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**ASSISTING THE POLICE TO DO THEIR JOB?
LIBERAL-PROGRESSIVES AND THE HEGEMONIC CONSTRUCTION
OF POLICE CORRUPTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES, AUSTRALIA**

Michael Kennedy and Kelvin McQueen

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Assisting the police to do their job? Liberal-progressives and the hegemonic construction of police corruption in New South Wales, Australia

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a theoretically based work that examines the validity of the notion of a police 'culture of corruption'. This notion has clearly swept the field of criminology in terms of explaining the deviance of rank-and-file police. We use empirical evidence drawn from public sources to problematise this notion as simplistic and misdirected. Gramsci's theory of hegemony and an understanding of the methodological limitations of certain approaches to studies of policing are used to explain the pervasive but wrongheaded status of the 'culture of corruption' thesis. We also contend that there is a political dimension to the elevation of this thesis to hegemonic status, again explicable in Gramscian terms. Particular individual agents are examined briefly to exemplify the way that hegemonic blocs of the state's executive and, in this case, academics, form and re-form. In places in this examination and in conclusion, we propose a more materialist and structuralist model for studying corruption in police forces, based on ideas such as social class, exploitation, resistance, class struggle, division of labour, alienation, and class consciousness.

Michael Kennedy
School of Social Science
University of Western Sydney
Australia
m.kennedy@uws.edu.au

Kelvin McQueen
School of Education
University of New England
Australia
kmcquee2@une.edu.au

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Introduction

This paper evaluates the contention that rank-and-file police are inevitably trapped within a ‘culture of corruption’ of their own making. We question the accuracy and usefulness of the concept ‘culture of corruption’ and its use by one academic commentator in particular.

Of more value, we contend, is a materialist and structural methodology for understanding police ‘corruption’. This would see such corruption largely generated by the oppressive operation of social class and the division of labour. This methodology locates rank-and-file police in a disadvantageous position in the power relations of their social existence and of their workplace. This type of understanding regards the ensuing and apparently ‘corrupt’ practices as explicable in terms of resistance by some rank-and-file police to increased exploitation and oppression.

By using a materialist conception, then cultural explanations of corruption, for what they are worth, can be given some purchase, especially when linked to the Gramscian notion of hegemony and also when linked to notions of class struggle, alienation, and class consciousness. By doing this, we contend that working-class rank-and-file police, like all workers under capitalism, are alienated from understanding the full implications of their social and workplace existence and thus sometimes respond to oppression in an ideological (i.e. limited, limiting, non-transformational, and less than fully class conscious) way. We further contend that this expresses itself in a form of deflected and refracted class struggle labeled as ‘corruption’ by the political arm of the state and its intellectual fellow-travelers for their own ends. In other words, much police corruption that exists does so in its current form as a response to class oppression of a particular

type, but is misleadingly characterised as ‘corruption’ to deflect from the full ramifications of perceiving this resistance as proto-class-conscious resistance.

A Gramscian notion of hegemony

A way to come to grips with the nature of both ‘culture’ and ‘corruption’ is through applying the Gramscian notion of hegemony. Hegemony is most complete when the ruling class’ intellectual and moral leadership successfully provides the fundamental outlook for the whole society (Bocock 1986, p.63). That is, hegemony is a deliberate channeling by the ruling class of popular cultural understandings into conformity with a pro-ruling-class/anti-working-class view of the world. As Ralph Miliband (1991, p.523) explains, the state is the key instrument through which hegemony is constructed and by which ‘a dominant and exploiting class imposes and defends its power and privileges against the class or classes which it dominates and exploits’.

Bocock (1986, p.63) makes the point that hegemonic leadership need not necessarily be provided directly by the economically powerful who own vast properties, but may be provided by career politicians, journalists, academics and others with little or no property. And their activity is successfully hegemonic ‘if, and only if, they pursue policies which are not in the direct narrow interests of capitalists, but rather which can be presented plausibly as being in the interests of the whole people, of a nation.’ That ‘uncorrupted’ (and perhaps in their own minds incorruptible) politicians should act punitively to make state institutions resistant to ‘corruption’ by their employees is one of the more successful hegemonic ideas of representative democracies. It is a classical ideological form where a section of the ruling class asserts that it acts not from self-interest but in the interests of the ‘people’ as a whole (or ‘taxpayers’ or ‘ordinary/concerned/law-abiding citizens’) and purely in the interests of ‘good governance’.

The workforce for hegemonic construction, while centred on the state, nevertheless is recruited broadly. Peter Worsley (2000, pp.95&103) argues that ruling classes have always manipulated privileged minorities of working people in order to ‘divide and rule’. Those privileged minorities include, of course, the intellectual workers found in state-supported institutions like universities, as well

as senior executives of public services when thrust into exculpatory mode by their political masters and mistresses. At the same time, the ruling class imposes its hegemony somewhat more coercively by using other people of humble origins as police and soldiers to suppress those who criticise and/or mobilise against their rule. Thus, the labour of oppression that forms the basis for hegemonic construction is divided between two workforces whose immediate interests are not always compatible.

As any scholar of Gramsci knows, this division between what may be called, on the one side, the intellectual and, on the other, the manual labour of hegemony corresponds to the not always clear-cut division between the state's utilisation of consensual and coercive modes to secure its rule. According to Gramsci, the ruling class prefers gaining legitimacy through organising consent rather than using coercion, but nevertheless it always arms consent with a coercive state apparatus. In other words, ultimately the gulf between the intellectual apologists for state legitimacy and the physical enforcers of that legitimacy is imperceptible when both work to sustain the rule of the bourgeoisie. At different times, one or the other assumes the leading role as the balance of class forces and consequent class struggle waxes and wanes.

This structural conception of hegemony appreciates that the ruling class attempts to constrain and direct the working class physically (coercively) and intellectually and morally (consensually), including its own state-based workforce, through state agencies in a manner immediately functional for the state and, more broadly, for the operations of capital. If the coercive agencies of the state move towards a more pivotal role in securing class rule, as occurs during capitalist crisis, then they may displace the intellectual apologists. In other words, there is always contestation between the leading members of the consensual and coercive apparatuses of the state as to who will play the leading role in hegemonic construction and maintenance. This, we contend, is the fundamental source for state-based intellectuals' (including some politicians') concerns over police 'powers': the fear by privileged minorities of intellectuals of their displacement by the coercive agents of the state and the eroding of their own state-guaranteed privileges and powers. Beyond this is their greatest concern: that the potential collective power of rank-and-file police can be used to challenge the entire state's

make-up. The notion of ‘corruption’ works well to constrain the police executive if felt necessary by the state’s intellectual leaders, but most significantly can be used to co-opt the police executive onto the side of the intellectuals and against the rank-and-file police.

The liberal-progressive fraction

Within and between the consent-seeking agencies of the state and their mirror-agencies in civil society, there are competing fractions of intellectuals. We contend that since the late 1980s a fraction of intellectuals, who may be termed ‘liberal-progressives’, has had to battle a reanimated conservative intelligentsia for pre-eminence within the hegemonic bloc. Furthermore, this battle of position has framed the ‘contending’ positions in the ‘debate’ around police corruption.

To define briefly the liberal-progressives’ characteristics: they may strike radical intellectual poses, but the limited extrapolation of their intellectual activity to the totality of relations under capitalism means that their analyses remain fundamentally conservative and uncritical. In most Western ‘democracies’, a crucial part of the current hegemonic bloc is composed of mainly academically-based liberal-progressives in contestation with the existing conservative fraction composed of fewer academics and more ‘experts’ drawn from media, party-political and public service senior executive ranks. The ‘critical’ work of the liberal-progressives, when they can manage a break from fretting about ‘corrupt’ police, is often aimed at embarrassing members of the opposing fraction. This is a reasonably safe pastime since it does little either to shed light on or challenge the structural hegemony of the bourgeoisie.

At the same time as deflecting analysis and commentary from structural concerns to the agency of individuals, a significant characteristic of all liberal-progressives is their ignoring for analytical purposes the division of labour that exists within policing institutions. ‘The police’ becomes the blanket term encompassing rank-and-file police, specialist squads, detectives, and administrative elites. This blurs the differentiation of functions between the ‘rule-makers’ and the ‘rule-enforcers’; the former, we would suggest, being the most important layer in the policing hierarchy.

From another angle, liberal-progressives and other ideologues commenting on policing often confuse their own peripheral function with that of the policy-making elite by believing that their 'research' is 'assisting the police to do their job.' This confusion is natural enough, according to Antonio Gramsci (1971, p.12), because 'the intellectuals are the dominant group's "deputies" exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony and political government.' Chris Harman (1983, p.9) explains that Gramsci's concern to ascertain the precise role of 'state-licensed' intellectuals (such as academics) arose from the pressing need to expose the duplicity of the reformist leaders of his time. Gramsci knew that the reformist 'solutions' put forward by liberals and 'progressives' may well appeal to some working-class interests, but Gramsci went on to make the point that the political function of the liberal and 'progressive' subalterns was ultimately to support the status quo of the state's oppressive operation. He felt that this meant that their interests coincided more with the 'left-wing' of the privileged middle class than with even the more right-wing elements of the workers' movement.

Liberal-progressives and credentials

Oddly enough, one of the more heated areas of contestation between the 'radical' liberal-progressive and the conservative fractions is over the value of their credentials and thus their right to represent the 'true' picture of policing to those who would assist the police to do their job. This degeneration of the criminal justice debate into one comparing the size of one's 'progressive' and/or academic credentials suggests that such commentators hardly embrace a counter-hegemonic position regarding the social order.

For liberal-progressives, the starting point for achieving the legitimacy to comment on policing is to distinguish oneself from rank-and-file police. For these 'specialists' in sociology and criminology, it would appear that the credentials of rank-and-file police inadequately equip them to participate competently in 'traditional' intellectual discussions that impact upon their jobs or become integrated into the policies that affect them. According to some intellectuals, academic 'credentials' gained through success at negotiating the peer-review process of academic publishing are the best measure of the degree of competence needed to enter the debate and to assist police to do their job.

We now focus on one particular exemplar of the credential contest: David Dixon, who is a well-published professor of law at the University of NSW, is a keen researcher and debater of policing policy and of police corruption, and was an adviser to the Royal Commission into the Police Service of the mid-1990s (Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service 1997, p.xviii). We would suggest that these milieus place Dixon in a position to promote the interests of an intellectual fraction. As such, the reformist thrust of the arguments in his books and elsewhere would place Dixon as an exemplary and leading liberal-progressive. On 18 May 2002, the Sydney Morning Herald featured a letter by Dixon displaying one of the key concerns of this fraction. He comments on the questionable qualifications of another academic, Richard Basham, who represents the more conservative intellectual fraction:

When quoting my comments about Richard Basham which I made on Four Corners, Miranda Devine misrepresents what I said ("No sign of arresting the vitriol", Herald, May 16). She omits the words making my point that academic research reputation is usually judged by peer-reviewed publications and grants. Having taken courses at university long ago does not amount to expertise: if it did, the world would be full of experts. So long as Dr Basham is held out as an academic expert, he should be judged by academic criteria. If, as Ms Devine suggests, his reputation depends on his 'hands-on experience in criminal investigation analysis', there are many NSW police officers with stronger credentials to act as policy advisers. The role of an academic in this area is to use specialist research skills, thereby possibly assisting the police to do their job. It is not to do their job for them. Nonetheless, if criminal investigation is really where Dr Basham's talents lie, perhaps [the police minister] Mr Costa could find him a uniform (Dixon 2002, p.38).

Dixon appears to be saying that while academics should know what they are talking about, they should not present themselves as experts on topics beyond their research expertise. While his reference to rank-and-file police appears somewhat dismissive, he would probably respond that he did not intend to exclude rank-and-file police from the policy debate. Indeed, he seems to infer that some organic intellectuals of the police service would make better policy advisors than some traditional intellectuals. Yet, at the same time, it can be assumed from the overall thrust of Dixon's comments that he is privileging evaluations of policing made by those traditional intellectuals recognised by the peer-review

process. This, of course, begs the question of how Dixon would assess organic intellectuals, other than their being measured against the most incompetent of traditional intellectuals.

Putting to one side the illogic of Dixon's views on the relationship between measuring academic 'credentials' and subsequently being granted the right to comment, the more important point is that Dixon here argues that it is the role of academics to assist the 'police' to do their job. But the real question is, assist which police to do which job? He fails to recognise the division of labour between rank-and-file police and their senior counterparts in policy construction and assessment (rule-making) as against policy implementation (rule-enforcing) (Kennedy & McQueen 2002; Reiner 2000, p.51). On this basis, it is difficult to determine whether or not he means to assist members of the police leadership to do the bidding of the party political arm of the state or whether he means to assist the rank-and-file police in enforcing the 'class, racial, sexual and cultural oppression that has been an integral part in developing the capitalist state' (Bernstein, Cooper, Currie, Frappier, Haring, Platt, Poyner, Ray, Scruggs & Trujillo 1975, p.144).

To a large extent Dixon clarifies this latter point in another letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 November 2003. He argues in support of former Deputy Police Commissioner Jeff Jarratt, who was dismissed from the New South Wales Police for failing to live up to a performance-management benchmark that he himself had been instrumental in constructing and implementing as policy.

The manner in which Jeff Jarratt was dismissed was disgraceful, a crudely handled, dubiously motivated exercise of power against one of Australia's most respected police officers. The Court of Appeal's ruling that such power is unrestrained rubs salt into the wound. The least that the Government should do is to pay the legal costs. Then it should legislate to require procedural fairness in such matters. Until it does, who would apply for a senior post in the NSW police? (Dixon 2003).

The irony of these comments is that, during the continuous 'reform' process of the last decade, many rank-and-file police suffered worse indignities than Jarratt, sometimes flowing from their 'failure' at his performance benchmarks. Beyond this, many victims of 'reform' suffered from the overall technicist and measurement-obsessed direction of Jarratt's management and policies (Clark

1996; Henderson 1996). Jarratt deliberately reinforced the division of labour in policing: one of Jarratt's own commissioned officer colleagues noted that he lacked empathy with rank-and-file police (Jacobsen 2000). In an audit of senior police conducted by the Hay Group Consulting Consortium (2000) there was substantial criticism of Jarratt's management techniques. Some senior police believed that they were being governed by 'management-by-fear'. The report cited one example where Jarratt allegedly told regional commanders that anyone exceeding their budget would be 'relieved of their commands' (Miranda 2001).

Jarratt was very aware that part of his purview was to break the power of the leading organic intellectuals of the service: rank-and-file detectives.

'Traditionally they (detectives) have seen themselves as the elite,' Mr Jarratt said. 'In many cases they have been far from elite – they have been a disgrace – and the freedom given has been abused and has allowed corruption to flourish' (Bearup 1996).

Jarratt would achieve his objective in two ways: by making detectives more 'accountable', and by increasing the ability of the service's internal affairs unit to root out 'corruption' (Bearup 1996). Jarratt encapsulated his mode of operation in a comment to a Parliamentary Inquiry: 'It [policing] is not a democratic set up' (New South Wales Government 2001). These elements of Jarratt's coercive and authoritarian role in the police service and the response by those he supervised as 'management-by-fear' seem at odds with Dixon's 'expert' assumption that Jarratt was 'one of Australia's most respected police officers' (Dixon 2003). Helping police to do their job in this instance seems to take the form of a traditional, but liberal-progressive, intellectual gathering consent for a subaltern implementing a more coercive regime against organic rank-and-file intellectuals.

The poverty of debate

In New South Wales there is a poverty of incisive debate regarding the broader criminal justice system. This is particularly the case with the aversion to examining closely the operations and consequences of the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service that concluded in 1997. For instance, the traditional intellectual community has not acknowledged the circumstances surrounding the double-digit suicides of police and civilians that took place during the Royal Commission (Clark 1996; Curtis 2003). The same intellectual

community also failed to recognise or familiarise themselves with the circumstances of the fourteen heroin overdose deaths that took place during a Royal Commission investigation. That investigation was part of an integrity testing strategy targeting rank-and-file police where Commission investigators facilitated the distribution of extra-strong heroin that led to the overdose deaths (Commonwealth of Australia 2003, LCA.630-688; Brown 2003; Kidman 2002). What this silence suggests is that the broader traditional intellectual community wishes to place itself firmly on one side of the policing divide between rule makers and rule enforcers. When not ignoring the division of labour that exists within New South Wales policing, these intellectuals tend to side with the 'official' view of the managerial elites who place blame for 'corruption' or 'inefficiency' squarely on the shoulders of rank-and-file officers.

Class-bias in these terms appears again in a letter published in the *Sydney Morning Herald* on 14 November 2003. In this correspondence, former NSW Police Commissioner John Avery expressed his support for former Deputy Police Commissioner Jeff Jarratt. Avery was also no friend of rank-and-file police: he had justified the Royal Commission into the NSW police as the 'one we had to have' and even when he asserted that only the 'under-informed and social misfits' would question the integrity of 'innocent' rank-and-file police, he nevertheless concluded that radical surgery was required to rid the police of the 'cancer of corruption' (Miller, Blackler & Alexander 1997, pp.vii-xiii). Yet, when such 'radical surgery' was applied to Jeff Jarratt, a member of the police executive, Avery wrote,

As a former NSW police commissioner, I am concerned for the future management of policing in this state because of the experience of former deputy commissioner Jeff Jarratt. I agree with Ian Ball, the Police Association president, that senior police and possibly other public service executives will feel threatened.... My close working experience of Mr Jarratt was that he was a man of integrity, ability and loyalty. He may have been offered as a sacrifice by a former commissioner to the political gods, but the gods failed to smile on that commissioner (Avery 2003).

In this letter, Avery makes no mention of the rank-and-file police who were sacrificed to the politicised regime of 'performance management' of 'that commissioner' [Peter Ryan] nor indeed sacrificed during his own reign as

commissioner. Nor does he clarify that while Jarratt was not promoted by one commissioner and was sacked by another, nevertheless under every regime, including Avery's, Jarratt was an influential member of the senior executive.

In spite of the class bias and business-as-usual stance of Avery, some liberal-progressive intellectuals characterise Avery as a progressive police commissioner. At times, the praise from this fraction for Avery borders on sycophancy; for example in Chan (1997), Dixon (1999) and Etter (1995), with McGrath (1999) being the only person to seriously question the Avery administration. However, both Avery and these 'scholars' appear to have overlooked the fact that Jarratt was dismissed for misrepresenting the incidence of crime collected by his centralised database. This was corruption under the definition applied to the activities of numerous rank-and-file police during the Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service (1997, p.5).

Another trait of liberal-progressive academics is their tendency to extend considerable intellectual credit to the layer of 'educated' senior administrators in policing institutions. As opposed to the constant call for 'reform' and accountability in relation to 'uneducated' rank-and-file police, there tends to be far fewer calls from liberal-progressive subalterns for thoroughgoing reform of the administrative layer and certainly less harsh solutions proffered than for rooting-out 'corrupt' rank-and-file police. Before giving some Australian examples of this phenomenon, the same process can be seen operating in Britain. For example, the support extended by intellectuals to Superintendent Ali Dizaei in his struggle with the London Metropolitan Police. Dizaei was certainly worthy of support against the disproportionate nature of his employer's response to allegations of corruption, but the extent of the support shown to an officer holding a law degree and a PhD in race relations seems seldom replicated for rank-and-file police (Hattenstone 2004).

In Australia a similar situation of unqualified support applied in the case of Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty's ill-judged comments about terrorism (Ramsey 2004), while vehement denunciation quite rightly came from all quarters when rank-and-file police uttering racist epithets were filmed (Brockie 1991). As well, in New South Wales the liberal-progressive strand of the intellectual community extended enormous support when the flaws, foibles and

corruptions were exposed of Police Commissioner Peter Ryan, Commander Lola Scott, and Assistant Commissioners Clive Small and Jeff Jarratt (Carlton 2002a, 2002b, 2003; New South Wales Police Integrity Commission 2003; Wilkinson 2002a, 2002b). Yet, this liberal humanitarianism and tolerance extended to the 'educated' ranks of the police executive was by no means regularly extended to their rank-and-file counterparts.

Liberal-progressive scholars should be reminded that Alan Sokal and Jean Bricmont in their work, *Intellectual Impostures* (1999), provide a unique and substantial challenge to any unconditional support given to the peer-review process for ascertaining academic standing on the basis of intellectual rigour or honesty. However, it is not so much that notions of the sufficiency of academic credentials and the peer-review process need to be addressed, but rather the way that the hegemonic process of policy formation by state elites and blanket support for it by academics and other traditional intellectuals works to cause the poverty of debate in relation to police integrity and corruption. This process marginalises certain information and knowledge, particularly when that knowledge departs from the conventional hegemonic framework.

In New South Wales there has been a degeneration of important public debate about policing into a sideshow about credentials and academic legitimacy, as exemplified by Dixon's lament. The undermining of the search for the real meaning of policing practices makes a succinct challenge to this sideshow difficult. This is because the main thrust of the attack by liberal-progressive intellectual commentators against their ultra-conservative 'opponents', such as Richard Basham or radio commentator Alan Jones, takes the form of a rather crude attempt to re-affirm their own 'progressive-thinking' credentials simply by being seen to challenge the ultra-conservatives.

Methodological corrosion

We suspect that the consanguinity of the views of some liberal-populist media commentators with the more 'moderate' law-and-order mongering politicians and their police and criminal justice system managers is that, at best, such well-meaning liberal-progressives, like their conservative *bête noire*, support the existing state of society, minus its corrosive elements (Marx & Engels 1999,

p.91). Generally, the only contestation between these public ‘intellectuals’ is over the character and causes of this ‘corrosion’. This explains why a good deal of the liberal-progressives’ simplistic antipathy towards rank-and-file police has been presented regularly over the last quarter of a century as hegemonic ‘common sense’, including by both neo-liberal and conservative elements within both the intellectual establishment and the political and criminal justice systems. It is quite startling the reversal where even the most reactionary commentators on policing, who would formerly have dismissed as ill-founded and subversive any complaints about policing practices, have come to accept that there may be at least some ‘corruption’ amongst rank-and-file police.

The problem here for academics of the liberal-progressive persuasion appears to originate in their research methodology and its underpinning values. Jock Young (1997, p.479) argues that establishment criminology denies or at best overlooks the relationship between social structure and social values and then on this dualistic basis and depending on the circumstances lurches between finding the causes of deviance in social processes or in individuals. The distinction between the conservatives’ hyper-individualist explanation for the causes of criminal behaviour and the liberal-progressive approach is that the latter uses a quasi-structural approach for assessing ‘underclass’ deviance and an institutionalist approach for explaining the policing response. Meanwhile, when or if liberal-progressives discuss the causes of rank-and-file police deviance, this quasi-structuralist approach inexplicably vanishes to be replaced by the nebulous phrase ‘culture of corruption’ and spotlighting the latest police officer caught with their hand in the till (Kennedy & McQueen 2002). The conservative/liberal-progressive distinction seems to be amicably overcome when they come to assess the actions of rank-and-file police.

A more useful study of policing would focus on the relative powerlessness of ordinary police to influence the oppressive machinery of the state and focus on the resistance by rank-and-file police to these impositions with a type of fragmentary, refracted and deflected class struggle. The following is our attempt to present the precepts for such an analysis.

While it is a criminological truism that the police are the state’s coercive agents of social control, it is also true to say that police are predominantly recruited from

the working class. The contradiction for ordinary police is that while they are functionaries of the bourgeois state they occupy a subordinate place within the layers of coercive power. From this location they are employed to reinforce directly the basis for ruling-class hegemony.

The problems for academics when researching such a contradiction, to the extent that they recognise that such a contradiction exists, were raised in the mid 1970s by Bernstein, Cooper, Currie, Frappier, Haring, Platt, Poyner, Ray, Scruggs and Trujillo (1975, p.11). They argued that the actual role of rank-and-file police should not be oversimplified. While policing institutions primarily serve to enforce and reinforce class, racial, sexual and cultural oppression, an integral function for the capitalist state, Bernstein *et al* also contend that

Although the police are...a repressive institution that operates to contain the poor and the powerless, they are also themselves exploited, not only by miserable working conditions and social isolation but also as instruments of laws and policies, which they neither control nor benefit from. The police protect private property but do not own it; as guardians of the peace, they defend government policies of imperialism and racism but do not derive any significant profit from them; and in their repression of popular movements, the police legitimise a political order, which they do not create. Control of the police, therefore, should take into account their dual role as both victimisers and victims, and we should examine possibilities for organising police resentment into political action (Bernstein et al 1975, p.144).

Just as important as it is to acknowledge this contradiction between the social position of rank-and-file police and the state's expectation of their allegiance to a social system often working against their interests, so it is important to acknowledge the division of labour in policing institutions between the rule makers and the rule enforcers and to identify where public commentators on policing sit in relation to this divide. These approaches, we would suggest, are the first steps to identifying and locating the associated alienating features of policing. These contradictions and divisions and their attendant alienation shape the forms of resistance and struggle of rank-and-file police. As suggested above, internal policing policy actually takes this resistance into account in its oppressive formulations, especially in regard to proposing dragnet definitions of corruption so that all rank-and-file police can fall under suspicion.

While it is obvious that some police engage in deviant activity, we propose that the definition of corruption used by the landmark Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service (1997, p.5) is a questionable instrument employed specifically by the state's 'rule makers' to oppress and subjugate its working-class 'rule enforcers'. Our assessment of the social relations of policing is not something new and reiterates the contentions of Gouldner (1968), McBarnet (1981), Rock (1997) and Young and Matthews (2003), if in a more determinedly Marxist way.

Conclusion

We would suggest that the liberal-progressive promotion of a simple antipathy towards rank-and-file police is a poor substitute for a more materialist and structural explanation. The liberal-progressive network of some politicians, senior police, administrative elites and academics, no less than their more conservative counterparts, have thrust into a leading explanation for almost all deficiencies in policing the notion that there is a culture of corruption amongst ordinary police that needs to come under intensified surveillance and be rooted out by the administrative elites. Various 'corruption' inquiries and subsequent 'reform' mechanisms have merely concretised this hegemonic zeitgeist.

This intellectual community has in turn legitimised and reinforced the construction of a hegemonic 'common sense' relating to the 'culture of corruption' of rank-and-file police. A central feature of this hegemonic ideology is that it avoids any class analysis such as we have attempted above. Instead, the notion of a 'corrupt' culture has been marketed to the broader public in a way that maintains the spotlight upon rank-and-file police. Consequently, the real concentration of social power in the hands of captains of industry, leading politicians and leading public servants and, more specifically, the social degradation and squalor attendant upon such a concentration of largely unaccountable power and aggrandisement of wealth at one social pole and the way that policing policy is formed in these circumstances are obscured. The effects of these three circumstances – unaccountable power, individual accumulation of immense wealth, and state policy being used to justify and obscure these while nonetheless cementing them in place – are the actual sources

of 'corruption' in policing institutions, the criminal justice system and society at large. These effects are, at one pole, social inequality, squalor and degradation and, at the other pole, authoritarian management being used to suppress the resistance that arises from degraded communities and from exploited workers within state institutions.

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