

IN BRIEF

● Police minister Hazel Blears has stressed the need for qualifications within the police service.


The minister told the Federation's Parliamentary Reception: 'We need to think very seriously about qualifications offered by the service. It would not be acceptable in any other organisation not to have a qualification in an area like supervision. So many of our officers are probationers and the role of supervision is absolutely key.'

● Offending Behaviour Programmes such as 'thinking skills' and 'anger management' courses cost at least £2,000 each and have been found not to reduce crime, according to a study by The Institute for the Study of Civil Society. Recent Home Office studies found that reconviction rates did not fall (Home Office Research Study No. 206; Home Office Research Findings No. 161.) In 2002 to 2003 over 12,000 courses were completed at a cost of over £25m.

● Police officers are needed to come forward with ideas to help cut red tape as part of the Bureaucracy Awards Scheme. The template to enter the Reducing Bureaucracy Awards scheme can be found at www.policer-feorm.gov.uk

● Proposals to install a cash machine in a petrol station in Handsworth have been rejected following objections from West Midlands Police. A planning application for an ATM cash machine to be installed at a filling station have been refused planning permission on the grounds that installation is likely to encourage criminal activity

Concerns that police powers will be handed out like 'sheriffs' badges'

 Giving out the powers of a police constable ad-hoc in the Serious and Organised Crime Agency is like Sheriffs in the Wild West 'shelling out badges', warned Andrew Mitchell, shadow police minister.

The Serious Organised Crime and Police Bill, currently going through the House of Lords, contains plans to dole out police powers to those joining the crime fighting Agency.

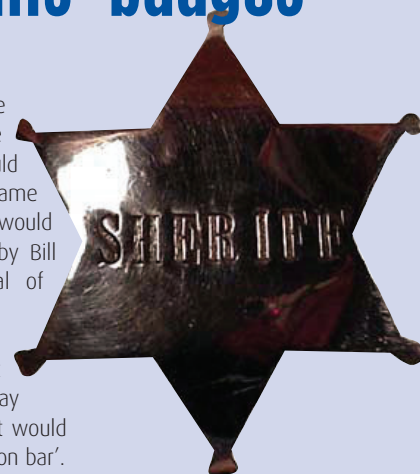
Mr Mitchell told the Federation's Parliamentary Reception, held in London recently, that the Conservative Party have concerns over the

issue.

He said that they were 'very nervous' that those joining the Agency would not be trained in the same way as police officers but would be given police powers by Bill Hughes, director general of SOCA.

Mr Mitchell said powers would be given out 'very much in the same way a Sheriff in the Wild West would shell out badges in a saloon bar'.

Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation of England and Wales, told around 200 parliamentarians that it was important



the SOCA Bill underwent proper 'robust' scrutiny before it reaches the statute book.

Leaflet launch on SOCA foul play

 The Federation has launched a leaflet campaign to lobby parliamentarians over plans to remove the status of constable from police officers who are likely to be transferred into the Serious and Organised Crime Agency.

The leaflet spells out the Federation's concerns about the set up of the Agency, where police officers will become simply 'officers' alongside those from other agencies such as Customs and Excise.

SOCA is designed to tackle drug and human trafficking across international borders as well as other large-scale organised crime.

Although Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation, supports the creation of SOCA, she argues 'we do not believe it will be successful if it is not staffed by fully sworn police officers'.

Currently, police officers who are transferred from the National Crime Squad and National Criminal Intelligence Service into SOCA could see their pay packets frozen, be dismissed at three months' notice and forfeit their pension rights.



SERIOUS ORGANISED CRIME AND POLICE BILL

- NO! Political control of operational policing**
- NO! Removing the Office of Constable from those transferring to the Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)**
- NO! Civilianisation of custody officers**
- NO! Increasing powers for Community Support Officers**
- NO! Unacceptable terms and conditions for officers transferring to SOCA**

POLICE Federation

A leaflet outlining the issues was handed out to parliamentarians at the Federation's Parliamentary Reception, held last month.

The leaflet states that the fact that police officers will lose their powers and status and then be handed powers by the director

general of SOCA ad-hoc is a 'recipe for disaster'.

Phil Aspey, secretary of the Superintendents' Association has also backed the concerns, saying that police officers will find themselves in a vulnerable position.