

Policing by Consent

Establishment of Police in England



In the British model of policing, police officers are “*citizens in uniform*”. They exercise their powers to police their fellow citizens with the implicit consent of their fellow citizens – “policing by consent”. It denotes that the legitimacy of policing in the eyes of the public is based upon a general consensus of support that follows from transparency about their powers, demonstrating integrity in exercising those powers and their accountability for doing so.



In early 19th century, attempts by the British Government to set up a police force for London - the largest city in the world - met with a lot of opposition:

- People were suspicious of the idea of a large police force, possibly armed. They feared it could be used to suppress protest or support unpopular rule.
- Paris had the best-known, best-organised, paid police force. However Britain had been at war with France (1793-1815) – so many people disliked the idea of adopting French governance practises.
- People did not think it was the job of the government to set up and control a police force; they thought it should be under local control.

Policing in London before 1829

Law enforcement among the general population was carried out by unpaid constables and parish watchmen who were elected/appointed by the local justice of the peace. In certain circumstances, such as serious public disorder, the army would intervene.

As law enforcement lacked criminal investigation capability, Magistrate Henry Fielding introduced the first detective service: the “*Bow Street Runners*” in 1753.

Fielding's force was made up of eight former constables who investigated crimes, handed over to them by the constables and watchmen. In 1805 the *Bow Street Horse Patrol*, the first form of uniformed police in London, was established alongside the Runners.

Unofficial "thief-takers" operated independently, being employed by fee-paying members of the public to catch criminals and present them before a magistrate.



In 1798 the *Marine Police Force* (aka *Thames River Police*) was established by Magistrate Patrick Colquhoun, with salaried, full-time constables. Responsible for preventing the theft of cargo, the Marine Police were initially made up of 220 Constables, assisted by 1,000 registered dock workers.

In its first year of operation 2,000 offenders were found guilty of theft from the docks. This success – supported by economic cost vs. benefit ratio - led to it becoming the first publicly funded preventive police force in England.

The London *Marine Police Force* is widely regarded as being the first modern police force in the world, in the sense that they were not government controlled and were responsible for the prevention of crime. Now known as the Metropolitan Police Marine Policing Unit it is also the oldest police force in continuous operation.

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Peelian Principles



Although not the first, the concept of professional policing was taken up by Sir Robert Peel, Home Secretary, in 1822.

Peel's **Metropolitan Police Act 1829** established a full-time, professional and centrally-organised police force for Greater London known as the "Metropolitan Police". Initially known as "Peelers", they went on to be known as the "London Bobby".



The **Peelian Principles** describe the philosophy that Sir Robert Peel developed to define an ethical police force. This philosophy is commonly known as **policing by consent** in the United Kingdom and other countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

Peelian Principles

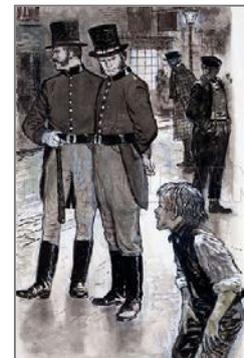
The principles traditionally credited to Peel state that:

- Every police officer should be issued an identification number, to assure accountability for his actions.
- Whether the police are effective is not measured on the number of arrests, but on the lack of crime.
- Above all else, an effective authority figure knows trust and accountability are paramount. Hence, Peel's most often quoted principle that "*The police are the public and the public are the police.*"

The Nine Principles of Policing

The nine principles were set out in the 'General Instructions' issued to every new police officer in the Metropolitan Police from 1829.

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.
3. To recognise always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing co-operation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.
4. To recognise always that the extent to which the co-operation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion; but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.



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6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public co-operation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that *“the police are the public and that the public are the police”*, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8. To recognise always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the State, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9. To recognise always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

