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## A cop tells it as it is

by Jacqueline Rees

Sir Colin Woods, opera lover, cabinetmaker, aider and abettor of television cop show scriptwriters and first commissioner of the new Australian Federal Police, learnt of police corruption in a thoroughly traditional way.

It was 1946. He had been two weeks a policeman after war-time army service. Pounding his first night-beat in London's West End, he was accosted by a prostitute explaining it was her turn to be arrested.

"She detailed exactly the evidence that was to be given," he said. "I of course pretended great sophistication and when we got to the station said I had seen her soliciting; she had been very busy, actually.

"The duty policeman took me to another room and told me how to do the evidence. It was exactly what she had told me. The whole thing was a great conspiracy, with the courts never asking any questions . . .

"There was a total disregard for what was true and real, and I wonder how many young policemen are still being introduced to those sorts of systems.

"Mind you the community in London got fed up with all of this and there was the Street Offences Act and other acts that took prostitutes and betting and so on off the streets.

"This stopped that interface between the police and those people and lessened the opportunities for friction and corruption. And that is an example of my deep-felt belief that communities do get the police they deserve. If they don't like the police they have got, they should go and look in the mirror.

"This doesn't let me off the hook, incidentally. If our service is not satisfactory they can fire me as an expression of their desire to get the police they deserve . . ."

Frank, hard-hitting, a man who has been called, "The most heartless, soulless, wickedest, nastiest pig in the business," Sir Colin, 59, has a wry sense of humour, quite a few soft spots and a very firm grasp of what he is about.

He was sworn in at a ceremony in Canberra in September as head of the new AFP. Formerly Britain's Chief Inspector of Constabulary, he doesn't see his reputation as a "clean-up" man being stretched here. When he became head of the Criminal Investigation Department in London in 1972, some 400 police officers were removed for corruption.

Of the two forces that will form the new AFP (the former Commonwealth and Australian Capital Territory Police forces), he said: "I'm quite lucky because there is not much corruption . . . But if any is identified the response will be vigorous and accurate and fairly painful."

On the controversial question of whether an investigator should be brought in from outside the force should any problem arise, he bars no holds.

"The police on these occasions insist they know enough about crime and criminals and crooked policemen to conduct their own inquiries," he said. "And this is right. But there is a way of doing this without having someone from the particular organisation do the job, and it is to get someone from another police force.

"When this was first suggested in Britain for Scotland Yard it took the Home Secretary's insistence to get someone in from Lancashire as it was. You know Scotland Yard saw themselves as the top cops of all time and naturally said, 'How in the blazes can someone from Lancashire come here and do it as well as us?'

"But that is not really the point. It has nothing to do with it. It has to do with taking that extra step along that great long path that the police have been taking in adapting to new pressures about how they should be watched and monitored . . ."

He is expected to develop AFP officers with expertise in anti-terrorism and international fraud to match any in the world. And it is highly probable that his proteges will one day take an aggressive role in the fight against drugs, although Sir Colin won't say anything like that.

It is a highly sensitive area, fraught with suspicion between police and the Narcotics Bureau of the Customs department.

Would he prefer the bureau was part of the force? He laughs. "Ask me again some time . . . I was interested to find a multi-disciplinary group was looking at the drug problem . . ."

"In London when I set up the Central Intelligence Unit including customs and police for drugs, we were conscious of the need to get everybody working together. You have to have a lot of discipline and understanding, but the most valuable element is trust. If you are not generating systems that make trust possible it is going to go sour."

Hadn't it gone sour in Australia? "Yes," he said. "From what I have read I fear it has."

He does see a role for Australia in training police to fight drugs through South-East Asia.

"I have dreams about the role Australia could play in training the senior police in the whole of this area," he said. "I mean the Asians send people in droves to learn from the Americans. We could be in the lead in this part of the world."

On organised crime and allegations of substantial mafia penetration into business, politics, police, unions, and government in Australia, Sir Colin said:

"It is obviously more of a problem here than in the UK.

"If it is entrenched it can be difficult to deal with, depending on how high up in government it goes. But if you can run good criminal intelligence in Northern Ireland I don't see why you can't run it here . . . I know the principles and I'll be applying them.

"Organised crime is international so an Australian Federal police role is inescapable.

"And I would be an odd policeman if I thought there was any racket that couldn't be busted."

Eyes are on Sir Colin in Canberra to see how he tackles illicit gambling and brothels.

"A good police force closes them down as soon as they pop up," he said. "You have the balloon phenomenon mind you — squeeze one end and it pops out the other. But if the police don't close them down, only the basest implications of being bought off are drawn."

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When *Bulletin* journalist and crime investigator Bob Bottom was in Canberra recently, he made public allegations about the extent of organised crime in Australia and warned against allowing organised crime and organised vice to get a hold in Canberra. The knee-jerk reaction of local police down the line was to publicly dismiss this "innuendo".

Sir Colin's reaction was quite different. "I believe in investigative journalism," he said. "Whenever the London *Sunday Times* Insight team reported on fraud the entire Fraud Squad was in hot pursuit . . . it is not the journalist's job to be a copper's nark but it is the policeman's job to try to get whatever the journalist is able to give him and work on it."

Sir Colin is exceedingly reluctant to criticise anything he has come to. In fact he came to a hornet's nest. There was hostility and antagonism that a "Pom" was being brought in.

"Some people have acted as if I am God's gift coming here, and I am sad on behalf of two Australian commissioners at least," he said. "The two Australian chiefs who I knew at our top staff college in England wiped the board, the outstanding students of the day.

"I believe we learn a lot from each other, although I am not unduly modest about my experience. I think it was the pope who said that experience is not unlike the lantern on the poop of a ship: it illuminates the path on which you have been. Well, mine didn't include Australia and I am sorry about that."

Why was the image of the "Pommie" policeman that of an efficient, helpful friend, and that of the Australian cop a bully?

"I think the ruggedness of your past has made you a vigorous lot," he said. "I hesitate to dim it down but in some branches of the service I think . . . the prosecution policies for minor offences might be modified . . .

"I think that is an area where English police are much more ready to caution and use an incident for setting up communication . . . that sort of thing . . . but I think the reason the police in Australia have been less willing to do this is because the public has been less

willing to listen to the policeman as an educator."

The new commissioner intends to bring an entirely new approach to police-Press relations in Australia. He said: "I think that if you look at any credible police force in modern times they really are more open. I think that if we have the information — subject to policy, etc. — well, it isn't a private possession of ours.

"More importantly, when there are matters of concern, the more open we can be about it the more quickly that concern will be dispelled. And never more quickly than when we say we are wrong."

Sir Colin expects to be personally approachable, too. Asked if he would give the Press his home telephone number when he found a house in Canberra, he said, "Yes . . . and if you ring me up every night I'm going to change it."

He is equally realistic about training police officers, a sore point in Canberra where the story goes that you get a man off the streets, turn him around three times, put a gun in his pocket, and call him a Commonwealth Policeman.

"Training will be reviewed," he said. "And we will end up with something I won't mind anyone seeing. It won't take too long. In fact I'll be quite happy to be shot down on a personal basis if anyone doesn't like the answer."

He is expected to turn out two sorts of policeman. There is "Mr Canberra Policeman 1982 (who) will be able to stand on his own feet. He will know what he is talking about and if he can't do something he will get someone who can, and get them quickly. But most of the time he will be able to do it, especially if it is none of his business.

"In other words there are no demarcation disputes about what policemen are for, they are there to help whatever . . ."

The other arm of the new force and the one most of the States will see is the Protective Services Unit with its special interest in counter-terrorism.

"It is getting back to something rather like the German border police," Sir Colin said. "Not exactly paramilitary, but with a clearly defined protective role."

This is close to his heart. He was involved in the early development of anti-terrorist squads in London. He expects to follow a similar procedure for training Australian officers.

"We made a list of what we were good at and what we weren't," he said.

"We weren't good at kidnappings. So we got people from Italy where they had a lot of kidnapping, from the FBI, from Germany where they are so efficient they get to the bank every time before the robber leaves it, and had a two-day seminar to evolve our philosophies about kidnapping and then rehearsed them.

"You go into everything, even the emotions between the kidnapped and the kidnapers.

"Each terrorist is different. You keep on thinking up little scenarios and playing them out. Then when it goes off you at least start half prepared. It is not easy, but if your officers are good enough you can play it by ear and you ought to be as good as the best terrorist, really.

"And the test of a good police force is how far it is looking ahead against the event that hasn't happened."

How vulnerable was Australia to terrorism?

"I would think our risks are of being used to further the terrorist aim, which is always to generate publicity rather than attack Australia politically," he said. "You can't really tell. You have to work on the assumption you are at risk and prepare for it.

"We'll be training a great chunk of the new force in anti-terrorism, though their job will primarily be to hold the fort until the State police arrive. To achieve that they will rank with the most highly trained anti-terrorist people in the business."

If Australia has to learn a lot of anti-terrorist tactics from overseas, she can make her own special contribution to busting international fraud.

"Australians seem to have taken over from Israelis as the office managers," said Sir Colin. "As you always used to expect to find an Israeli in any big new international fraud initiative, you now expect to find an Australian . . . there is a lot to be done."

Does he foresee his new force dominating Australia as a national

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force? "God forbid," he said. "Small is beautiful. You don't want enormous bodies in Australia doing non-productive things."

Is he going to develop a model of the British police forces seen on the telly? Not exactly.

"When *The Sweeney* started, several of the wives of the Flying Squad asked if everyone was always jumping into bed with everyone else," he said, laughing.

"Actually, a lot of the brass got very stuffy because of the excessive display of arms. The Flying Squad worked very closely with the actors, helped them with dialogue and all that. But I mean we never shoot out.

"The only time we had a real shoot out was this dreadful case at the Indian Embassy where two young people got shot by police and it turned out they were carrying only toy pistols."

When he is not helping out with scripts, Sir Colin Wood likes to relax with opera.

Sir Colin is married and has one married daughter. He is their handyman, liking to "spoil wood, making wardrobes and that kind of thing."

"I believe a policeman should have a three-dimensional hobby, painting or gardening or something with tangible results because every year, according to reports, things are 5 per cent worse.

"Every futurologist sees crime increasing at approximately the same rate as it is now. There is no one who I have ever read who says it is going down."

— *The Bulletin*, October 9, 1979.

## A FAREWELL TO 42 YEARS' SERVICE

by the Editor

On Thursday, September 27, 1979, the Minister for Administrative Services, John McLeay, announced the appointment of Mr J. M. Davis as Special Adviser on federal policing matters and as Senior Fellow of the Australian Institute of Criminology.

When he announced the appointment, Mr McLeay said, "the Government expressed its appreciation of the service given by Mr Davis to the Commonwealth Police Force, including his 11 years' service as its Commissioner.

"The Government is pleased that he is able to continue to serve the Commonwealth in a special advisory and research role," Mr McLeay concluded.

Mr Davis commenced his Police career as a Constable in the NSW Police Force in 1937, serving in many divisions of that Force. After 17 years, the majority served in the Criminal Investigation Branch, he severed his ties with NSW Police in 1954 as a Senior Constable.

Born at Kitchener, NSW, on July 22, 1916, Mr Davis was educated at Cessnock High School. While a serving member of NSW Police, he enrolled at Sydney University where he graduated in 1947 with an Honours Degree of Bachelor of Laws.

Mr Davis was appointed Assistant Director of the Commonwealth Investigation Service in 1954 and served in this capacity until the Service became part of Compol in 1960.



He was appointed Deputy Commissioner of the newly created Force and served in this capacity until becoming its Commissioner in April 1969.

During Mr Davis's term of office many new procedures and ideas were introduced into the Force included among which were the establishment of uniformed police at international airports, establishment of Australian Bomb Data Centre, establishment of organised crime units within the Crime Intelligence Section, and the creation of V.I.P. and Counter Terrorist Sections with appropriate training.

Other major developments seen during the past decade have been the introduction of forensic science research programmes, expansion of police radio communications net-

work, the introduction of Railway Investigation Squads in Tasmania and South Australia and the introduction of Diplomatic and Consular patrols in Canberra.

Always displaying an interest in education, Mr Davis expanded the Force's training facilities with the acquisition of the Commonwealth Police Training Centre in Canberra. Many in-service training programmes have been included in the Centre's curriculum.

Mr Davis received the Queen's Police Medal (1967), Commander of the Royal Victorian Order (1970), and Officer of the British Empire (1976). He also holds the Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal and National Medal.

Since 1975 Mr Davis has been the Australian Representative of ICPO. In this capacity he led Australian delegations to the general sessions of ICPO in Argentina, Panama, Stockholm, Manila, Nairobi, Seoul, and Ghana. As well he has visited the Australian Police Contingent serving with the UN Forces in Cyprus in most years since 1970.

When interviewed by *Platypus* Mr Davis said, "Compol members built up a completely honest, effective and responsive force whose traditions of service and dedication became household words within two decades.

"I hope these traditions will spill-over into and influence the destiny of the new Australian Federal Police so that it may justly earn the distinction of being 'Australia's finest'."