

Should we have a Ministry of Justice?

In your editorial in *Justice of the Peace* July 9 (p. 525, *ante*) you advocate the creation of a new Ministry of Justice “with total oversight, supervision and overall responsibility” of the criminal justice system in place of the individual operational independence of the police, prosecutors etc. The undesirable delays you rightly complain about cannot in my view justify such a grave interference with constitutional safeguards.

In particular it would be highly undesirable for prosecution policy to be placed in the hands of the executive in place of the independent, quasi-judicial powers of the Attorney General in this regard. There is constant pressure on this front, which must be strenuously resisted. Otherwise we will indeed witness the arrival of the long-heralded police state in Britain.

I dealt with this in my article “Does the Attorney General know his job? (*Justice of the Peace* April 2, p. 248), where I asked, because of suspicions I spelt out in the article, whether the Attorney General is aware that, as exclusive holder of the prosecutive power of the state, he should not permit the executive to encroach on that power.

No reassurance was forthcoming from Lord Goldsmith on this score, so the doubt remains.

Yours faithfully,

Francis Bennion