

surely he would have felt that the reservations which Laptew expressed about Sutcliffe were worth a major probe to resolve. Equally, one must ask how Detective Chief Superintendent Ridgway became satisfied with the outcome of the reactivated £5 note inquiry, confident as he was that one of the 241 had at some time handled the Jordan £5 note. The senior officers of the West Yorkshire Force were also affected, of course, by the policy decision to stake everything on the letters and tape which, at the time, may have seemed to offer a very simple form of salvation in the light of the mass of divergent information and separate lines of inquiry which the investigation had by then accumulated.

305. The final irony in connection with Sutcliffe's interviews is that immediately before the tenth interview, seven of the eight officers who took part in interviews 6, 7, 8 and 9, were working together at Idle Police Station. Several of these officers had reservations about Sutcliffe and collectively they were in possession of all the relevant information about him. It is obvious that they did not communicate with each other so as to co-ordinate the information against him although there is good reason to think that this was due primarily to a lack of effective briefings for personnel involved at the grass-roots level of the inquiry.

(vii) Media Relations

306. The formation of a Community Affairs Department within the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police in 1974 gave an opportunity for a re-assessment of the role of the Force Press Office. Chief Superintendent Domaille, who was the first commander of the newly formed department, conducted a comprehensive review of the arrangements for liaison with the media, as a result of which a civilian press officer with previous journalistic experience was appointed. The press officer was provided with an assistant and administrative support, but no police officer was appointed to work with him. In many police forces an officer in the rank of inspector is appointed to work alongside a civilian press officer so that someone who is recognisably a police officer is available to take a personal part in press conferences and in local radio and television programmes. In the absence of such an appointment in West Yorkshire, Chief Superintendent Domaille accepted personal responsibility for the work, particularly in relation to serious crimes such as the early murders in the Ripper series which occurred in 1975 and 1976. In each of these cases the Chief Superintendent made early contact with the senior investigating officer and made the necessary arrangements for press conferences and press releases.

307. When Chief Superintendent Domaille left the Community Affairs Department for other duties in 1977 his personal interest in press relations was not maintained by his successor so that the weight of further inquiries fell squarely on the press officer, Mr. Baxter. Unfortunately, to the media Mr. Baxter lacked the professional status of a senior police officer so that there was a tendency for reporters to bypass him and make direct contact with senior investigating officers in important cases. Mr. Baxter looked after the mechanics of press conferences and the distribution of press releases but was not made as aware as was desirable of developments in serious crime inquiries so that he was not in a position to help press representatives directly. Mr. Baxter's situation was not helped by the fact that the senior investigator in the two earliest murders in the Ripper series, Detective Chief Superintendent Hoban, was very popular with press reporters with whom he had an easy familiarity. Mr. Hoban also fully appreciated the assistance which an investigating officer could gain from accurate and helpful press coverage of serious crimes.

308. A number of senior investigating officers undoubtedly enjoyed their contact with the press and the status which involvement in radio and television broadcasts brought them. There was thus no strong pressure from them for the appointment of another police officer as press relations officer, even when the existence of a very serious series of crimes was recognised.

309. Although some senior investigating officers enjoyed their contacts with press, radio and television, others did not. Assistant Chief Constable Oldfield, for instance, loathed television and was never happy using the medium on which he often appeared ill at ease, stilted and inarticulate. Relationships with the media were an additional burden which Mr. Oldfield had to carry once he had taken control of the inquiry, and clearly harassed him at times when he should have been pre-occupied with the investigation.

310. The Ripper inquiry, by its very nature, excited the interest of the local, national and

international press to an extent never before experienced in relation to a murder investigation in the United Kingdom. There was, therefore, a very strong case for the establishment of good formal relationships, and as the series developed media relations called for expert and careful handling by a well trained professional team.

311. During the early stages of the investigation the relationship between the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police and the press was quite good and appears to have been handled properly on both sides. The attacks on Rogulskyj, and Smelt were treated by both the press and the police as purely local incidents, whilst the murder of Wilma McCann in Leeds excited only local interest in spite of press efforts to obtain sympathy by publishing a story about her children waiting in the fog for her to come home.

312. The murder of Joan Harrison at Preston was also dealt with as a local matter although there was some minor press speculation that the crime might be connected with the murder of Yorkshire prostitutes following the murder of Emily Jackson in Leeds. It was this murder which first saw the use of the term "Jack the Ripper" in connection with these crimes. This ensured that the murders were referred to in the national press but they still did not attract much public interest outside Yorkshire.

313. The murder of Irene Richardson in Leeds just over a year later was immediately linked by the press with the murders of McCann and Jackson, a point which was conceded on the police side by Detective Chief Superintendent Hobson who said that there were striking similarities between the crimes. The murder of Patricia Atkinson in Bradford was also linked with the series and the "Daily Express" used the headline, "Ripper's Triangle", and published photographs of McCann, Jackson, Richardson and Atkinson. The murder of 16 year old Jane MacDonald was the subject of very considerable coverage. MacDonald's youth and the fact that she was not a prostitute produced rather more response from the public, and media interest sharpened in consequence. Both the police and the press expressed the view that the killer might have made a mistake and wrongly identified MacDonald as a prostitute. The possibility that any unaccompanied woman was a potential Ripper victim was not considered at that time.

314. The attempted murder of Maureen Long was also linked with the crime series. The attack did not excite much public sympathy, however, probably as a result of the description of Long as a woman of loose morals. The murder of Jean Jordan in Manchester was also identified as being within the series, and the start of the first £5 note inquiry generated considerable interest. The tone of press articles at that stage was still generally sympathetic to the police and to their problems in dealing with a series of this nature. The fact that prostitutes continued to be the victims conditioned response from the public and although five murders and a serious assault were at that time regarded as being within the series there was no evidence of undue public concern. Some media attempts to improve the public response by conducting interviews with prostitutes failed to achieve any significant change of attitude.

315. The attempted murder of Marilyn Moore was again quickly recognised as being linked with the previous crimes and a photofit impression which Moore compiled of her attacker was widely circulated. Unfortunately, as is referred to elsewhere, although the photofit impression was a good likeness of Peter Sutcliffe, the police did not regard it very highly and the press treatment of the case reflected this lack of interest.

316. The murder of 18 year old Helena Rytka at Huddersfield did invoke public sympathy and was well covered by the press. The fact that the victim, an attractive girl with a twin sister, was also an orphan produced some public response so that police appeals for assistance produced an improved flow of information. At the same time concern was being expressed about the disappearance of a Bradford prostitute, Yvonne Pearson. The problems facing the police in connection with the known crimes and with Pearson's disappearance were highlighted in a number of feature articles which included coverage of the operation of the Major Incident Room. The subsequent discovery of Pearson's body was immediately hailed by the press as a further Ripper murder although senior police officers had reservations about the crime because of the unusual character of the head injuries and the absence of stab wounds.

317. The murder of Vera Millward at Manchester was quickly recognised by the media as a Ripper crime but press coverage again reflected the fact that the victim was a prostitute.

318. The comparatively harmonious relationship between the police and media reporters which had previously existed underwent a significant change with the discovery of the body of Josephine Whitaker at Halifax. Although this crime was immediately linked with the Ripper series it marked a change of pattern in that, apparently for the first time, the victim was a young woman of good character, murdered in a respectable residential area of the town, and who could not possibly have been looked upon as a prostitute by the murderer. The first rift between the police and the press stemmed from the publication of a photograph showing the dead girl's body and the crime scene. This photograph, published initially by the "Halifax Courier" and later reproduced in other papers, caused a great deal of public resentment and a loss of confidence by the police in the willingness of the press to deal responsibly with information about the crimes. Publication of the damaging photograph was followed by the publication of a spurious photofit impression and other misleading information.

319. The receipt of the third "Sunderland" letter in March 1979 and of the tape recording on the 18th June 1979 was to lead to a further loss of harmony between the police and the press. It was also to lead to a recognition of the fact that a 'mole' was operating within the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police. Once a decision had been taken to ask for public assistance to identify the author of the letters and tape, a transcript of the tape recording was prepared in anticipation of a press conference at which the letters and tape inquiry was to be made public. Within a very short time of its preparation, a copy of the transcript of the recording was in the hands of a local newspaper which used some of the information in a report prior to the press conference. This leakage and lack of co-operation on the part of the press hardened attitudes amongst senior police officers who subsequently timed that particular press conference so as to enable television to "scoop the press". Release of information about the letters and tape generated a tremendous amount of publicity and excited public interest so that the response to the appeal for information was quite considerable. Unfortunately, as is recorded in detail elsewhere in my report, the letters and tape were spurious so that media brainwashing of police and public alike, that the author was the Ripper, was to fatally flaw the whole investigation.

320. The murder of Barbara Leach, at Bradford, prompted widespread press coverage highlighting the previous assumption that no unaccompanied woman was immune from attack. The whole mood of media coverage of the inquiry changed and articles and broadcasts became critical rather than supportive of police action. The "Daily Express" began a campaign to "bring in the Yard" whilst the "New Statesman" of the 12th September 1979 included an article which was highly critical of the police handling of the investigation and exposed a number of "clues" which, it was alleged, the police had not trusted the public with.

321. The publication, on the 13th September, 1979, of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police "Special Notice" about the Ripper's crimes was anticipated by the Chief Constable during an address to a Conference of Chief Officers of Police at Preston on the 7th September. This was the first occasion when the attacks on Anna Rogulskyj and Olive Smelt were publicly included in the series and this caused problems because, unlike the majority of other victims, neither Rogulskyj nor Smelt was classified a prostitute. This point may not have been made sufficiently clear to press representatives covering the Conference since it led to the homes of Rogulskyj and Smelt being besieged by reporters. As a result of her treatment at the hands of the press Anna Rogulskyj consulted a solicitor and threatened legal action against the Chief Constable and the "Yorkshire Post". The security of confidential information belonging to the West Yorkshire Police was again called into question because it is clear that the press quickly obtained copies of the Police "Special Notice" to which they made blatant reference during the remainder of the investigation. This is not the only evidence of breaches of security involving police documents and David Yallop's book "Deliver us from Evil" is notable amongst other things for its reproduction of confidential police telex messages in connection with the Ripper case.

322. In spite of some lack of harmony between the police and the press, the sponsored publicity campaign on the letters and tape, which commenced on the 4th October 1979, was fully supported by the media with widespread coverage in newspapers, on radio and on television.

323. The effort was so effective that the public response swamped the Major Incident Room with low grade information, a situation which ought to have been foreseen by the Chief Constable and his senior officers. It is now clear that the objectives of this campaign should have been specified

more exactly and that proper provision should have been made within the Major Incident Room or elsewhere for adequate staff to be available to handle the response which the campaign was intended to promote from the general public. In the event, of course, this additional publicity further brainwashed police and public alike into accepting the validity of the North Eastern connection.

324. The arrival of Commander Nevill and Superintendent Bolton of the Metropolitan Police in Leeds in November 1979 attracted a great deal of attention and prompted further pressure in the London based daily papers for "The Yard to be brought in to investigate the Ripper crimes".

325. Probably as a result of their failure to control the effect of the publicity campaign on the letters and tape, the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police adopted a campaign of relative silence early in 1980. This restriction on the flow of information to the press and media was not well received and relationships became even more strained. Fortunately the change of policy coincided with a period of inactivity on Sutcliffe's part so that there was time for both sides to reflect on the situation.

326. The murder of Marguerite Walls was the subject of local publicity but the change in Sutcliffe's method of operation to causing death by strangulation prompted the senior investigating officer to say that it was improbable that the crime was part of the Ripper series. This may have been a genuinely held view, reinforced by the circumstances of the subsequent attack on Uphayda Bandara where strangulation was also attempted. It now seems clear, however, that some senior detectives in West Yorkshire believed that there was a connection between the murder of Walls and the assault on Bandara and the remainder of the series.

327. Denial that the attempted murder of Teresa Sykes at Huddersfield was connected with the Ripper series is, however, less easy to explain in retrospect. It is now apparent that although denial of the connection between this assault and the remainder of the series was categoric, a number of senior detectives were convinced that it was a Ripper crime. The denial given to the press may therefore have been little more than an attempt to reduce the public, media and Parliamentary pressure to which the force was being increasingly exposed.

328. The discovery of the body of the final Ripper victim, Jacqueline Hill, in Leeds, led to unprecedented press and television coverage which gained an even greater upsurge when it was learned that the police had been handed Miss Hill's handbag near to the murder scene just over two hours after the attack on her, and yet failed to find her body until directed to it by a member of the public the next morning. There was perfectly proper speculation that if the police had searched more diligently Jacqueline Hill might have survived the attack. This topic is dealt with in more detail later in my report and it is sufficient at this stage to relate that the murder of this respectable University student, coupled with apparently clear evidence of inefficiency and suspected lack of concern on the part of the police, promoted media pressure thereafter which was to undermine the confidence of the West Yorkshire Metropolitan Police to a very serious extent. Whilst some of the early and factual reports were perfectly justified, the "goldrush" amongst reporters, including representatives from Europe, America, Australia and Japan, led to a lowering in the standard of reporting and to the concoction of fictitious information. Particularly damaging was an item in "The Sun" on the 21st November 1980 which gave a completely fictitious account of the experiences of a student named Andrea Procter who was alleged to have witnessed the attack on Miss Hill. In the hysteria of this period proper standards of conduct amongst journalists reporters broke down in a scramble for any information about the series. Spurious calls were made to the police to test the promptness of their response and items of property were reported to have been found, with camera men in attendance to record the police action which resulted. Old and dated photofit pictures were resurrected and republished as current information about the series and large scale publicity was given to the opinions of "mediums" and other self-styled "experts".

329. The pressure from the press during that period was not solely felt by the police. Reporters used fraudulent means to gain access to Leeds University buildings, a practice which led the Students Union to take the unprecedented step of inviting the police to patrol the University campus to keep pressmen out. The opinion of students about the activities of the press in general was summed up by a large banner displayed on the Students Union building on which was displayed the pointed comment, "Piss off press".

330. The investigating officer in the Jacqueline Hill case, Detective Superintendent Finlay, became so disenchanted with the activities of the reporters that at one very frosty press conference he told them that he would not talk to them again until he had something specific to say.

331. This breakdown in the relationship between the police and the media clearly called for urgent action and with the arrival of the external Advisory Team in November 1980 Superintendent Morritt was appointed as permanent liaison officer for the Ripper series investigation. Superintendent Morritt made tremendous efforts to restore contact between the two sides and within a relatively short time it was possible for them to engage in more meaningful dialogue as a result of which media coverage became more responsible and more accurate. Press conferences, interviews with senior officers and opportunities to film members of the police force undertaking inquiries, were means which were used to keep the public fully informed of current developments. Public misgivings about the conduct of the inquiry were to some extent allayed thereafter. The flow of information which followed these new measures was very heavy indeed and contributed to a further saturation of the Major Incident Room.

332. This closer relationship between the police and the media representatives was to last until the arrest of Peter Sutcliffe on Friday, 2nd January 1981. When it became apparent on Sunday, 4th January that a break-through had occurred in the inquiry media activity became frantic. Further leaks of confidential police information occurred, whilst cheque book journalism developed on a wide scale involving anyone with something to say about Peter Sutcliffe or his crimes. Sutcliffe's arrest and the events up to his trial are dealt with later in this part of my report and it is sufficient for me to say here that within a short time of Sutcliffe's arrest the predominant line of media coverage of the story was one of criticism of the police for their failure to detect Sutcliffe at an earlier stage.

333. The disclosure of further aspects of police inefficiency during and immediately following Sutcliffe's trial and the removal of all sub-judice restrictions resulted in a very wide range of articles and features, each pursuing the objective of a Public Inquiry into the conduct of the police investigation. Protests by the Chief Constable, Mr. Gregory, that he and his force were being subjected to a media conspiracy added fuel to the flames, as did the activities of a number of Members of Parliament and others who repeatedly called for a Public Inquiry into the Ripper investigation. This went on until Sutcliffe's appeal was announced when the sub-judice rule re-emerged, perhaps with greater influence having regard to the Law Officers' public announcements on the issues of Contempt following the notorious Press Conferences at Dewsbury and Sheffield soon after Sutcliffe's arrest.

334. The conclusions which emerge from an examination of relationships between news media representatives and the police during the Ripper inquiry have parallels in several other fields. In the same way as a proliferation of senior inquiry officers made for lack of continuity and duplication of investigative effort, the failure of the West Yorkshire Police to appoint a senior Police Press Liaison Officer, once it was recognised that a serious crime series was in progress, led to unnecessary difficulties. Although Chief Superintendent Domaille's early attempts to control the situation were beneficial, the fact that his successor did not continue the work which he had started, and that no police officer was appointed to share responsibility for press relations with Mr. Baxter, paved the way for a confused situation in which each senior inquiry officer handled his own press relations. The lack of continuity which this lack of organisation involved opened the door for trading on personal relationships and for the exploitation of the lingering loyalties of senior detectives to one or other of the former police forces. The understandable demand for information for publication was not satisfied by the police who could, at a much earlier stage of the inquiry, have made arrangements for the sort of facility to observe police activity which was provided after Superintendent Morritt's appointment. The failure to provide information caused considerable frustration amongst reporters and encouraged them to indulge in speculation and in some cases the fabrication of material. Such action made senior investigating officers very suspicious of reporters and their attitudes ultimately hardened into the "say little or nothing" policy of 1980.

335. Another factor which had an adverse influence on press relations was the illness which caused Mr. Oldfield's absence from duty between August 1979 and January 1980. Although

Mr. Oldfield could never be said to have had an easy relationship with the press, he was one of the few points of continuity and the failure of the force to appoint a clearly recognisable successor to him added to the reporters' difficulties.

336. The conclusion that the West Yorkshire Police failed to make proper formal arrangements for meeting the needs of the media in relation to the inquiry is supported by the fact that relationships went progressively downhill until pressure, developing from the murder of Jacqueline Hill, made it imperative for a senior Press Liaison Officer to be appointed. Superintendent Morrill's own appreciation of what his appointment called for is well worth quoting as a final comment under this particular heading:

- (a) to diffuse the situation with the media
- (b) to try and regain public support and sympathy which had been lost
- (c) to try and eliminate press speculation and correct the "misinformation" supplied to the public
- (d) to regularise the public's understanding of the police investigation and in so doing focus public attention into those areas likely to prove fruitful
- (e) to improve understanding within the force of both the investigator's intentions and beat officers' objectives.

(viii) Lack of Computerisation of Records

337. The Police Service has, for a number of years, been heavily involved in the use of computers to improve police efficiency. Such computer applications range from simple information retrieval processes commonly used in all organisations, such as those related to pay and accounts, to large scale systems of command and control used to ensure the most effective use of police resources in an operational context. The use of computers in police administrative functions produces similar benefits and problems to those experienced in other forms of organisation and management. It is not until the police enter the field of computerising information about people and their activities that difficulties arise in relation to privacy considerations and whilst the Service has accepted that there is a need for checks and balances it has been vociferous in its argument to justify the use of such technology in the interest of crime detection.

338. The Ripper police investigation is a good example of where the increased use of computers could have been of invaluable assistance to investigating officers but it should also be realised that such computer usage would inevitably have led to an increase in the storage of information about people and their lawful activities and which, in most respects, could therefore be described as innocent. Examining the criticisms made of the West Yorkshire Police for their apparent lack of use of computer technology in the Ripper case, one must, therefore, consider both the technical and potential aspects of what was or was not done and equally significant, the effect of such considerations when contemplating the way ahead.

339. In general the criticisms made infer that had computer technology been used the offender would have been detected at a much earlier stage, greater and more efficient use would have been made of the information available, and, by implication, cost savings would have been achieved. Indeed it has been suggested from one source that a meaningful system could have been procured for as little as £3,000.

340. The facts relating to the Ripper case are that as early as 1977 West Yorkshire Police were consciously making inquiries into the possibility of using computers to assist in the investigation. A small Working Party was formed with that in mind and consequently the Police Scientific Development Branch (PSDB) was approached to ascertain the then state of the art arising from the experiments which had been ongoing since the need for a computerised incident room system had been recognised in the light of the "Black Panther" case in 1974. At that stage it was clearly apparent that the experiments being conducted would need considerable further development before a viable solution could be found and offered to the West Yorkshire Police. Nevertheless, resulting from this initial approach, numerous meetings were held involving the PSDB and Police Research Services Unit (PRSU).

341. Resulting from these further meetings, in August 1977 an offer was made to the West

Yorkshire Police which envisaged utilising a main frame computer based at the Atomic Energy Authority Establishment at Harwell with an input being made by telephone lines from West Yorkshire and by information being physically passed to Harwell using cassette tapes.

342. There were, of course, at that time considerable problems arising from the conversion of existing records filed in the Major Incident Room. An estimate was made that some 13 man years of effort would be required to carry out this back record conversion. The initial cost of this work amounted to a nominal sum of £25,000 (which Home Office was prepared to fund), plus ongoing costs of £3,000 per week to run the system. After careful consideration this offer was declined by the Chief Constable on the grounds of cost and the premature nature of the scheme in the light of the incomplete development work undertaken. Such a system was subsequently to be used in Derbyshire in 1979 and remains the basis of experiments being conducted by PSDB. The experience gained in the Derbyshire experiment (which was not used in an operational context) has assisted in determining a new package which is currently about to be put out to tender. I have no doubt that the Chief Constable's decision not to embark upon the costly scheme proposed was the right one. The overall technology required was still in its infancy and even ignoring the costs, I am satisfied that it would have been foolhardy in the extreme to have attempted to mount an operation of such magnitude on substantially untried equipment.

343. In May 1978, PSDB and PRSU were again consulted by the West Yorkshire Police and a further study report was produced making a number of recommendations. Essentially, this report recommended that the information held about people in the main nominal index varied to such an extent that problems would arise when endeavouring to convert this information to a computer base. It will be recalled that at the time the police forces involved were commencing to embark upon the task of recording vehicle sightings in various "red light" areas in Northern England and it was immediately recognised that the retrieval of vehicle registration numbers was a much more viable proposition for a computer application. In addition, the existing Police National Computer (PNC) network provided a ready made communication system for this purpose. In essence the study report recommended that consideration should be given to operating the sighting of vehicles on a computer and this led to the Police National Computer Unit (PNCU) involvement in what was later to become known as the "Cross" and "Triple Area" sighting programmes, as described earlier in my report. This computer application ultimately involved the recording of over five million vehicle sightings from six cities in Northern England. I venture to suggest that such an exercise could only have been undertaken by the use of a large computer with a sophisticated communications network. Although, as we know, this application did not lead directly to Sutcliffe's arrest, it did indeed identify Sutcliffe, first in the "Cross Area Sighting" and later in the "Triple Area Sighting" projects. I therefore consider that this initiative in the use of computer technology, and particularly by the PNC, reflects great credit on all those involved.

344. In addition to the consultations with Home Office agencies which resulted in the subsequent use of the PNC application, the West Yorkshire Police also carried out considerable research in the private sector in their efforts to seek a solution to their problems. It is of interest that in 1977 they were quoted for a system capable of supporting the nominal index at a cost of some half a million pounds and in that respect were again advised that the back record conversion was considered to be a mammoth task. In addition, individual approaches were made to numerous multi-national computer companies all of which failed to produce any viable suggestion to assist the police investigation. I am also aware that during this period the force, through its existing liaison with local government agencies, made every effort to establish whether the various computers available and operated by local authorities could assist in the Ripper investigation, but again to no avail.

345. It is clear from this brief synopsis that every effort was made by the force to find a computer solution to the increasing problem being presented to it by the growth of the Major Incident Room records. The PNC application to deal with vehicle sightings was an excellent example of what was achieved by the existing systems. Nevertheless, it is also clear that in relation to the Major Incident Room records two main problems continually presented themselves and were not to any degree resolved:

- (a) Once the series had been recognised the back record conversion problem appeared to be a stumbling block to the implementation of any computerised system, and

- (b) the technology available throughout the course of the investigation (and possibly even to date) could not provide a system which could permit a full text retrieval which was clearly needed to overcome the problems existing in the Incident Room during the Ripper series of murders.

346. It should be borne in mind when considering the use of computers that the considerable cost involved and the complex problems presented by the needs of back record conversion, may all have been to no avail as the Ripper may have been caught at any time. It is therefore my considered view that criticisms levelled at the force in this connection are totally unjustified. In technological terms the equipment was not and to some extent is still not available to cope with an investigation of this magnitude. As to the claims made that the Ripper inquiry could have been run on a computer costing £3,000, I simply emphasise that the additional costs falling as a result of the Police National Computer system being utilised to deal with the vehicle applications alone, and which involved using the existing computer, amounted to more than £240,000.

347. Consideration of the use of computer technology in the Ripper case would not be complete without reference to Sutcliffe's arrest, for it was the use of technology in the form of a personal radio and the PNC which enabled the officers involved to quickly ascertain that the number plates on Sutcliffe's car did not match the description of his vehicle. Furthermore, had Sutcliffe not been brought to notice previously by the computerised "Punters Index" it might well have been that the Ripper squad officers would not have shown such interest in him following his arrest in Sheffield.

348. Although in my view the West Yorkshire Police did all that could have been expected of them in relation to the use of computer technology in the Ripper investigation nevertheless I do have one reservation, in relation to personnel, arising from the recommendations made to the West Yorkshire Police by the Joint Study Team in 1978. In that report it was recommended that a police officer with knowledge and experience of computers should be attached to the Ripper investigation team. This recommendation was never taken up and indeed the senior investigating officers we interviewed appeared unaware of it but thought it would have been of great advantage had it been implemented. I have already indicated elsewhere in my report an apparent lack of knowledge concerning the extent of the computer application dealing with the vehicle sightings, and I have no doubt that the recommendation made by the Study Team was sound and should have been accepted by the West Yorkshire Police.

349. Whilst I have stressed the excellent work done by the Police National Computer Unit in this inquiry in relation to the "Punters Index" I have been told many times by senior police officers of the difficulties they experienced over many months in endeavouring to ascertain the names and addresses of the owners of vehicles whose numbers were printed out in the "Cross Area Sighting" application. Initially this could only be done by feeding those registration numbers back to the PNC by way of a computer terminal and receiving by way of hard copy in return lists of the vehicle numbers together with names and addresses of the owners. It took a considerable period to automate this process so that the "Cross Area Sighting" print-out showed not only the registration number of the vehicle sighted but also the name and address of its owner. There was also another marked limitation in the programme. When the "Cross Area Sightings" were fed into the computer they were given the time and date of the input but not the actual time of sighting of the vehicle in the "red light" area so that what might have been incriminating evidence to the investigating officer was not readily available to him prior to relevant interviews. I have discussed these limitations with senior staff of the PNCU who quite rightly have pointed out the enormous efforts which they made to alter existing software to make the system as useful as it was to the police. Regrettably, the continuity of staffing and maintaining the necessary expertise were ongoing problems within the Unit which did not permit better progress in extending the automation of this particular application. I believe that these limitations were contributory factors to the delays occurring in the Incident Room and the general inefficiency of follow-up inquiries and thus should have been recognised as a priority area for increased resource deployment.

350. I shall refer to the need for common incident room systems to be adopted throughout the Police Service and the need for staff training. I shall also deal with the means currently being utilised to overcome these problems. These difficulties have been recognised since 1974 when clear

terms of reference were given to PSDB as follows:

“In the light of the police requirement for improved means of handling information during inquiries after a major incident (e.g. murder or a major disaster) to examine the feasibility of using computerised information retrieval systems for this purpose and to report on the costs, likely benefits and other aspects of any such use.”

351. It was not until 1979 that a critical appraisal was undertaken to identify the requirement for a computerised major incident facility which could be fully evaluated. The objectives of this were:

- (i) to examine critically the possible area where benefits can be derived from computerisation of a major incident room
- (ii) to suggest how the computer system should be integrated with the Major Incident Room itself and how indexing should be performed by a computer”.

352. There was therefore little progress made during the intervening five year period. Apparently some useful work was done between 1974 and 1977 but then three senior scientists left the department and only one junior scientist remained to carry on with the project. There should have been a higher priority afforded this much needed development programme especially since departmental staff must have been well aware of the enormous difficulties then being experienced in the Ripper Major Incident Room. Finally, I think it worthwhile to add a caveat about innovating new computerised systems of police records and it is simply this; the Service, whilst endeavouring to progress in this computer age, should be constantly aware of the dangers of being persuaded to adopt an extremely sophisticated solution to a problem where such sophistication has to await the advent of technological advance.

(ix) The murder of Jacqueline Hill

353. As there was a great deal of criticism surrounding the police action immediately following the last murder in the series, namely that of Jacqueline Hill, I decided to deal with this as a separate issue .

354. Between 9.15 p.m. and 10 p.m. on Monday 17th November 1980 Sutcliffe killed Miss Hill as she walked from a bus stop on the Otley Road towards the University Halls of Residence on Alma Road, Leeds (fig. 17). The initial attack took place on Alma Road opposite an unoccupied house called “Oakfield” and Miss Hill was then dragged on to waste ground at the rear of the Arndale Centre where additional injuries were inflicted to her body.

355. At 10 p.m. that night a 31 year old Iraqi student at Leeds University, Amin Moosa Hussain, was walking along Alma Road from Otley Road towards the Lupton Flats Halls of Residence when he found a lady’s handbag (fig. 18) on the footpath opposite “Oakfield”. Hussain found that the handbag contained a Barclaycard and a small amount of cash. He originally intended to take the handbag to the site office at Lupton Flats but when he found that the office was closed he took the handbag to the kitchen of the block where he lived and discussed it with two other students. As Hussain was not familiar with English customs and had an incomplete command of the language, one of the other students, Thomas Curtis, said that he would deal with the matter in the morning. Curtis intended to check with the site office the following morning and to report the matter to the police in the event of the bag being unclaimed.

356. Shortly before midnight Hussain returned to the kitchen (where the handbag had been left) to prepare food. He examined the handbag again and for the first time noticed that there were spots of blood on it. Two other students then came into the kitchen and after Hussain had showed the handbag to them, one of them volunteered to take it to the “duty student”. There was then some further conversation in which a student with previous service as a Colonial police officer, Anthony Gosden, was involved. He suggested that in the light of the bloodspots on the handbag the police should be informed.

357. A 999 call was made and received in the West Yorkshire Eastern Area control room in Leeds