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Private security

Editorial

The growth of the private security industry is probably one of the most striking developments in the criminal justice field. It is precisely the growth of this type of industry that characterises our forthcoming entry into the 21st century: a market-economy with public-private partnerships; a growing information technology with new surveillance possibilities; prodigious attention paid to crime and security. It is not surprising that private security has become big business. Happily there is also growing academic interest in private security, which is necessary if the effects of this commercial activity on the public are to be analysed and regulated. For that matter it is necessary just to have a better insight into the actual development of this commercial branch. This issue not only condenses the existing knowledge and points of view on the subject, but also adds new information to the debate.

Jaap de Waard presents a discourse on the private security industry in European and non-European countries. As there has always been a lack of reliable data on the subject, at the end of 1997 some 40 international experts on the private security industry in various countries were requested to supply relevant information. This article gives the detailed results of this investigation; it elaborates on the size of the sector (manpower, number of companies), the turnover, and the regulation schemes in various countries. How has the private security industry developed in terms of size and quality? How does the size of the private security industry compare to the size of the police force? How has legislation developed and changed? Which possible trends and future developments are to be expected? As the first article of this issue it gives us a unique overview of the development of this industry.

Les Johnston evaluates developments in private security. In his view it is important to look beyond the negative concerns which dominate the debate. The re-emergence of private policing can also be seen as an opportunity to identify and address critical questions concerning contemporary government. Two developments have had a major impact on contemporary policing. First, policing (and governance) are now highly diversified, with public policing (and 'state rule') being supplemented by the actions of a wide range of civil, commercial and voluntary bodies. Secondly, the growth of commercial security is itself, part of a wider shift towards risk-based thinking. This shift now pervades all public and private institutions, including the police. These two developments (should) have serious implications regarding the way we think about the governance of policing.

Michael Kempa, Ryan Carrier, Jennifer Wood and Clifford Shearing broaden this question on the governance of policing to the role of the state in the globalisation process and the impossibility of predicting the future with existing technologies. There are two possible political responses to an unknown global order, both of which are represented in contemporary trends in private policing. On the one hand, where an uncertain global future is approached through a discourse of negativity, the natural response is to seal and protect already scarce resources from others, leading to a pattern of enclaves in which the privileged sequester themselves and exclude the 'dangerous poor'. On the other hand, one may choose to respond to the challenge of non-calculable risks by being flexible, poised to detect and act instantaneously to challenges *as they arise*. In this respect a model of 'networked nodal governance' is introduced. Governance of this kind will involve the connection of multiple private agencies with state structures to derive the most suitable responses. Such networked systems have the *potential* to derive 'best practices' through successive approximation and repeated testing, rather than through centralised planning.

Until recently, the great majority of writing on private policing concerned North America, reflecting the fact that in the USA in particular there has been a long history of official interest in the subject. Shearing and Stenning (1981) provide a fundamental explanation by pointing to the rise of what they call 'mass private property' in the US over the past 30 years or so. *Trevor Jones and Tim Newburn* consider the degree to which mass private property has emerged in Britain, and how far this might

help to explain what has happened to policing in this particular country. The authors focus upon the three key examples of mass private property: those occurring in the retail sector, the residential property sector and finally the leisure/entertainment sector. The broader aim, however, is to highlight the need for more detailed empirical examination of developments in urban space and policing in other western European countries.

Private investigators should be considered in any comprehensive study of private security. *Martin Gill and Jerry Hart* investigated this old and interesting profession. Clients seek private investigators' services for many reasons, ranging from murder investigations to the tracing of missing heirs. Following a comprehensive review of the available literature and some informal contact with practitioners, a postal questionnaire was distributed to 1,700 private investigation agencies. The authors and their researchers subsequently were also able to conduct personal interviews, to study individual case histories and their outcomes and, whenever possible, to engage in participant observation of 'live' investigations by private investigators. In addition, a second postal questionnaire was distributed to 1,500 solicitors – the most frequent users of private investigators' services. This part of the research asked solicitors why they used private investigators, how they selected investigation agencies and what kinds of tasks they asked them to undertake. It also enquired whether they employed private investigators for their own purposes or on behalf of their clients and what procedures they invoked to ensure they conducted enquiries and other tasks to the appropriate standards and how these were defined.

In the section *Current Issues* Kevin Haines describes 'crime as a social problem'. The article seeks to place the study of crime in the social policy context. Criminal careers research is critically evaluated and modern social trends are outlined as a background to an exploration of the interaction between criminological research findings and social policies for youth at risk. The *Crime Institute Profile* comes from the *Stockholm Institute for Criminology* and is written by Henrik Tham. The section *Selected Articles and Reports* is renewed in so far that it is directly linked to the central topic of this issue, Private Security.