



Metin Enver, Managing Editor

Editorial – August 2010

Police Brave-wary?

If the new coalition government needed convincing that there's far more to policing than just preventing and detecting crime, then the annual Police Bravery Awards last month must have done the job.

This annual event, organised by the Police Federation, has become a showcase for the multitude of activities police officers get embroiled in; whether it's pulling people from burning buildings and vehicles or saving people trying to jump from a bridge, the stories of selfless heroism certainly dispel the myth that the police service is risk-averse.

This year's overall winners from the Metropolitan Police pursued what they assumed was someone firing live ammunition at them, despite having nothing more than a simple baton for protection. Fortunately, it transpired it was a starter pistol, but that was only discovered after they caught the young lad and stopped him from firing.

In June, Lord Young was appointed by the coalition government to review health and safety laws; laws that exist to protect the public as well as police officers and other emergency service workers. There remains a misconception that somehow this legislation hampers policing; that officers don't provide the service to the public that they should because of unnecessary legislation.

What absolute nonsense. Every day, cognisant of health and safety laws, police officers carry out heroic deeds, putting the public first. It may be that in some instances the interpretation of legislation has resulted in obscure directives. I'm sure you don't need a manual on the basics of riding a police bicycle or avoiding slipping on wet leaves, but regrettably these examples are highlighted by hungry media and seized upon by politicians.

The Police Bravery Awards also highlight the dangers that police officers face. Many of the nominees this year had not only been threatened with knives, guns and other weapons, but had been physically assaulted.

I trust politicians of all parties will remember this when they so readily opt to lump police officers in the pot with all other public sector workers. Policing is a uniquely demanding profession and, when making future decisions, the government must ensure that the dangers inherent in the job are fairly reflected in police officer terms and conditions.

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