

Who's pulling the strings?

Earlier this month we witnessed further fragmentation of the police service with the demise of two more police branches – the National Crime Squad and National Criminal Intelligence Service, and the creation of a new Government organisation, the Serious Organised Crime Agency where 1,000 SOCA officers will be given police powers on an ad hoc basis.

This seems to be part of an ongoing Government programme to remove those who hold the Office of Constable from most areas of policing, whether it's interaction with the communities at a local level or tackling serious cross border crime nationally and abroad. Indeed, your average prisoner may go cradle to grave throughout the police process with barely the briefest encounter with a fully attested sworn police officer.

And all this erosion at a time when David Green from right-wing think tank, Civitas, tells *Police* why current offender behaviour programmes are failing



Editorial by Metin Enver, Editor of *Police* magazine

to impact on the rising tide of criminal activity across England and Wales, suggesting more prison places could be the answer.

Now, the cynics amongst you may start to wonder if there is any connection between the Government's decision to implement a doomed offender management programme and their haste to promote their own solution by compartmentalising the police service into silos of non-sworn police employees.

What's so wrong with the independent, impartial police officer? Or have I just inadvertently answered the question. With the controversial *Da Vinci Code* about to hit the silver screen next month and conspiracy theories abound, could it be that the fears expressed by the lone voice of the Police Federation are being proven. Namely, that politicians are seeking to directly influence operational policing decisions, and the independent Officer of the Crown gets in their way?

So, if we take this sinister plot to a natural conclusion, how do the planned amalgamations fit in? Well, according to West Yorkshire's chief constable, Colin Cramphorn, the Home Secretary's police reforms will give a 'direct line of control' to every street in the country. Mr Cramphorn claims current reforms will remove the checks and balances that already exist between the Home Secretary, police authorities and chief constables. Instead he predicts a powerful Government mogul, a subservient police

authority and chief constables at the bottom of the pile trying to keep the policing head above water.

Now whilst I appreciate that it's the pound in the pocket that stirs our emotions it's important that we do not stand aside and let this political control happen. The police service must unite to ensure that any changes are for better delivery of policing to the public and not just a mechanism for politicians to gain greater operational control. For let's face it, if we lose, we become nothing more than puppets on a string with operational decisions based on electioneering whims or, dare I suggest it, political party donations.



What do you think?
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15 Langley Road, Surbiton, Surrey KT6 6LP.
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In Focus



The Government has pledged to provide every community in the country with a neighbourhood policing team. John Dean looks at a team in Northumbria who have slashed detection rates. Pages 16 and 17



A former police inspector from West Midlands Police is now 'speaking with the enemy' as he works in a mediation service to reduce gang conflict. Pages 14 and 15



Dr David G. Green, director of the right wing think tank Civitas argues that more police and prison places for offenders will help cut the crime rate in Britain. Pages 22 and 23