

GENERAL SECRETARY'S SPEECH
CONSTABLES' CENTRAL CONFERENCE BOURNEMOUTH
TUESDAY 12TH MAY 2009

Conference, Ernie Hanrahan, Deputy General Secretary of the Constables' Central Committee, and I rise on behalf of the Committee asking that Conference receives and accepts the annual report of the Constables' Central Committee for the year 2008.

Copies of the full report have been distributed and should be in the possession of all delegates.

The elephant in the room – fair pay – has been expelled and the right to negotiate future pay and terms and conditions of service within the PNB has for the time being been reserved.

Last year through the PNB we secured a three year pay deal. The CCC is of the view that in the prevailing climate a better deal couldn't have been achieved especially with the backdrop of a looming recession.

There is a clause within that agreement that either side can refer the matter back to PNB for further negotiation should the financial climate change. It is therefore pleasing to hear that despite the recent severe downturn in the economy the police minister has declared that there will be no reneging on the deal from the Labour government.

The fear for next year has to be that there will, in all probability, be a new government and the most likely candidates have already made clear their views on what will happen with public sector pay.

Conference, the coming year is likely to be a difficult one for the service and we will face ever greater challenges, on tighter budgets.

But there are also opportunities for the service and for constables.

We have, at the moment, a crime and policing bill making its way through parliament. The bill is currently in its committee stage and intends to implement the changes set out in the policing green paper. These changes include provisions for directly elected police representatives which the Police Federation opposes.

However, there are also welcome measures: the bill aims to significantly reduce bureaucracy; cut red tape and beef up community policing roles.

A new policing minister has been appointed to oversee the passage of the bill and the CCC has been active in making our representations to him. Vernon Coaker replaces Tony McNulty as Minister of State for Policing. He has a track record as a junior Home Office minister whose previous roles include tackling knife crime and drugs trafficking.

The CCC is pledged to work with the new minister in the way we did with his predecessor but, as ever, we are firm in our positions and clear about our concerns.

As I said earlier, we are now a year away from the next general election which could herald a change of government and – therefore – government policy.

It is, of course, essential that the Police Federation and the CCC takes the lead in communicating the facts about policing to politicians and the public, rather than allowing journalists and civil servants etc a free role in spreading often inaccurate or misleading information.

This is why your Committee has continued to be active in its political and media engagement.

Where stories have appeared in the national press reporting myths or allegations the Committee seeks to set the record straight and to inform the public.

Conference, it is crucial that we do this – if we do not, we have only ourselves to blame when the public is cynical about policing and policy-makers seek to lumber us with ever more forms to fill in or with unfair pay deals.

In conveying your views to government and opposition, the CCC has been active (as part of the Police Federation) at each of the main party conferences - debating with politicians and journalists and taking an active role in shaping the development of the service for the benefit of rank and file police officers who only want to see it get more efficient, more effective and better trusted.

And we are getting even better at understanding the views of members. We now have the results of Project Branthwaite, our comprehensive membership survey completed by 6,500 police constables. The results of the survey are currently being discussed with Branch Board Secretaries and Chairmen.

But the results have already triggered further work on how a possible role of 'lead' or 'advanced' constable could be developed and this has triggered off a debate within the NPIA.

Conference, it is important in these times that the CCC takes a campaigning as well as a representative role, especially at a time where tighter budgets will place public services under an even stronger magnifying glass.

The recession will not make our lives easier but that doesn't mean we should give up on reform: the government says it cares about real neighbourhood policing; about greater collaboration between forces; and about reducing the stifling bureaucracy that stunts efficiency.

It is our job as your representatives to hold the government to its pledges. We all know that crime is unlikely to fall in a recession and so we need all of your support in ensuring that we are not expected to work even harder with fewer resources available.

Thank you, Conference. I ask that you accept the Annual Report of the Constables' Central Committee.