But as seen above, effective demand displayed in practice by calls for help is much more complex, including uncontroversial service calls, but mainly comprising order-maintenance, conflict resolution and potential crime incidents. In any event, in a democracy the channel for translating public views into policy is not directly through opinion surveys or direct calls for service, but via institutions of democratic governance.

Democratic governance and the police role

Democratic police governance in Britain has long been limited by the common law doctrine of constabulary independence, which has been interpreted as rendering ultra vires interventions by government into operational policing policies. This has always been contested, and debates about police governance were long polarized between two models, dubbed the 'explanatory and co-operative' vs. the 'subordinate and obedient' models (Marshall 1978). The former was enshrined in the Police Act 1964, whilst the latter was sought by political radicals who wished normal democratic governance to apply to policing. Since 1993 both have been superseded by a 'calculative and contractual' model (Reiner and Spencer 1993), fitting in with the emergent neo-liberal law and order consensus. Central (and to a severely limited extent local) government develop policing objectives and plans, governing from a distance through market-based incentives (short-term contracts, financial sanctions) that 'steer' the formally independent constables who 'row' (in the words of the New Public Management).

This is about to be transformed by the Coalition's reform of police governance, which is unequivocally populist. Whether it is democratic is a moot point although, like it or not, it is a done-deal, and for the time being the best that can be hoped for is to make the changes work as fairly and effectively as possible (Loader and Muir 2011) . The linchpin will be the 'elected police and crime commissioners (PCCs) who will give the public a direct say in policing in their area. The PCC will hold police forces and chief constables to account. The PCC will set local policing priorities and decide how your council tax is spent on crime and policing issues' (www.homeoffice.gov.uk/police/police-crime-commissioners/, accessed 17/11/11). The priority of crime control is built into the title itself, begging all the questions discussed in this pamphlet. The government's advocacy of PCCs is riddled with what can be called the CSI fallacy: that policing is a matter of uncomplicated technical skill and efficiency. This obliterates its inherently political character as the use of power on behalf of some against others.

The claim that PCCs achieve democratic governance of policing identifies democracy solely with voting. But elections are a necessary not a sufficient condition of democracy. Electing police commissioners does not guarantee democratic policing. There are several dangers to bear in mind:

- Tyrannies of the majority (oppression of unpopular 'police property' groups);
- Trammelling of due process: failing to respect legal and civil rights;
- Democracy becoming plutocracy, government of the rich, by the rich, for the rich; the 'finest government money can buy' in the words of American journalist Greg Palast;
- Unequal access to knowledge about policing and media power, frustrating evidence-based policy development.

In short, democratic citizenship requires not merely political rights but civil, and social/economic rights (Marshall 1950). Liberal democracy needs social democracy if it is to prevent plutocracy (Reiner 2011).

Theoretical critique of the force/service dichotomy in discussions of the police role

The force vs. service debate involved a number of conceptual failings. It assumed a tacit sexism ('domestics' were classified as service not crime). The dichotomy also rested upon an excluded middle, namely, first aid order maintenance. Most policing involves neither social service nor law enforcement, but order maintenance or peacekeeping: the settlement of conflicts by means other than law enforcement.

Policing is best thought of not in functional terms (the achievement of security, crime reduction etc.), but as a special capacity to use ordinarily illicit tools, particularly legitimate force. The police (like punishment) are a necessary evil, 'the fire to fight fire' (Brodeur 2010), making a police officer 'Florence Nightingale in Pursuit of Willie Sutton' (Bittner 1974 – Willie Sutton was an infamous American bank-robber). Police forces were a condensation into one agency of the State's defining feature of legitimate force (Weber 1919). They were desired by the elites who established them primarily to protect the hierarchical social order in a way that presented itself as impartial (Silver 1967). For this reason Peel emphasized their purpose as mundane crime prevention.

Once they were set up as a 24-hour force/service, however, they came to be called upon in a miscellany of emergency cases that required at least the potential deployment of legitimate force. Crime fighting, law enforcement, were important parts – but only parts - of this mandate. The uniting feature of tasks the police are called upon to perform is not legally defined, but is that they involve 'something that

ought not to be happening and about which someone had better do something now!' (Bittner 1974 p.30). The combination of a mandate of keeping a particular stratified order intact, whilst also maintaining general order on a daily basis at the behest of ordinary citizens, gives policing a Janus-faced character: 'parking tickets and class repression' (Marenin 1983).

Crime control in its place

Crime fighting is the dominant image of police in the media, which are the main source of information for public. But this leads the police on a Quixotic quest, as there are inherent limitations to the possibilities of crime control through policing. The drivers of crime and disorder largely lie much deeper than any possibility of being tackled by even the best police. This view was once a widely shared orthodoxy. However, it is now frequently claimed to have been refuted by recent experience and evidence.

Evaluation research on policing and penology during the 1970s and 80s has often been summed up as showing 'nothing works'. American and British research on traditional police tactics (notably the blockbuster Kansas City Patrol Experiment) suggested that they had limited effect on crime levels (Reiner 2010 pp. 147-59). This was not due to police incompetence, but a result of the thin spread of resources against potential crime targets (for two graphic calculations cf. Clarke and Hough 1984; Audit Commission 1996). This has recently been stridently criticised as assuming police officers were 'zombies' who blindly patrolled huge beats without any assessment of where crimes were likely to occur (Sutton 2011). Studies of police going back as far as the 18th century Bow Street Runners do show considerable ingenuity on the part of officers in where to direct their attention. However, this does not refute the point of the Clarke/Hough and Audit Commission calculations. Given the huge array of potential targets they are charged with protecting, even if every cop on the beat had Poirot's grey cells and Jack Bauer's ruthless street smarts, they cannot have much impact on overall crime levels.

Several studies in the last twenty years have shown that police organisations overall, using smarter, intelligence and evidence-led tactics, directing scarce resources systematically to identified 'hot spots', can make a serious difference to crime in such locations (Sherman 1992; Braga and Weisburd 2010). How much these and other innovative tactics account for the overall crime drop in the USA and elsewhere since the mid-1990s remains vigorously disputed, however. Econometricians who claim that policing played a part in the crime drop have tried to refute the impact of new tactics, suggesting that the crucial factor was increasing police numbers (the most influential discussion is by Stephen Levitt in 2004, popularised in his bestselling book Freakanomics).

Recent econometric studies have usefully been reviewed by Ben Bradford for the HM Inspector of Constabulary (Bradford 2011). After several decades in which econometric studies showed either no relationship between police numbers and crime levels, or even that increasing police numbers raised crime rates (more police generated more recording), in the last few years most studies suggest a significant negative elasticity of crime to police numbers. However, several of these are based on the (thankfully) rare special circumstances of terror alerts leading to saturation policing, and it is questionable how far these can be extrapolated to much smaller variations in everyday police levels. It is implausible to assume constant elasticity of crime to police numbers at all levels: moving from no police to some is likely to have an exceptional impact effect, and saturation policing probably deters all criminals but the suicidal or mentally disturbed. None of the econometric studies explore the causal mechanisms explaining why relatively small variations in police numbers (10-14% apart from the terror alert studies) should produce any sharp effects – they would be scarcely perceptible on the streets. It is possible that modest increases in numbers facilitate innovative strategies, and it is the latter that are crucial. This certainly seems to be the argument of recent analyses of the New York experience (Zimring 2007, 2011).

Overall, however, the jury is still out on the great crime drop. The orthodox conclusion remains plausible: policing is a relatively minor element compared to the broader sources of crime in political economy and culture.

Assessing neo-liberal policing

The huge shift in police discourse since the advent of neo-liberalism during the 1970s is illustrated by the following two contrasting quotes:

'There is relatively little the police can do about crime. We are not letting the public in on our era's dirty little secret; that those who commit the crime which worries citizens most—violent street crime—are, for the most part, the products of poverty, unemployment, broken homes, rotten education, drug addiction and alcoholism, and other social and economic ills about which the police can do little, if anything. Rather than speaking up, most of us stand silent and let politicians get away with law and order rhetoric that reinforces the mistaken notion that the police—in ever greater numbers and with ever more gadgetry—can alone control crime.'
Di Grazia 1976 (Police Commissioner, Boston).

'Crime is down – blame the police.'
(Bratton 1998).

The root cause of the change in policing is the neo-liberal hegemony of the last forty years. By the early 1970s, from their hugely controversial origins in 1829, the police had come to be symbolically acclaimed guardians of public against crime and disorder (Loader and Mulcahy 2003). But the growth of public tranquillity and security that coincided with the spread of police throughout the country after 1856 was mainly due to more inclusive economic, social and cultural citizenship not policing (Reiner 2010 Chap.3).

The neo-liberal take-over of economic and social policy from the 1970s unravelled this complex of subtle, hidden controls, causing greater crime, disorder, and insecurity (Reiner 2007). In the face of these pressures, the thin blue line turned out to be a Maginot line, and buckled. A 'new feudalism' appeared: those with the power to do so built their exclusive bubbles of security, reflecting the growth of inequality (Shearing and Stenning 1983; Bayley and Shearing 1996; Jones and Newburn 2002). The language and practices of 'business' pervaded policing, like everything else. With all other controls against crime eroded, the police were expected to actually deliver the crime control they had always promised, but which is largely beyond their grasp.

The Coalition proposes neo-liberal policing in its starkest form. Criminal catching is paramount, to be achieved by a commonsense revolution. The promise is that this can achieve security, despite massive and multiplying social and economic dislocation and injustice, provided the police are properly incentivised by elected commissioners.

Smarter crime prevention and policing did succeed in holding the lid down in the 1990s and 2000s, as criminology largely became 'lidology' (designing better lids). But optimism about the crime control potential of policing to keep the peace in the face of mounting economic and social collapse is wishful thinking.

The recent riots in summer 2011 are a criminological Rorscharch test, which different perspectives have read in conflicting ways. Hopefully Tim Newburn's current research (with The Guardian), Reading the Riots, will provide a sounder evidence base for discussion. The riots do seem to show, however, that the underlying socio-economically rooted pressures generating criminality had been suppressed, but not tackled, by the decades of getting tough on crime not its causes. When the lid was suddenly lifted, many took advantage.

The reluctance of the public to acknowledge the fall in crime since the 1990s is not just irrational or an overexposure to The Sun. It also reflects recognition that criminality (the potential of a society to generate crime cf. Currie 2000) has been suppressed not reduced by policing, and still threatens to explode into crime and disorder.

Conclusion: In praise of fire brigade policing

Changing police numbers and/or tactics can impact on crime, pace the 'nothing works' conclusion of many in the 1970s and 80s. But this is largely through symptom suppression. Policing can create space for more radical attacks on the root causes of crime (as happened in the later 19thcentury and much of the 20th). But this needs to be filled by social and economic policy. The most important address for crime control is not Scotland Yard but 11 Downing Street.

Police should not be thought of primarily as a means of crime control. This creates unrealistic expectations and diverts attention from their more fundamental peacekeeping role. The police are hugely in demand for emergency interventions that potentially require legitimate coercion, including but not mainly, attending crime scenes.

This seldom requires the full panoply of flashing blue lights, sirens and screaming tires which pejoratively attract the label fire brigade policing. How to limit these dramatic paraphernalia of fire-brigade policing only to occasions when they are necessary and proportionate raises the same tough regulatory issues as restricting the core resource of legitimate force. But seeing the police role as analogous to the fire brigade, as an emergency service, fits the effective demand for them. It sets achievable goals of providing good enough provisional resolutions (Bowling 2008), and triage for problems requiring other sorts of longer term or specialist intervention.

As the Raymond Chandler epigraph to this pamphlet claims, the police offer vital short-term symptom relief but not cures for grave social ills. Ultimately the police can only contribute to social pacification in conjunction with broader policies spreading inclusive citizenship and social justice. The growth of resistance to the continuation of neo-liberal policies, exemplified by the proliferation of protests such as the worldwide Occupy and the UK Uncut movements, (http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/occupy-movement/, accessed 4 December 2011; http://www.ukuncut.org.uk/ accessed 4 December 2011) offer some hope. This is further bolstered by the indications of support for the protestors' grievances from within the heart of the establishment, from leaders of the Church to the Financial Times. As yet however there has been little reflection in criminological discussion that neo-liberalism's heyday may be passing, after the 2007 financial crash and subsequent economic crises refuted its intellectual basis (despite its zombie after-life in current government policies). But what if criminal justice discussions saw the wisdom of earlier - tacitly social democratic perspectives - which acknowledged the limits of policing and punishment in the absence of social justice?

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