



Metin Enver, Editor

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Deal or no deal?

You would think that the Home Secretary had enough on his plate in his early months to keep himself occupied without the prospect of taking on the might of the 160,000 strong UK police service. Well, it appears not, for he is prepared to meddle with the one thing that will unite us all – the pound in our pocket.

For the first time in 27 years the Official Side of the Police Negotiating Board has failed to agree an arrangement for police pay which would mean a 3 percent increase this year from September 1.

So, what happens now? Well, there will be a period of mediation towards the end of August to try to find an amicable settlement and then it's likely to go to arbitration for an independent decision. Trouble is, any decision taken at arbitration will still need to be ratified by the Home Secretary. And with so many projects on the go, and a bullish Gordon Brown breathing down his neck about not exceeding the Treasury imposed limit of 2.25 percent for the public sector it will take a brave Mr Reid to sign off the increase.

You would be forgiven for thinking that the PNB is independent. It should be, and works effectively when it is. But the recent behaviour of the Official Side would suggest they are firmly in the pockets of the government. I mean, let's face it – even if the Official Side agreed to the arrangement in place since 1979, the government can still override it. But no, it appears they won't even take that step for fear of being out of favour with Dr Reid or out of kilter with Mr Brown.

What price independence?

So, are we heading for a summer of discontent? Well, not if the Police Federation of England and Wales has its way. National chairman, Jan Berry, has stressed to both the Home Secretary and Tony McNulty, the police minister, the anger and disgust felt by police officers throughout the UK that this pay rise has not yet been agreed.

At the Federation conference the Home Secretary recognised the uniqueness of policing and heard that the police pay arrangement is sacrosanct. He knows that the Police Federation cannot, and will not, allow police pay to be eroded. So, come on Mr Reid, the ball's in your court and there's 160,000 officers waiting.

Editor: Metin Enver

Deputy Editor: Syreeta Lund

Designer: Lisa Ryszkowska

Contact: 15 Langley Road, Surbiton,
Surrey, KT6 6LP

Tel: 0208 335 1000

Fax: 0208 390 2249

E-mail: slund@jcc.polfed.org

Advertising Agent:

Landmark Services

Contact: Sharon Davies

2 Windmill Street

London

W1T 2HX

TeL: 0207 692 9292

Fax: 0207 692 9393

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