

THE IRISH NEWS

online 

Friday, 18 April 2008

- HOME
- NEWS
- SPORT
- BUSINESS
- LIVING
- AN TEOLAS
- SEARCH
- SUBSCRIBE
- LOGIN

POLITICS | EDUCATION | COLUMNISTS | LETTERS

Most PopularMost Emailed

BreakingSportBusinessWorldGossip



THE IRISH NEWS
WORKPLACE & EMPLOYMENT
AWARDS



FREE
random stories



today's top pictures

inphotos
browse Irish News photos online

Issue Changer:



today's pdf downloads

sudoku
play online now



NEWS >

Watchdog struggles to 'police the past'

By Allison Morris

16/04/08



Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson

Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson has warn-ed that unless a decision is urgently taken on how to better police the past his office is in danger of reaching a "tipping point".

In his first interview since taking over the post the former Canadian Mountie, pictured, said the British government needs to look at alternative ways of dealing with investigations into allegations of collusion.

The ombudsman's office has more than 100 'historical' complaints against police on its books.

Mr Hutchinson, who took over the watchdog role from Dame Nuala O'Loan in November, said it is struggling to cope with the dual role of investigating both past and present cases of alleged police failures and misconduct.

"We have 109 historical cases and many more coming through the from the Historical Enquiries Team," he said.

"Some 70 per cent of those are pending, meaning we simply don't have the resources to deal with them at present.

"I'm running two businesses here, one in the past and one in the present, and the workload in the past is overwhelming.

"We are having to shift more and more resources to the past.

"I've used the words tipping point and we are really coming up to a tipping point."

This week the ombudsman released a highly critical report into an investigation into the 1988 shooting of RUC man John Larmour in an ice cream parlour in south Belfast.

It is the second report that Mr Hutchinson has delivered since taking over.

"In some ways it's easier for me because I'm not associated with any particular faction," he said.

"There is a perception though that as a former police officer I would align myself on the side of the police and I can assure you that's not true.

"I strive to get to the truth in a fair and impartial manner. It's important that we hold the police to account when they do fail and I will be judged on my results.

"Should the Eames/Bradley report and the two governments ultimately decide that there is a better method to deal with the period between 1968 and 1998 then certainly they could have our resources to deal with that.


"Should that be either in a evidentiary collection mode or in an information mode is for government and broader society to decide.

"My view right now is that

while legislation compels me to we will investigate complaints to the best of my ability because the victims and families require some resolution.

"Whether in future that involves a police ombudsman or not is for broader societal debate."

 Print  back to top

 Email this story