

“ PPP ”

People for Proper Policing in North Wales

Solicitors complain their violent clients are escaping with cautions because police are chasing targets By Niall Firth 31st July 2008

Violent criminals and other serious offenders are getting away with nothing more than a fine or a caution because police are obsessed with chasing targets, magistrates have warned. The latest Home Office figures for **fixed penalties show a 37 per cent increase in 2006, with a 17 per cent rise in cautions. The Magistrates' Association, which represents more than 28,000 members, has claimed that these cautions and on-the-spot fines are being overused to increase conviction rates.**

Solicitor **Digby Johnson, of the Johnson Partnership in Nottingham**, told the BBC: *'Offenders who would normally face court and serious sentences are walking away with a ticket in their back pocket. I've known a caution for a serious offence of **actual bodily harm** where the **victim required stitches**. A caution was issued for having a house full of cannabis plants. A 20-year-old man who had unlawful sex with a 15-year-old was cautioned.'* **Chairman Cindy Barnett** said: *'We have always had grave reservations about criminal offences other than very minor infringements being dealt with out of court. Anyone who has broken the law so as to merit a punishment should be dealt with in court with efficient use of resources to prevent reoffending.'*

Solicitors also complained that half of the **finances given out were never paid in full** and that many offenders exploited the system by **giving false addresses**.

Mr Johnson said: *'**The criminals play the system day in day out.** They admit the offence quickly to qualify for a ticket, which is the fastest way of getting out of the police station.'* The Police Federation of England and Wales, which represents rank and file police officers, says that pressure on forces to improve crime detection rates is to blame. A federation spokesman said officers are being "encouraged to dispense instant justice where at all possible".

The latest figures show that **court appearances fell by more than 10 per cent in two years to 1.78 million.** Magistrates believe the next figures due out in November will show an even more dramatic fall. Cindy Barnett told the BBC: *'We need to see more serious offenders in court. Magistrates are the ones who should be carrying out summary justice, not police behind closed doors.'*

A Ministry of Justice spokesperson said it was not always necessary for an offender to be taken to court. *'Fixed penalty notices and cautions enable police to deal swiftly with low level offending, freeing them up to spend more time on frontline duties and more time investigating violent, dangerous or sexual offences as well as freeing up court time for more serious offences.'*

The PPP comments... Brunstrom has been the ongoing architect driving this dangerous process for the government. PLEASE read his comments in our earlier article. He stated on live BBC TV that *"slipping over a speed limit is no different to slipping a knife into somebody"*. As chair of the Penalty Notice System progress committee he has arranged that many serious crimes ONLY attract a penalty notice. This so called clever man has devised a system that **any criminal can use & abuse. We repeat, his tenure in North Wales & in ACPO will have serious repercussions for many years after he's GONE**