

R-E-S-P-E-C-T ... find out what it means to me

Not so much to a fanfare of trumpets but poignant none the less, Tony Blair launched his long awaited Respect Agenda last month. There had been much talk throughout the latter months of 2005 about whether the agenda had legs to stand on its own or whether its sentiments would just seep into an array of legislation throughout the year.

To the surprise of many in the media seeking a news hook, there appeared to be little new ideas in the plan. Yes, we're all agreed we need to tackle minor offences and anti-social behaviour. But it's how the Government plan to do this that has more worrying long term implications.

Building upon the extension of Community Support Officer (CSO) powers introduced over the last two years, there are plans afoot to further clarify some of their powers in the new Police and Justice Bill. In principle, it may seem fair that CSOs should be able to provide minor enforcement patrols, issuing fixed penalty notices, or penalty notices for disorder. But ask yourself, is



Editorial by Metin Enver, Editor of Police magazine

someone requiring a penalty notice for disorder likely to 'come quietly'? I think not. So the self-fulfilling prophecy comes true and CSOs find they are facing confrontational situations without the necessary training and equipment to deal with it. So, what next? I know, call for a police officer.

The increasing use of non-sworn police staff to provide frontline policing, albeit in the guise of neighbourhood policing teams, is not in itself necessarily a problem. But imagine the shock on the faces of Home Office offi-

cial when we hear from several Unison sources that police staff are to be actively encouraged to join in any planned industrial action undertaken by the union in its battle with the Government over changes to the public sector pension scheme. It slowly dawns that not only can their new frontline police strike, they may well do so.

What will the Blairs do? Tony and Sir Ian, that is. Perhaps the very threat of industrial action by frontline staff will at least make them realise the importance of the politically independent Officer of the Crown who cannot strike, and remind them why the Federation fights so hard for them when planned changes to terms and conditions are discussed by the Police Negotiating Board, or used to win points by the newly elected Tory leader, David Cameron.

But, whatever challenges the future holds and however policing is delivered, it is right that we tackle the important issue of anti-social behaviour that blights so many people's lives. To that end,

Minister Hazel Blears deserves our support in principle, as she drives forward the Respect Agenda.

If there is one sad note though, it's that it is a poor indictment of society that we even need an agenda, which on the surface appears to set out what many of us would consider to be just good, sensible neighbourly behaviour. Sadder still, is that I dare say that for many of those the plan is actually targeting, the mention of a Respect Agenda probably had them thinking of George Galloway MP's game plan to attempt to win Channel 4's celebrity Big Brother. Doesn't that just say it all?

What do you think?

We would like to hear your views on the issues discussed in this month's magazine.

Write to the letters page at:

15 Langley Road, Surbiton,

Surrey KT6 6LP.

Fax: 020 8390 2249

or by email: slund@jcc.polfed.org

In Focus



As the service braces itself for more reform, Professor Roger Seifert, from Keele University, examines what has happened in other public sector organisations and the repercussions for the police service and the future role of the police officer. Pages 14 and 15.



As the importance of human DNA is hailed as a success story in the fight to tackle serious crime, Peter Riley reports on the importance plant DNA is taking in solving murders, rapes and kidnappings. He interviews leading forensic botanists. Pages 20 and 21.



Rape is still a largely unreported crime and those that make it through to the court process are still often failing to gain convictions. Tina Orr-Munro picks through the Met's review of why this trend continues and tries to highlight where forces can improve the service to victims. Pages 17 and 19.