



## People for Proper Policing in North Wales

### The Prime Minister urges courts to make more use of tough sentencing powers for gun crime offences.

Sean O'Neill, Crime Editor of The Times, March 25<sup>th</sup> 2008

Gordon Brown said today that **the five-year mandatory minimum jail term for possessing a firearm — introduced four years ago but still not being fully enacted** — was part of a range of tools available to clamp down on gun criminals. Mr Brown was responding to calls from a senior police chief for judges to be consistent in imposing the five-year term set down in law.

**Bernard Hogan-Howe, Chief Constable of Merseyside**, told The Times that heavy sentences were an essential part of the strategy to deter criminals from carrying guns. He said: *"There is evidence of sentencing where the power has been available and not been used and that is simply wrong. I want very heavy sentences for possession of firearms which would deter people from arming others or carrying guns themselves."*

The judiciary defended its interpretation of the firearms sentencing powers and the right of judges to use their discretion. **The Judicial Communications Office** said that there was a proper legal mechanism for the police and others to complain about supposedly lenient sentences. It added: *"If, in any individual case, the police (or the CPS) believe that a mandatory minimum term has not been imposed for gun crime for reasons that are not justified, it is open to them to ask the Attorney-General to consider referring the case to the Court of Appeal as unduly lenient. This provides a clear mechanism for sentences to be reviewed and checked against the statutory framework, sentencing guidelines and case law. The number of cases referred for failure to impose a mandatory minimum sentence is small."*

Mr Brown said it was vital that **other elements of the criminal justice system backed the police in the fight against guns**. *"The important thing about gun crime is that we have the policing and support for the police to enable us to root out gun crime, We had set sentencing that is very high — five years for possession of a gun — for magistrates to use. It is tough sentencing, to take action alongside more policing in hotspots, more metal detection, more undercover policing, more stop and search powers, and more surveillance."*

**Chris Huhne, the Liberal Democrats' Home Affairs Spokesman**, said that there was an "increasing gap" between what the Government said about penalties and what sentences the judges handed down.

**The PPP comments .....** Another example of Brown's amazing dishonesty and/or ineptitude. He **MUST** know that this is a pointless discussion! The newspapers are daily reporting that the PRISONS ARE FULL and that early released and bailed violent criminals are murdering 100s of people annually. Meanwhile in North Wales justice minister David Hanson is procrastinating about where (not when!) to build a new prison for the North West. **AND** the man of Straw (Jack) is seen on National TV visiting the palatial facilities in a prison where an inmate tells him that the regime is too soft to prevent re-offending.