

Firearm Registration: An Evaluation

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Brief History of Canadian Firearm Laws

- Handgun registration - Proclaimed in 1934
- C-51 - Proclaimed in 1977
 - Eg, FAC, unsafe storage
- C-17 - Proclaimed in 1991
 - Eg, stiffer rules for the FAC
- C-68 - Proclaimed in 1995
 - Eg, registration and licencing

Firearm Registration: an Evaluation

- Three topics in my presentation:
- Has it worked?
- What is the cost?
- Implications for police
- Conclusions

Has it worked?

The Politicians' Promise: Improved Public Safety

- “The goal of the new regulations is ... to help keep Canada safe... [and]to prevent violence.”
 - Allan Rock, Justice Minister, Nov. 27, 1996
- “..the firearms program is improv(ing) public safety in Canada.”
 - Martin Cauchon, Justice Minister, Dec. 3, 2002

New Ministry, Same Promise

- “[The firearm registration] system [is] intended to be used ... to make our streets and communities safer.”
 - Wayne Easter, Solicitor General, Jun 3, 2003

Has it worked?

- Has firearm registration delivered on its promise of public safety?
- The true test is if violent crime drops

Violent crime, not gun deaths

- Crime is the traditional concern of the police
- Gun crime is just a fraction of violent crime
- The public is not safer if gun crime decreases while violent crime increases

How can firearm regulations help to create a safer society?

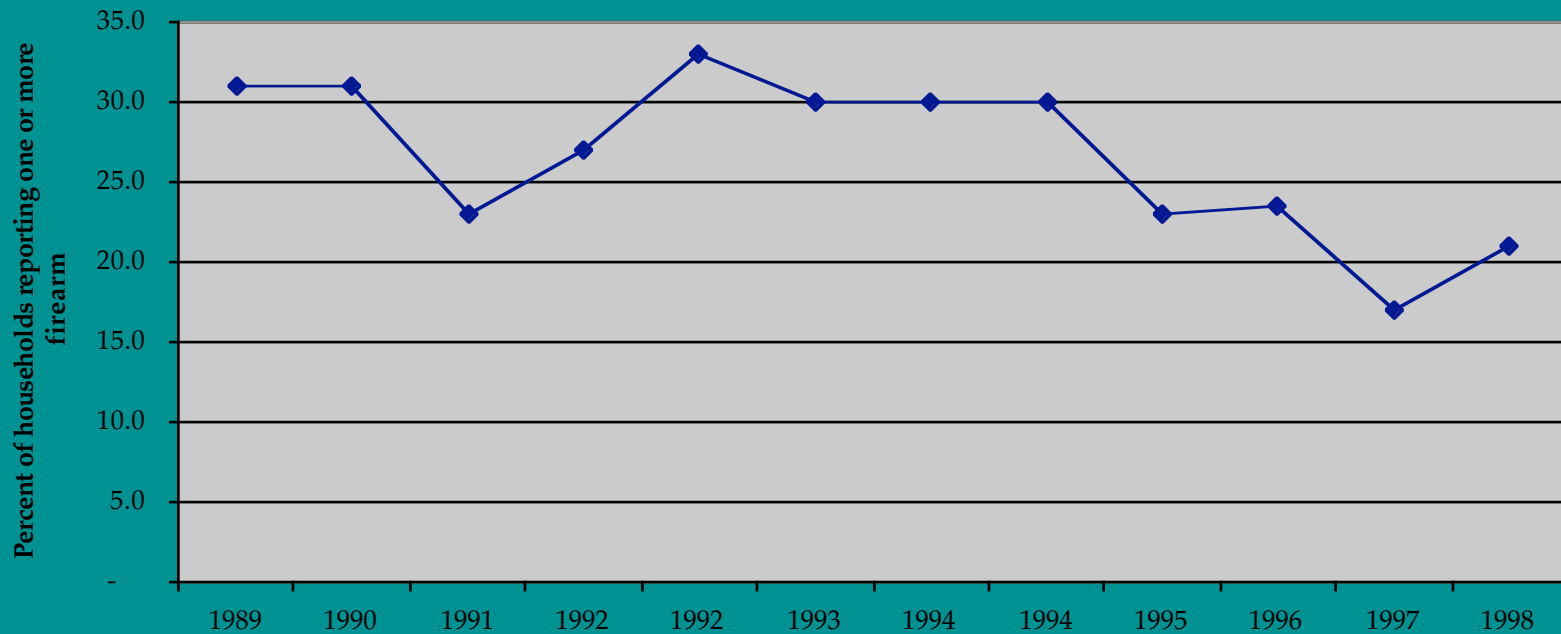
- In theory, firearm registration will:
- Encourage responsibility among firearm owners
 - By motivating citizen to be responsible
 - By allowing police to check on each citizen
- Reduce the number of guns and gun owners
 - Increased costs
 - Increase bureaucratic hassle
- But does it work in practice?

Are Owners Complying?

- How successful is licencing?
- How successful is registration?

How Many Gun Owners Are There?

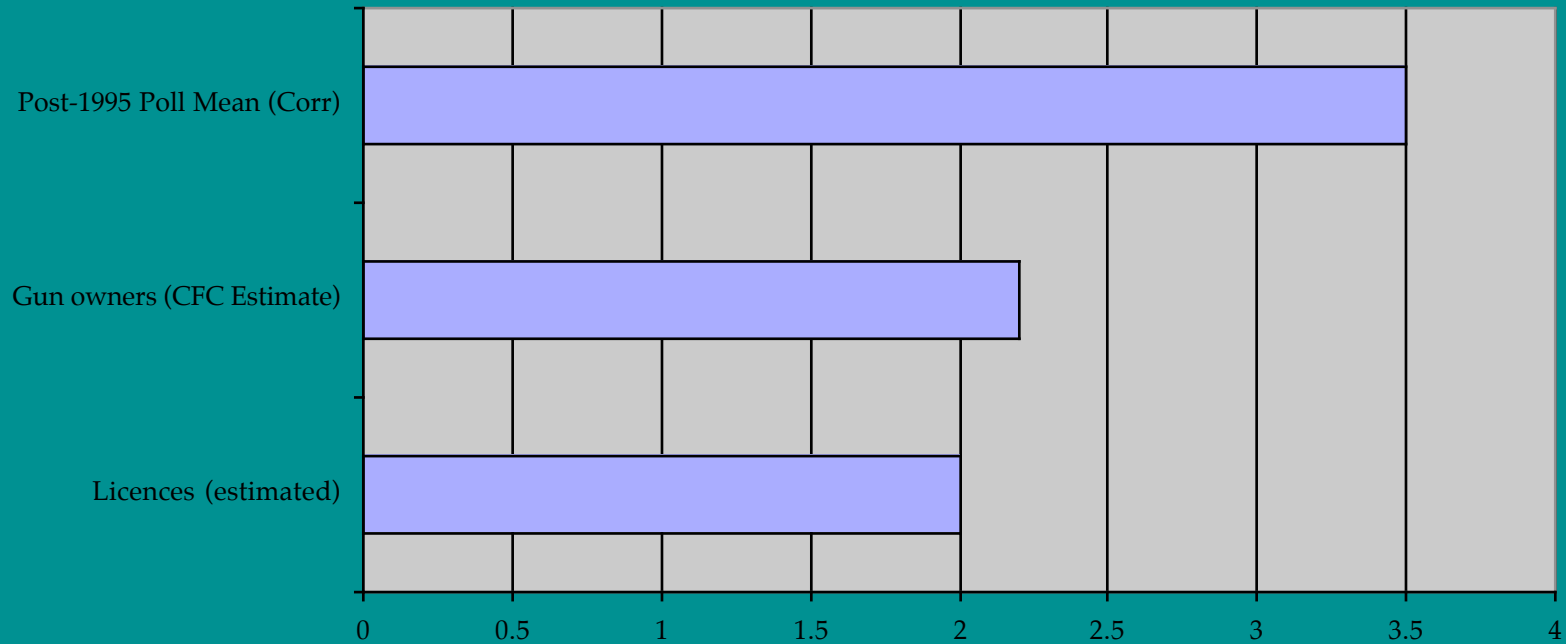
Survey Estimates of Households with Firearms



Source: Mauser (2001)

How Successful is Licencing?

Gun Licences and Gun Owners (Millions)



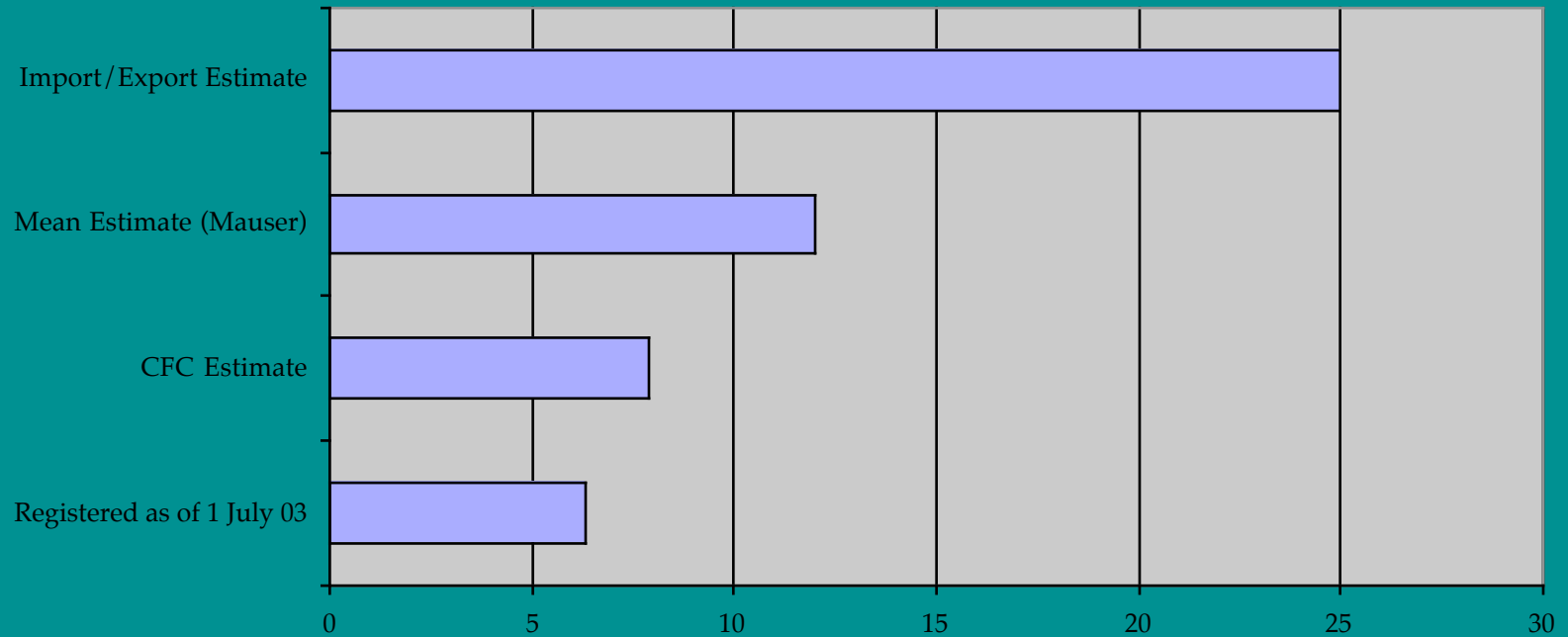
Source: Department of Justice, Mauser (2001)

How Many Owners Not Licenced?

- 300,000 unlicenced gun owners
 - CFC estimate
- At least 1.5 Million unlicenced gun owners
 - Post-1995 polls (Mauser)

How Successful is Registration?

Firearms in Canada (Millions)



Source: CFC, Surveys, Mauser (2001)

How Many Guns are Unregistered?

- 1.6 M unregistered guns
 - CFC estimate
- At least 6 M unregistered guns
 - Post-1995 Polls (Mauser)

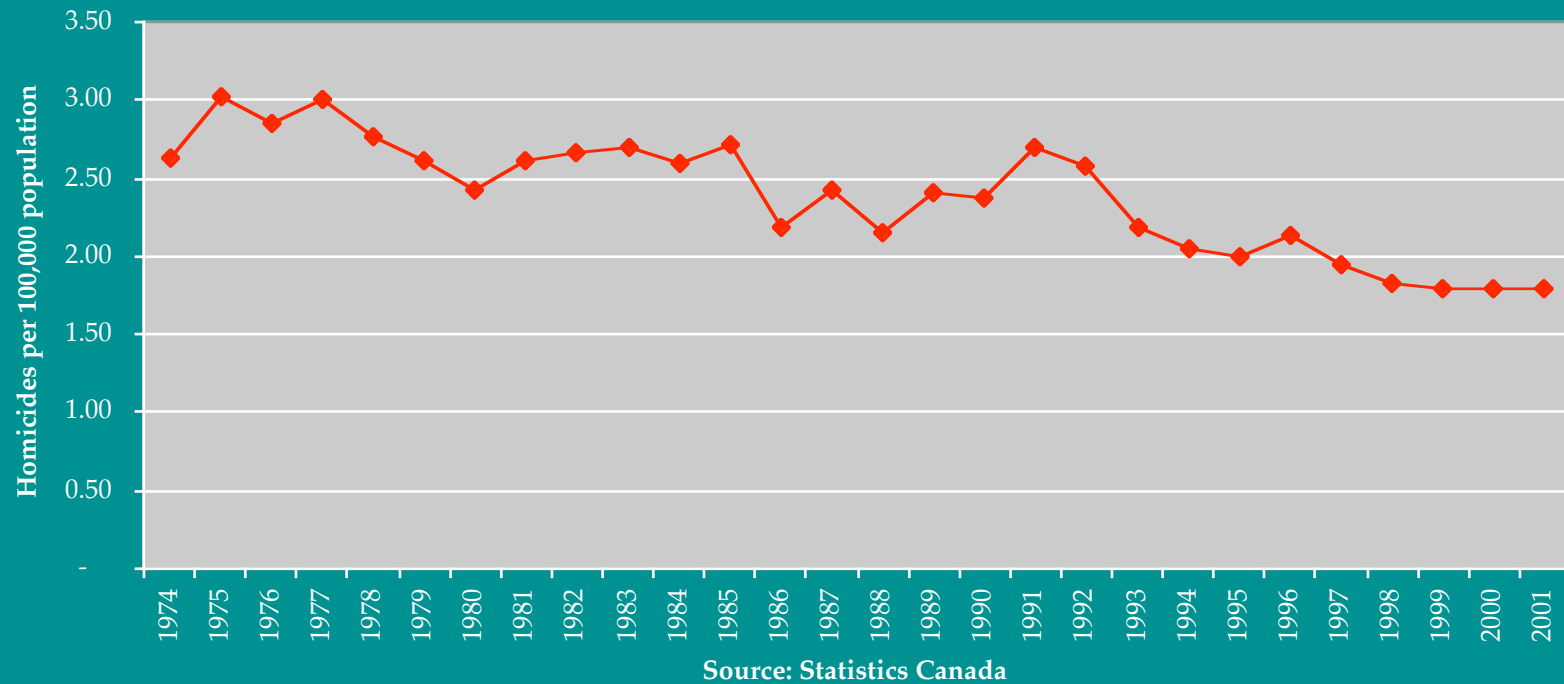
Have Firearms Regulations Reduced Violent Crime?

- Homicide
- Violent crime

- What about Suicide (80% of gun deaths)?

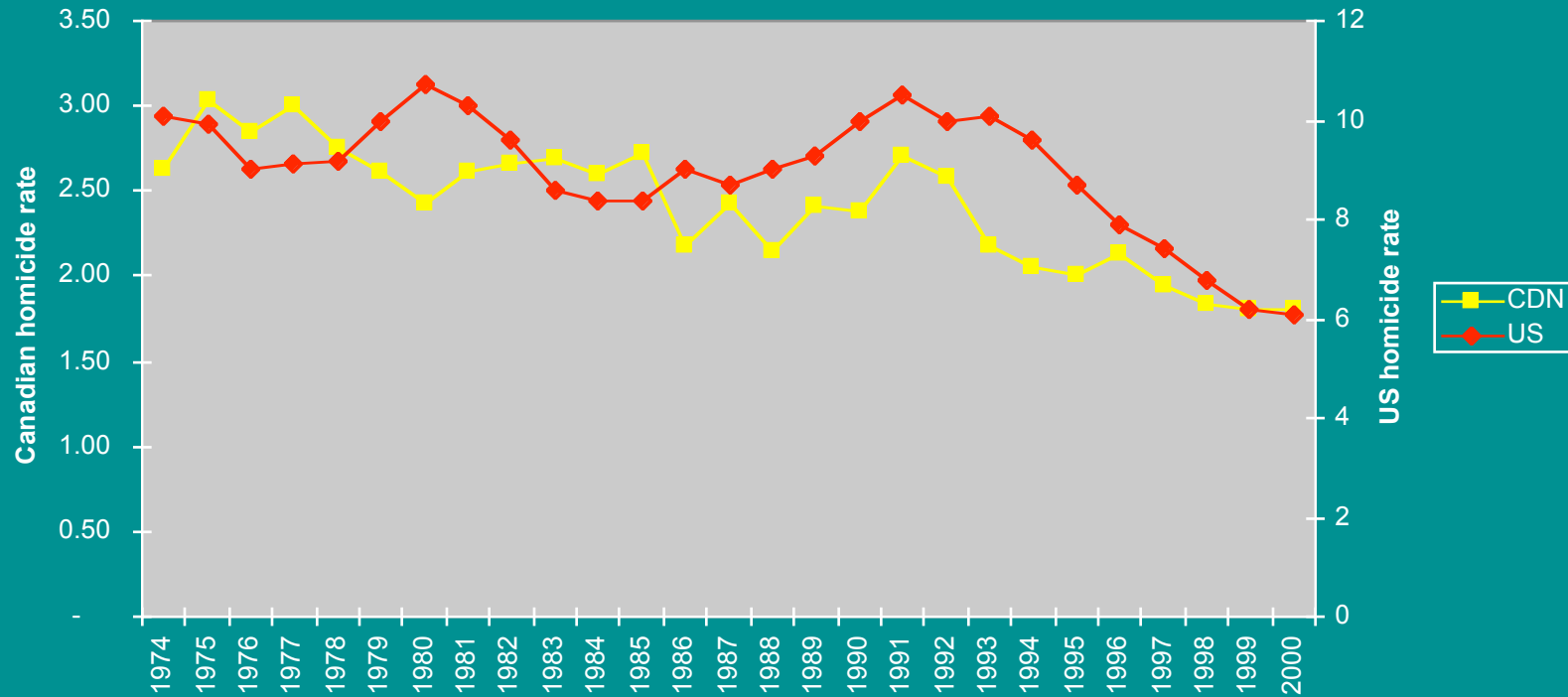
Homicide in Canada

Canadian Homicide Rate

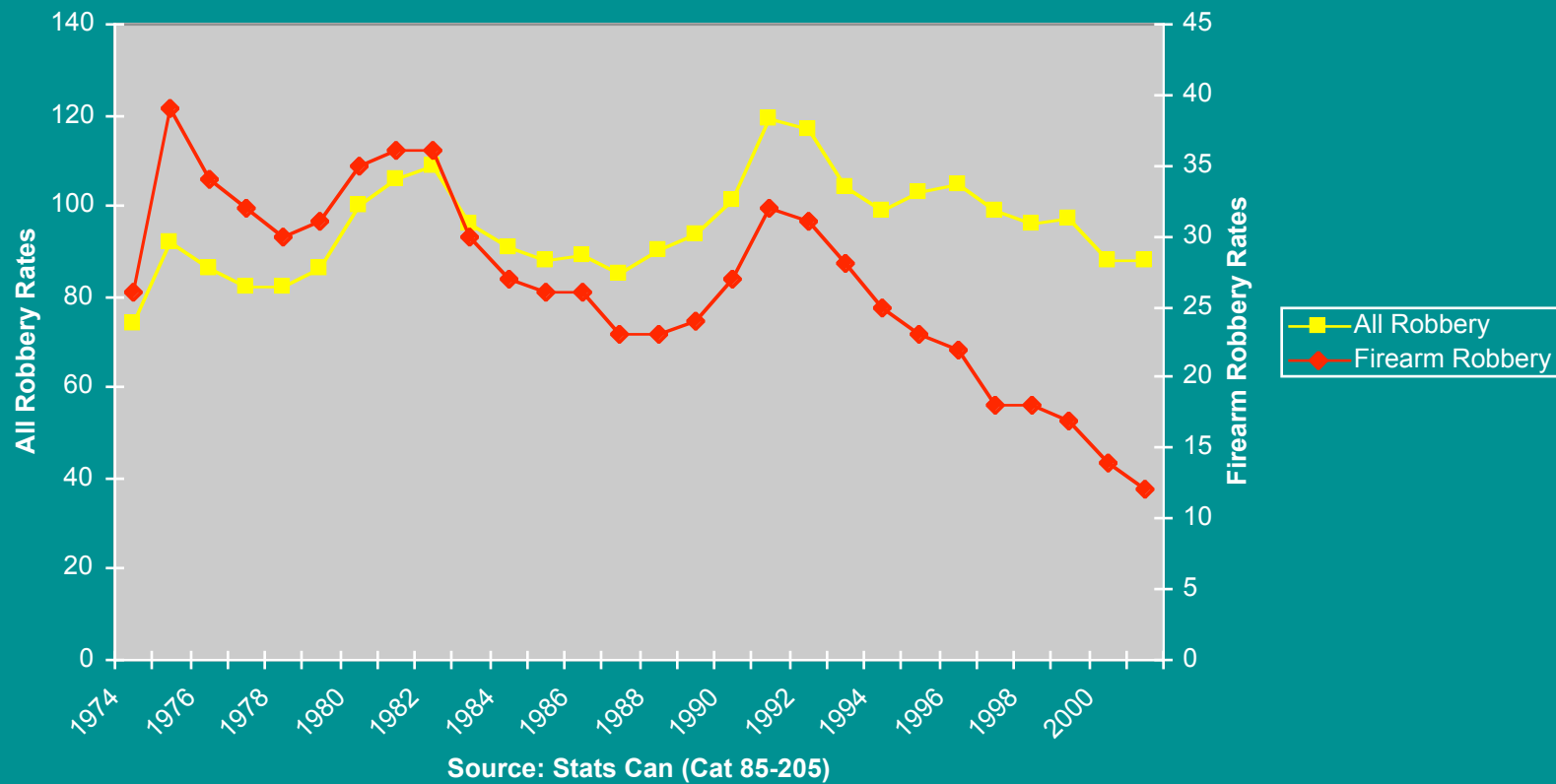


It Can't be Canadian Gun Laws

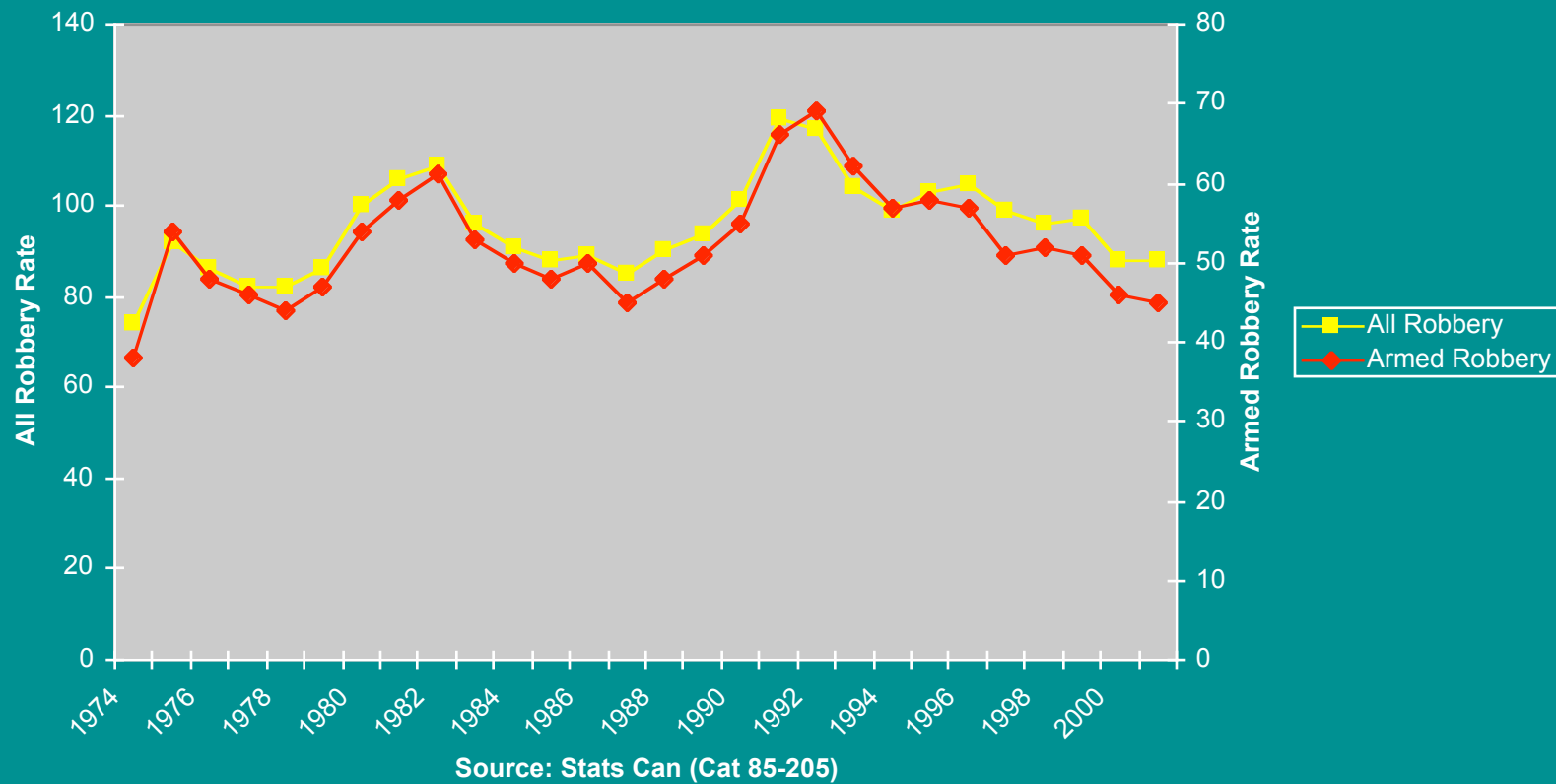
US Canadian Homicide rates



Trend in Robbery and Firearm Robbery

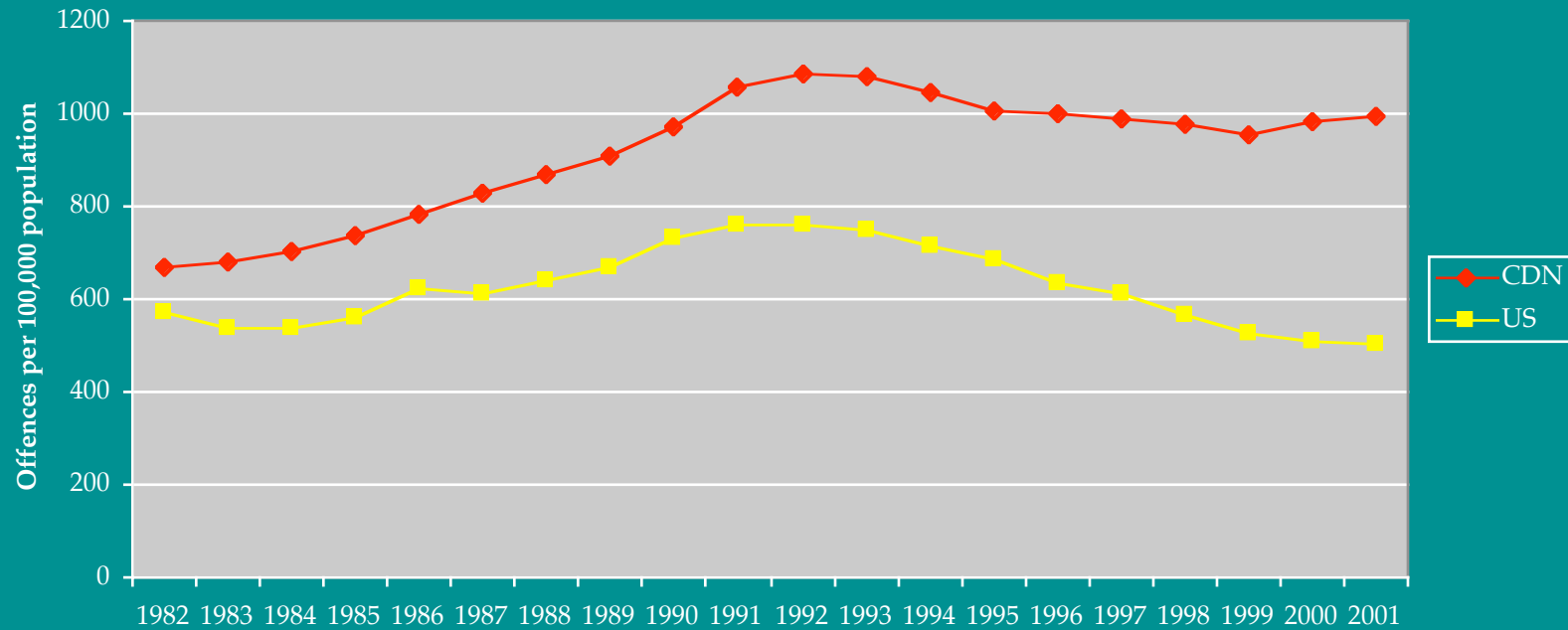


Trend in Armed Robbery



Violent Crime Trends

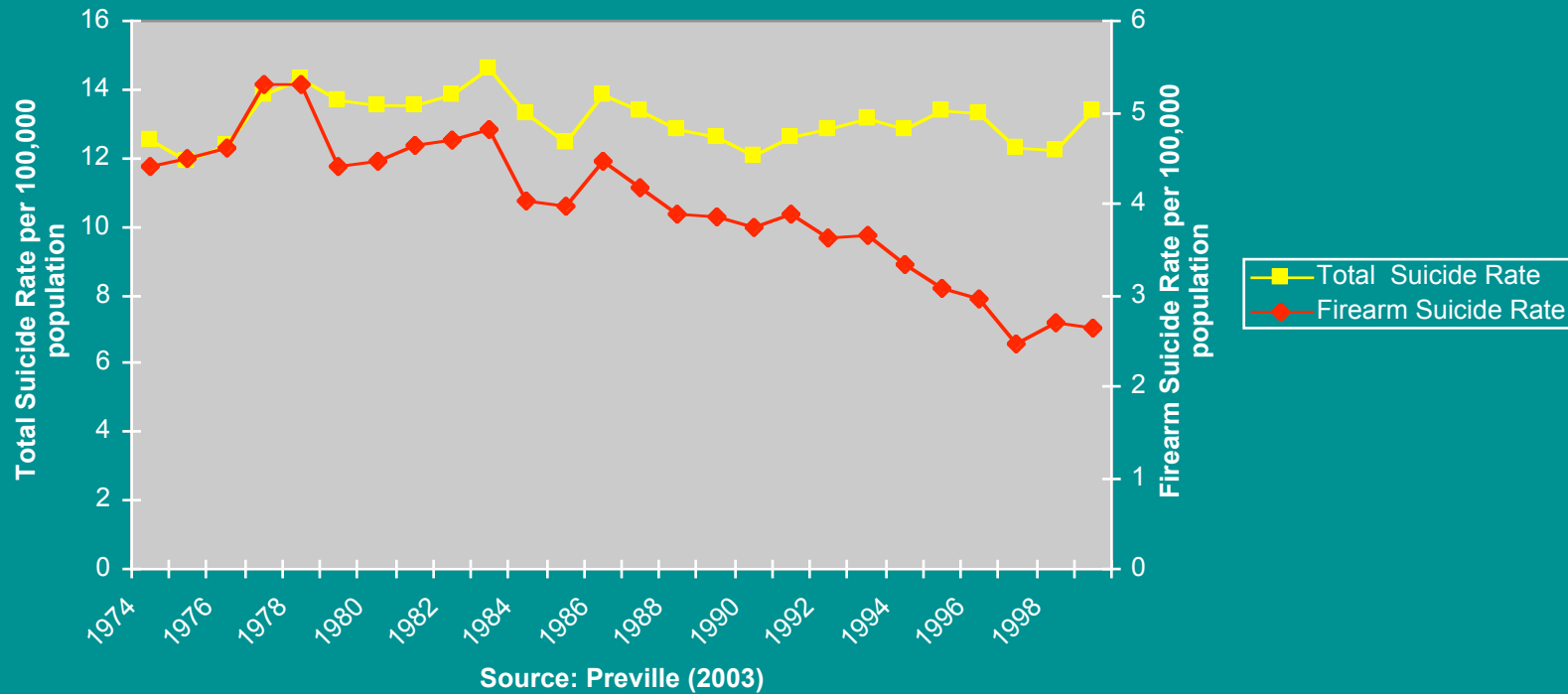
Violent Crime Rates in Canada and the United States



Sources: Juristat, 2002; FBI, 2002

What About Suicide?

Firearms and Suicide in Canada



What is the Cost?

Three Kinds of Costs

- Implementation costs
- Enforcement costs
- Opportunity costs

Implementation Costs of Registration

- Auditor General estimated that the Department of Justice costs would be
- At least one billion dollars by '04-'05
 - Auditor General's Report, Dec. 2002

Unknown Additional Costs

- Federal government did not fully cooperate with Auditor General
- AG did not examine other cooperating agencies, e.g.,
 - Solicitor General
 - Customs
- These unknown costs may total another Billion dollars

Enforcement Costs of Registration

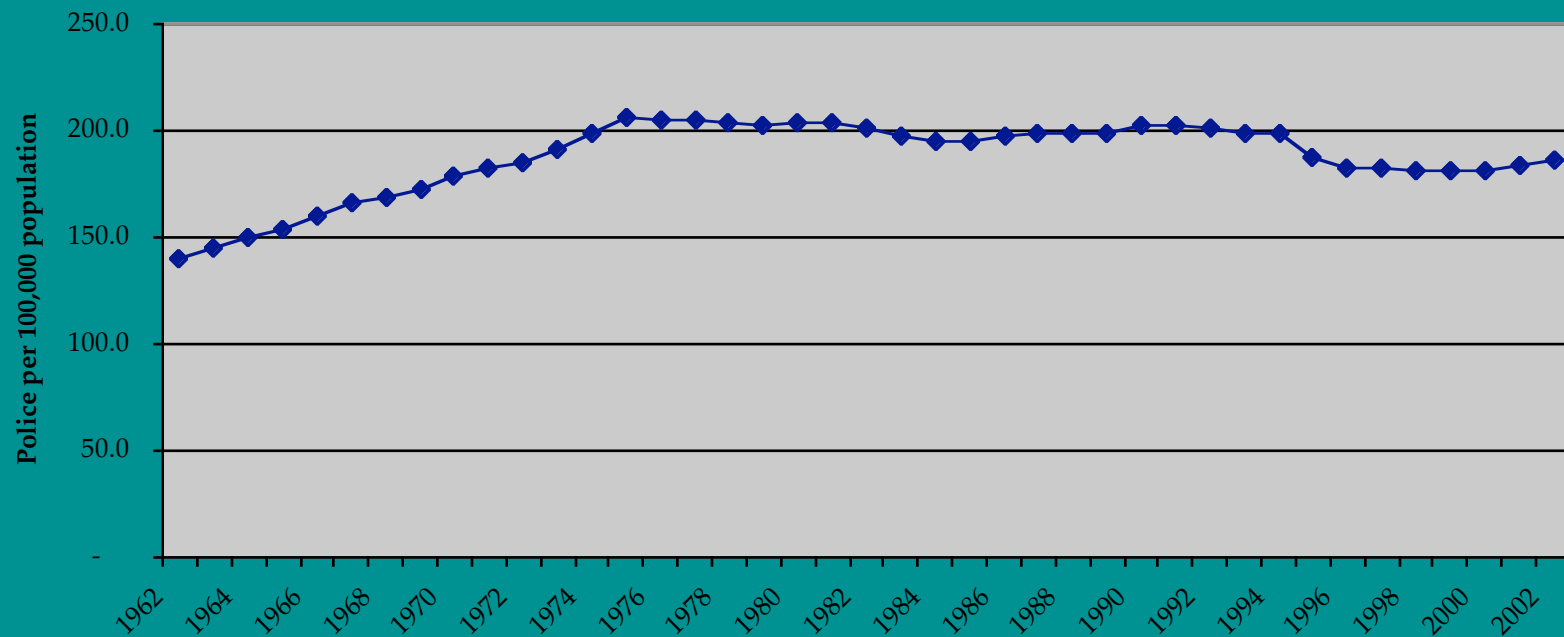
- Easily cost still another billion dollars
- Between 300,000 and 1.5 M owners in non-compliance
- Enforcement costs per conviction
 - At least \$3,000
 - Up to \$10,000
- A possible total of three billion dollars

Opportunity Costs of Registration

- We could have spent these billions on:
 - More police, better salaries
 - Fighting organized crime
 - Fighting terrorism
 - Expanded corrections

Slow Decline in Police Officers per Capita

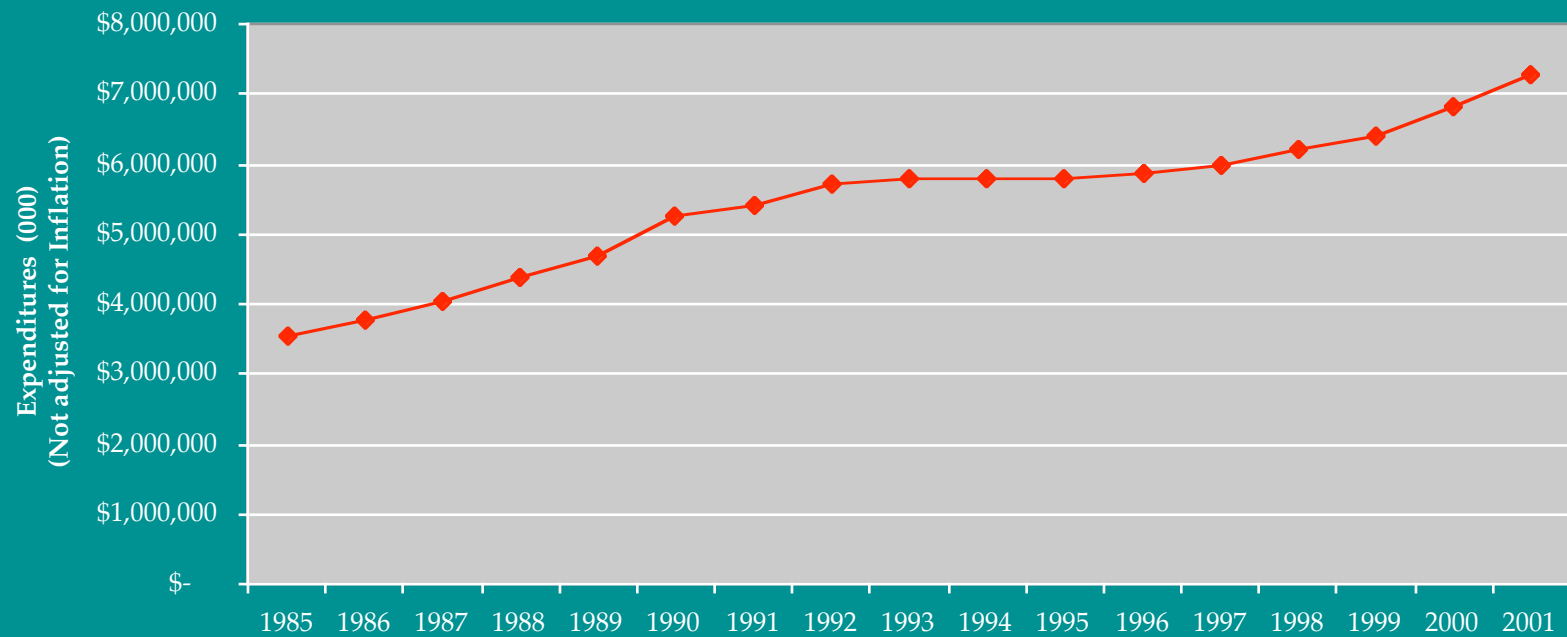
Police Officers per Capita



Source: Can Sim

Police Budgets (Not Adjusted for Inflation)

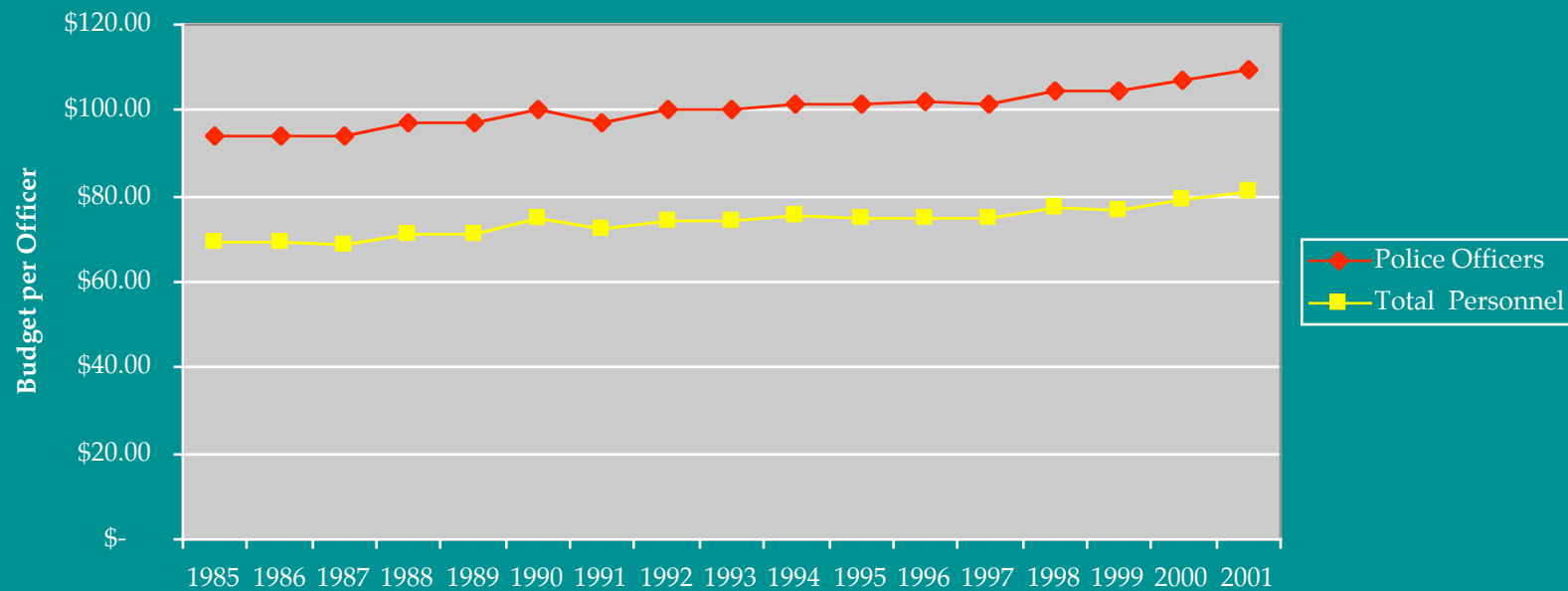
Total Expenditures on Police



Source: Statistics Canada

Real Police Expenditures are Flat (weighted by CPI)

Expenditures for Police Personnel
(Weighted by CPI)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2002

Fighting Organized Crime

- Prosecutions are difficult, expensive
- Funding very limited
- Charges infrequent

Fighting Terrorism

- Screening immigrants and visitors to Canada
- Tracking illegal immigrants with deportation orders
- Budgets are extremely limited

Some Facts about Terrorists

- 36,000 immigrants ordered deported have been 'lost'
 - Auditor General, April 2003
- 8,000-10,000 Tamil terrorists in Canada
 - Mackenzie Institute, July 9, 2003

Expanded Corrections

- Longer prison terms
 - More prison sentences
 - More probation and parole officers
 - More prisons
-
- Corrections budget flat for past decade (after accounting for inflation)

Implications for Police

Implications for Police

- Expansion of the “grey market”
- Increase in the “black market”
- Increased risk for police
- Registration violates basic police principles

Increased Risk to Police

- Inaccurate registry creates
 - False positives
 - False negatives
- RCMP has concerns about errors in registry and poor screening of gun owners

False negatives

- When the police are called out to a house where NO firearms are registered,
- Does no registration mean - no firearm?
- Few violent criminals will register their guns
- The police CANNOT trust the registry

False positives

- When police called out to an address where a firearm is registered,
- Does a registered gun mean ‘danger’?
- Only the most law-abiding people will register their guns.
- The gun registry misleads police

Firearm Registration Violates Basic Police Principles

Sir Robert Peel, England

- The founder of modern policing
- Introduced the London “Bobbies”
- In 1822, he developed basic policing principles

Firearm Registration Violates these Principles

- The police are the public, and the public are the police
- The police need the willing cooperation of the public to enforce the laws

Implications for Police

- Firearm registration undermines support for the police
- Firearm registration reduces public willingness to cooperate with the police
- Policing resembles military occupation forces

Conclusions

- Firearm registration has not increased public safety
- Firearm registration is diverting billions of dollars away from legitimate police activities

Conclusions

- Firearm registration undermines support for the police
- Firearm registration increases the risk for police

PEEL'S NINE PRINCIPLES OF POLICING:

Sir Robert Peel, England (1822)

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and by severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

- 3. To recognize always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of willing cooperation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.**
- 4. To recognize always that the extent to which the cooperation of the public can be secured diminishes, proportionately, the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.**

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

5. To seek and to preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustices of the substance of individual laws; ...; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order; and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

7. To maintain at all time a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen, in the interests of community welfare and existence.

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

8. To recognize always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the state, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.

PEEL'S PRINCIPLES OF POLICING

9. To recognize always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.