



Metin Enver, Managing Editor

Editorial - October 2007

Robbing Peter to pay Paul?

This month we feature the menace of a rising gun culture, which has seen a steady increase in gun-related violence over the last 10 years. Ironic, as only last month the Metropolitan Police Authority announced they would put on hold further rollout of Taser until they are satisfied how it will be deployed. This despite the wishes of the government, chief officers and the Police Federation to see more frontline officers afforded the protection of a non-lethal force needed to properly police our streets.

But let's not lose heart; there is some good news on the horizon. The Home Secretary has found £50 million new money to give to the service. New money. So, the pay dispute's settled I hear you say.

Regrettably not. No, this new money is for 10,000 handheld devices to cut down on paperwork and keep officers out on the streets.

Don't get me wrong, this should be, and has been, widely welcomed. It appears that Jacqui Smith will actually deliver something that the Federation has been demanding for some time, and previous Home Secretaries have repeatedly promised.

But I do wonder if the timing is such that 140,000 officers in England and Wales will ask is this robbing Peter to pay Paul?

We're awaiting the next stage of the police pay debacle, with the independent Police Arbitration Tribunal hearing set for 2nd November. The Police Federation, together with all the other UK staff associations of the Staff Side of the Police Negotiating Board, has made it clear that the Home Secretary must honour the tribunal's decision. Whatever that may be, the reality is that any pay rise is likely to be for the New Year sales, and not in time for Christmas.

So, I ask myself, at this time when we are in the midst of a pay dispute with the government, seeking an honest days crust for a dangerous days graft, will 10,000 frontline officers be shouting with delight at the new handheld device which allows them more time on the streets? Well I suppose that depends, as the 140,000 officers may prefer the warm and dry comfort of the station if they can't afford to fix a hole in shoes worn out pounding the beat.

Acting Editor: Tina Orr Munro

Managing Editor: Metin Enver

Designer: Lisa Ryszkowska

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

Tel: 0208 335 1000

Fax: 0208 390 2249

E-mail: syreetalund@polfed.org

Subscriptions: Subscriptions@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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