

The federation points to lack of 'transparency' in SOCA committee

A circle of Government ministers will set priorities for the Serious and Organised Crime Agency behind closed doors and is not 'transparent or accountable', warns Jan Berry, chairman of the Federation.

Mrs Berry said that the priorities to be set for the crime-fighting Agency should be determined by a SOCA board, made up of a more independent cross-section of members.

The Government plans to set up a cabinet committee of Labour ministers, chaired by Charles Clarke, the Home Secretary, which will then decide priorities based



Bill Hughes: director general comparable to a chief constable

on assessments given to it by SOCA and others.

Mrs Berry said: 'A cabinet committee is not good enough as there is no transparency. Who is it accountable to? I understand there has to be some secrecy involved with serious and organised crime but that is why it needs to be more representative than one party in a cabinet committee setting priorities.'

The Agency will initially focus on drug trafficking, organised illegal immigration, major financial scams and internet paedophiles.

Bill Hughes, director general of the Agency, due to come into

effect in April 2006, told *Police* that his position is comparable to a chief constable and means he will be independent of political control - even if his officers sign up to serve SOCA, and will be ultimately accountable to the Home Secretary, rather than swear their allegiance to the Queen.

But Mrs Berry added: 'I have difficulty in believing the role could be politically independent, the Home Secretary appoints the director general and those in the role likely to be on a contract which will need to be renewed.'



Behind bars

Chief constables were put behind bars for the night to raise cash for the charity Crime stoppers.

The inmates consisted of Julie Spence, deputy chief constable of Cambridgeshire Constabulary, David Westwood, chief constable of Humberside Police, Alistair McWhirter, chief constable of Suffolk Constabulary and Kevin Wilkins, assistant

chief constable of Norfolk Constabulary.

They took part in the Lock Up Your Boss charity event last month in order to raise at least £2,000 by sleeping in the cells at a new prison in Peterborough. Inmates were treated to a champagne reception before inmates were led away to their cells and woke in the morning to enjoy a prisoner's breakfast.



Julie Spence, deputy chief constable



David Westwood, chief constable

Tribute to a man of principles

By Tony Judge

Leslie Male MBE, who died last month, was a highly respected national chairman of the Federation in the 1970s. A quiet, self-effacing man with strongly held principles, Les was typical of the men who entered the police service after fighting in the Second World War. He always wore his Commando badge with pride.

During his time as chairman, Les and the then general secretary, Dick Pamplin, managed to resolve a long running internal dispute over London pay that at one time threatened to split the Federation. He had to face strong criticism from implacable opponents of any form of regional pay, but as always he did what he believed to be right. In his long retirement, he devoted years of service to the National Association of Retired Police Officers.

Les never strayed from his



local links in Birmingham and the West Midlands. My favourite story concerns the siege of Salltley Coke Depot by Arthur Scargill and his flying pickets in 1974. The local police were so understaffed that Les, in his sergeant's uniform, was sent to help keep the peace. As he approached, a huge cheer came from the police ranks. "Who's he?" asked Scargill of an inspector. "That's our shop steward," was the answer.

