

Government is using police as ‘punch bags’

Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper took a side-swipe at Theresa May, labelling her approach to police reform as ‘cack-handed’ and undermining leadership and morale.

Speaking at the Police Federation’s annual conference, Ms Cooper said that the government should stop acting as if police officers are “punch bags” in relation to attacks emanating “from Downing street and the Home Office” about the so-called “police gravy train”. She also said the Home Secretary “had failed to fight her corner” in the spending review.

A survey by Labour, based on police authority plans, shows that the jobs of 12,500 officers will be lost over the next four years, with a further 15,000 job cuts to police staff. In Warwickshire frontline officers are now being used to cover back office jobs and domestic violence units and roads policing units are being squeezed.

“David Cameron and Theresa May made the wrong decisions and the wrong judgements about the future of policing – and I fear it is communities across the country who will pay the price,” Ms Cooper told delegates.

Alex Robertson, chairman of British Transport Police Federation, said the imposition of recommendations from the Hutton and Winsor reports would do nothing for morale. He added: “It is wanton vandalism against police pay and conditions.”

Les Grey, chairman of the Scottish Police Federation, said protecting the budget and police officers would protect the public. Elfyn Llwyd of Plaid Cymru said that ACPO “appear to have an agenda, many of them appear to be in bed with the government on this disastrous plan”.

And Terry Spence, chairman of the Police Federation of Northern Ireland – where two officers have been killed and many injured in the last two years – warned the government not to “take us for granted”, and that while we are “special and different” we are not “sacrificial”.

We need to listen to police, says Ms Cooper

Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper shared her views with *Police* magazine on some of the topical issues facing policing:

Do you believe the cuts to police numbers will impact on levels of crime?

“We know it’s already having an impact on the frontline. The government is taking huge risks in the fight against crime. It’s not what communities want, to lose 12,000 officers [the estimated cuts to numbers]... it’s an attack on leadership and morale because of the way it’s been handled.”

Will crime commissioners bring politics into policing?

“These are American-style police chiefs will have a lot of power in the hands of one person without any of the checks and balances you need. It does put at risk the centuries-old tradition of British policing. That is why there was strong opposition in the House of Lords and now they have ripped the heart out of the Bill it should make the government think again.”

The government is trying to exclude police officers from health and safety legislation. Federation members risk their lives; shouldn’t they be protected?

“It’s important to work with the police – officers who know on a day-to-day basis what protection they need and the risks they take. We should listen to police and how the legal framework works.”

BTP Federation chairman Alex Robertson described the Hutton and Winsor report recommendations as “wanton vandalism”



Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper said the government is taking “huge risks” over crime

