

Cops and Bobbies

Fulbright scholar compares U.S.-U.K. community policing methods

In the U.K. most local police follow a top-down, data-driven model that often fails to "address the concerns of—or indeed involve—local people in decisions around the type of police service they actually require," said Paul Wilson, a chief inspector with London's Metropolitan Police. "It is for this reason that Chicago's community policing approach is seen as a model to which many British police forces aspire."

Police officials and political leaders from many European countries have visited Chicago to look into its program. "Many see it as an alternative to a New York-style, zero-tolerance approach to dealing with quality-of-life issues that concern the public," said Wesley G. Skogan, professor of political science and IPR faculty fellow.

Wilson, who received a Fulbright Policing Fellowship to study U.S. approaches to community policing, headed to the other side of the "pond" in September. His first stop was Chicago and Northwestern, where he chose to base his studies not only because of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy, or CAPS, program, but also because of Skogan, who is one of the nation's foremost community policing experts. Skogan and his colleagues have been evaluating CAPS since 1993.

The London inspector, who also visited San Francisco, Miami, and New York, has found American policing to be heavily

politicized, with a city's mayor playing a large role in determining the types of policing methods employed. While Wilson recognized that many U.S. police officers decry this seemingly high level of politicization, he also noted it does lead to greater integration and communication between police and community-safety service providers and promotes ethnic diversity in the police force.

As a former chairman of the U.K.'s Black Police Association and part of the prime minister's Neighbourhood Renewal Unit, he found that "in the U.S. ethnic diversity within the policing command structure is achieved by a mayor answerable and accountable to an often culturally diverse electorate." British police are struggling to achieve the same level of diversity as the populations they serve and show "little prospect of this being achieved in the foreseeable future," Wilson said. "Hopefully, some of the practices I've witnessed in the U.S. may assist in helping police reach out to our ethnically diverse communities."

**Prime Minister Tony Blair launched the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in January 2001 to narrow gaps in education, housing, crime, etc., between disadvantaged neighborhoods and the rest of the U.K. Its website is www.neighbourhood.gov.uk.*

For more information on CAPS, please visit the Web site www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/policing.html.



Wesley Skogan localizes a Chicago police beat for Paul Wilson.