

Bridging the gap

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could happen. Citing a long list of changes that were necessary in order to ensure that the police served society, Harding emphasised the need for a new approach to and understanding of discipline.

Remarking on drills he had observed in SAP colleges (and other police academies round the world), he exhorted the police to distinguish between discipline and regimentation.

"Discipline is discipline of the self: to study, a desire to be professional and to serve. Discipline has a new face, we must throw out the old one!"

The police should be "progressive, visionary and capable of responding to linkages between economic, social and political demands", said Harding. Flexibility and versatility were essential ingredients.

"The police executive tradition of boldly leading the police force into the past has got to die!" Instead, he added, the motto of the modern police officer should be: "my interest is in the future because I'm going to spend the rest of my life there".

Harding was also adamant that there should be no support for secretive policing in a democracy.

"We need to remember that within a democracy - which is a very demanding process - we cannot discharge our duties without the public's consent to do so on their behalf."

He added that police officers at all levels should not turn a blind eye to police wrongdoing and reminded them that they were not above the law.

"We must condemn it, oppose it, challenge it and deal with it... If you do not do so, do not delude yourself that you will secure the public trust."

Tragic loss

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trade unions, business people and local government structures. In addition, the local police forces should be ordered to be bound by whatever agreements were reached.

"What has to be achieved is constant contact and a relationship between the police and the residents on a social basis. This means that the same persons must be stationed in this community on a longterm basis, and get into contact with the people, not only in crisis situations, but in everyday life in a positive way."

Change: police urged not to go it alone

It was clear at the conference that the new language of change has become part of official police parlance. However, as Canadian police chief Jim Harding said, it was one thing to "talk the talk", the SAP now needed to "walk the walk".

Time and again during the conference speakers emphasised that irrespective of their merits, any reforms to police-community relations introduced unilaterally by the police would be in vain unless the communities they were designed to serve were consulted.

On the surface it would seem that the rhetoric of change was shared by police and their critics. In his address, Deputy Minister of Law and Order Gert Myburgh spoke of the need for an holistic approach to crime and violence and the multi-dimensional model of community policing which the SAP was adopting.

Community policing, he said, comprised four associated elements: community based crime prevention; proactive servicing as opposed to emergency response; public participation in the planning and supervision of police operations; and the shifting of command responsibility to lower level ranks.

Acknowledging that the police had become "estranged from large segments of society over the years", Mr Myburgh said the SAP had a strategic plan for reform and restructuring which would give "considerable attention" to the poor image of the police.

Calling for a partnership between the police and the community, Mr Myburgh spoke of the need for the police to be "peace officers" and to engage in "interactive policing". He said the SAP was working towards a changed organisational structure in which the para-military model was surrendered for a flatter profile.

Chief of police in KwaZulu, Major-General Jac Buchner, also emphasised the need for police to serve those communities with which they were familiar and, despite a wary look over his shoulder at the deputy



BUCHNER: police must serve in communities they know.

minister, criticised the standard procedure in which police were recruited from one part of the country and then stationed in another area with which they had no affinity and little understanding or knowledge.

However, all the talk of change prompted Janine Rauch of the Project for the Study of Violence at Wits University to ask the deputy minister to acknowledge that this new language had not origi-

nated solely from within the SAP, and that the police needed to work *with* others in the process of change.

Bringing the conference to a close Dr Van Zyl Slabbert again drove home the point that the police could not act alone.

'The police need to realise that political change in South Africa is not an enemy'

"Whatever else you do as we go through the transition, you will not be able to pull yourselves up by your own bootstraps. You cannot effect change on your own," he said.

Just as there were now forums in which housing, electrification and politics were negotiated, so there should be forums in which politicians and the police could engage each other and in which the police and the community could develop joint strategies.

Stressing the need for shared decision-making Slabbert said: "There can be no development without an interim government in South Africa, but I cannot see an interim government going about its business effectively without stability in our society."

Fink Haysom of the ANC's constitutional committee said the police needed to realise that political change in South Africa was not an enemy but offered a future full of more creative opportunities than they had had until now.