

We heard a little earlier from Sir Menzies Campbell. You had applause, I noticed, when he said ‘bonfire of central targets’, supporting a Royal Commission, but you did not like some of the other things. It will be interesting to hear what happens next because of course, my task now is to introduce to you the Leader of the Opposition, the Rt Hon David Cameron, MP. *[Applause]*

**David Cameron**  
**Leader of the Opposition**

Thank you very much, Nick and can I say it is a great pleasure to be back here in Blackpool and no, I did not come on my bike, though having read your programme, perhaps I should have come on the Royal Train. But thank you for inviting me to speak to your Annual Conference. It is a privilege to be here.

I know that as police officers, when you talk about what you do, you sometimes describe your work as ‘the job’, but we all know that it is no ordinary job. We all ask you, every single day, to do things that most of us would never do, to put yourselves in the front line, to put up with abuse, with aggression and with disrespect, often to put yourselves in danger on our behalf. Sometimes, that has meant police officers making the ultimate sacrifice. We saw that again recently with the tragic death of PC Richard Gray. I want to add my voice to the many tributes paid to PC Gray. Twelve British police officers have died as a result of attacks in recent years. They died for us, the public. That is not ‘a job’. That is duty, dedication, a true vocation, and it deserves respect and gratitude from everyone in this country. *[Applause]*

So we ask a lot of the police and increasingly, too much. You do not need me to tell you how urgent a political priority crime and antisocial behaviour have become. Whatever satisfaction you may get from that better job, the better car, the better house, the better holiday, it disappears pretty quickly when your son comes home from school with a black eye in exchange for his mobile phone. I spent the last two days teaching at a secondary school in Hull. I think I learned rather more than the children I was teaching but the most chilling moment came when children in one class were asked to put up their hands if they had been victim of an assault of a violent crime. Almost every single hand in the class went up. There is nothing that does more to destroy people’s quality of life than crime and the fear of crime. I believe, however, that the entirely appropriate political prioritisation of crime and antisocial behaviour has, in recent years, given rise to a dangerous distortion. There is

total lack of clarity about the responsibilities of the police on one hand and wider society on the other.

We can see how it has happened. If you are a politician, you know the public is concerned about crime, you want to respond to that concern, you want to do something about it, you want to be seen to do something about it. One of the most obvious levers to pull are those marked 'Police' and 'Criminal Justice'. After all, the police forces are something that you control in a way, unlike the social forces that contribute to crime. So you pull and pull and keep on pulling those levers; we have had just over 30 – yes, 30 – Criminal Justice Bills in the last ten years: more laws, more offences, more targets and initiatives, more politicians saying, 'Look at me, I'm tough on crime'. So gradually the perception builds up that fighting crime is simply a question of law enforcement and policing and thus, if crime goes up it is the police who are to blame. The reality is quite different.

Crime, antisocial behaviour, disorder and incivility on our streets are the consequences of a breakdown in society, of a collapse in social responsibility, in the home, in schools, in our culture and values and ultimately, it is you, the police, who are given the responsibility of picking up the pieces of our broken society. If we really want to reduce crime, however, rather than simply respond to it, we cannot go on just picking up the pieces. We have to mend our broken society and that is not your responsibility. We broke our society, all of us, as parents, as citizens, as members of society. We broke it, and we have a shared responsibility with the government, for fixing it. If we sit back and expect the police to do all of the work, we will forever be managing the social problem of crime, rather than solving it. However, just as we are undermining social responsibility by placing too heavy a burden of expectation on the police, we are at the same time – and you have heard a lot of it at this Conference – undermining your professional responsibility by placing too heavy a burden of central management and central direction on the police: targets, direction, inspection, centralisation that takes away your judgment and discretion and undermines your morale and your vocation. The effort to control crime through policing alone ends up by controlling the police too much, making it harder for you to do the job that you want, and we need you, to do.

I want to be absolutely clear today about what I, as Prime Minister, would expect from you and what you should expect from me. I am standing in front of you because I want to see real change in our country – real, lasting, positive change. For years, we have been going completely in the wrong direction. Instead of serious long term analysis that we need of the social breakdown that contributes to crime, we have seen a short term, superficial approach based on the utterly misconceived view that just passing laws and rolling out initiatives can make people good. We have heard of them: light courts, marching jobs to the

cash point, Asbos for unborn children – those are some of the initiatives which, thank Goodness, were never introduced. The problem is that far too many headline grabbing gimmicks were introduced. When it comes to the police and Criminal Justice System, instead of the serious, long term reforms needed to fight crime more effectively, we have seen short term, superficial approaches, which substitute targets, micro management and centralisation for real professional responsibility.

Look at what they have done to policing. There are five public service agreements; five key priorities in the National Policing Plan; another six priorities in the National Community Safety Plan; 23 baseline assessments; 32 statutory performance indicators. Police forces are now overseen or directed by the Home Secretary, the Police Standards Unit, Her Majesty's Inspector of Constabulary, the Audit Commission, the National Police Improvement Agency, ACPO. There are too many top-down bodies interfering with local policing, often competing for the same territory.

Then there are targets – oh boy, are there targets! Targets that conflict with each other; targets that have to be met, even if they relate to crimes that are not a problem in your local area; targets that, as you said in your powerful report published this week, are actually bringing you into conflict with the law abiding majority that you want to serve. Along with the targets have come the paperwork and the reporting and you know that if we do not get rid of the targets, we will never get rid of the paperwork. This top-down approach is completely, damagingly, 180 degrees wrong, and it has to change. [*Applause*]

Let me first spell out what I mean when I talk about fighting social breakdown. I mean a social policy revolution as far reaching and lasting in its positive effects as the economic revolution that the Conservative Party led in the 1980s. It is necessary because social breakdown is the great challenge of our times, just as rescuing our economy was the challenge of two decades ago. You see this, not just as professionals – all of you are not just police officers, you are mothers, fathers, neighbours, friends. You can see that things have gone badly wrong in our society. Family breakdown, drug and alcohol abuse, mental illness, truancy, poor discipline in schools: these are some of the most important causes of crime and they are getting worse, not better. We are bringing up a generation of youngsters, many of whom are simply not equipped to be responsible adults and it is no use just blaming them. We set the rules. We lead by example.

A year ago, I made a speech about young people and crime – the one about hoodies. It has been more misunderstood and misrepresented than anything else I have said. Those three words were words I never said, so let me try again. Aggressive hoodies who threaten the rest of us must be punished. They need to know the difference between

right and wrong and it is our job to tell them. I am a Conservative. I believe in punishment. I believe in deterrents. I believe in the difference between right and wrong. I believe in setting clear boundaries. But what do we really want? A society where more and more children are out of control and a rising tide of crime and punishment? Or do we want those children to behave properly in the first place? If we do, we have to stop the problems before they start and that means making sure that more children grow up in stable and loving homes. You know from your work that there is a context to crime and that context is the truancy, the drugs, the family breakdown, the poor schooling. You know it. You see it in your everyday life. Identifying that context and dealing with it is not soft; it is serious. And politicians who attack me for saying it, even though privately they agree with me, are not tough. They are cynical, they are short term, and they are profoundly wrong.

Do not expect, therefore, the next Conservative government to pass a Criminal Justice Act every five minutes. Do not expect an ever increasing array of offences for you, the police, to uphold, or initiatives to unroll. Instead, expect us to ask society as a whole to address the causes of crime, to focus on social breakdown and the family breakdown that lies at the heart of it, to put in place the proper drug rehab that we so desperately need in this country, to start backing families properly and yes, to back marriage, including through the tax system. We must acknowledge that changing our society for good is not the work of a weekend's headlines, or even a parliamentary term, but the work of a whole generation.

Just as I am clear about society's responsibility for fighting the causes of crime, so too am I clear about the police's responsibility for fighting crime itself. Too much discretion has been taken away from police officers by a system that no longer trusts professionals. Your discretion to bring charges has been removed and it is you who have to deal with the delays in custody, not the CPS. Your discretion to choose how to deal with minor crimes and resolve conflict on the streets has been diminished. You are angry about it and it is local communities that suffer. Police officers used to be street corner diplomats. Now, too often, you are agents of Whitehall. You should be crime fighters, not social workers or form fillers, and that has to change.

Look at the effect of the Human Rights Act. I see that the Home Secretary has now bravely criticised it, having introduced it. Over the last few years, we have seen a series of disgraceful incidents: prisoners being given access to pornography; burglars getting Kentucky Fried Chicken. One chief constable was prevented from publishing 'Wanted' posters for murderers on the run on the grounds that to do so would infringe their human rights. No wonder the public think that the authorities are on the side of the criminal!

Let me pledge this: a key part of our reform for the Criminal Justice System will be to replace the Human Rights Act with something that works. *[Applause]* At the heart of our plans for police reform is my commitment to bring commonsense to law and to policing, restoring discretion to officers, sweeping away the arbitrary national targets and skew performance, leading to police officers going for easy detection of minor crimes. Last year, I said that national targets should be scrapped. In our recent proposals, we argue that detection targets are distorting performance. We call for a far simpler measure of police performance based primarily on levels of crime, not on how well forces are meeting targets.

Like any public service, the police must be accountable but this accountability should be primarily local. After all, police forces grew out of their localities. In my judgment, police authorities are too weak and too invisible to exercise that local accountability, so we plan to replace them with directly elected commissioners – that is commissioners, not elected police chiefs – who will answer to their communities. In doing so, we will of course protect the operational independence of forces. We have a vital duty to prevent the politicisation of policing and that is a duty we will fulfil. Giving officers more discretion and local responsibility, however, is only part of the story.

We also need a police service that can address the most complex challenges facing our law enforcement agencies today – fighting terrorism effectively, tackling serious crime and those incidents that cross border forces. That means either forces collaborating more effectively or a national serious crime force to do the job, but we will not go down the failed route of amalgamations. I am proud of the fact that my party drove the government to a standstill over that issue ...

*[tape turn – no overlap]*

... changing and no organisation can be immune from that change. That is certainly a lesson that we, in the Conservative party, have had to learn. When you look at antiquated IT systems that are not joined up, when you look at processes and paperwork that a modern business would streamline, when you see police officers still doing jobs that a civilian could do, releasing those officers for front line duties, when you look at pensions that are not portable, then there seems to be an overwhelming case for change.

Change is not always easy. In fact, it is frequently pretty tough, but the questions are tough and, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we have to face them directly and face them honestly. Do you really want to work in an organisation where your reward bears little relation to your skills and how much you put into the job? Do you, with all your training, all your experience, really want to do clerical jobs because someone has objected to a civilian doing them? Do you really want to work in an organisation where you cannot move jobs before retirement

because of the impact on your pension? I suspect not. The changes we have proposed to the way police workforces are managed are all intended to produce better trained, better motivated officers, better enabled to do the job.

It would be easy for us to ignore these issues, simply attack the government and choose a quiet life, but that would not do you, me or, more importantly, the public, any good. I have had literally hundreds of communications from police officers, by letter, by email and in private conversation, and I get the same message again and again: 'Please, let us get on with the job'. So, when I talk about reform I emphatically – and I stress this – do not mean more performance measures or national targets. In fact, I mean sweeping those things away.

Here is the deal: we will scrap the unnecessary paperwork like the stock form. We will update and integrate inadequate police IT. We will scrap central targets and interference. We will reduce the number of top-down central bodies attempting to direct policing. We will radically simplify the performance measures. We will restore officer discretion. In return, I want you to agree to the changes we need to build a police force where motivated, committed officers can really succeed.

Last month, the Conservative party's Police Reform Taskforce published a 250 page consultation document on how to improve policing. I know that Jan and her team will be responding to our proposals. Our direction of travel is clear: more local policing, stronger accountability, better performance and reforms to let you do the job but we can only do this with your help. We need to get the detail right. Nick Herbert, my Shadow Minister for Policing, has been here all week. As Gordon Brown might put it: he is here to listen and to learn. One thing Nick and I understand very clearly is that while the police will always have the lead role in the fight against crime, other parts of the public sector must fulfil their responsibilities. Local councils must work in effective partnership with you to develop crime reduction strategies. They cannot just leave it to the police because you are the 'can do' service, and we need to improve the rest of the criminal justice system.

When the police assemble a case, you must have the support and availability of the CPS to take it on. The courts must work properly with the same understanding of local criminality that you have. There must be honesty in sentencing, so that when offenders are brought to justice, they are given a proper sentence. We need a penal system that rehabilitates offenders so you do not just find them back on your doorstep within a few months. That is what you can expect from the next Conservative government.

Let me repeat my offer to the police: you make the changes which will improve police performance, and I will stop the centralisation, the bureaucracy and the political interference

that gets in your way. I will ensure that you have the resources, the strategic direction, the support and, above all, the freedom to deliver effective policing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The essence of any police force is its people, above all, its police officers. That is where most of the resources go. You are the investment which we, society, make to keep us safe. We rely on you, the Thin Blue Line. You swear your oath in the office of constable to cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against people and property.

In turn, we the people, and the politicians, owe you something: our support. As Sir Robert Peel famously said, 'The police are the public and the public are the police'. One officer recently remarked when we were discussing options for change, 'At the end of the day, we all want the same thing'. And so we do. We all want to see a safer society. That means, more professional responsibility for the police, so you can do your job fighting crime and it means more social responsibility from the rest of us, so we do our job and address the long term causes of crime. Committed to our shared objectives, clear about our distinctive responsibilities, let us work together to build a society of which we can be truly proud.

Thank you. [*Applause*]

**Nick Owen:** David, thank you very much indeed. Usual situation, we have lots of questions building up. I emphasise that we are short of time on both sides, so keep the questions sharp, please and I am hoping the answers will be similar.

**Brian Stockman (Sussex):** You said in your speech, 'Police forces are something you sort of control'. You have plans in your proposals for direct entry to Senior Officer Academies. You have referred to directly elected commissioners and Mr Davis has talked about directly elected sheriffs. Do you believe in the independence of the office of constable, so that we investigate without malice or favour things like cash for honours?

**Speaker:** My question is in relation to you saying you are going to take away targets and so on, because the first part of your speech clearly demonstrated your belief that police are not responsible for all crime. You then go on to say you will retain crime rates as a measure of police performance. Why not ask the public what they think? Let's get away from the objective questions that are easy to ask and can be answered by stats, and do a more comprehensive survey of what the public think they are getting from us. That is what our measure should be, what the public get for what they pay for.

**David Cameron:** First, the gentleman from Sussex: do I believe in the independence of the office of constable? Yes, absolutely. I said at the beginning of my

speech, that point about ministers believing they 'sort of' control the police. I was making that point because that is what we need to get away from. This Home Secretary and the last three or four – however many we have had over the last ten years – have increased direct control over the police, from the centre. It is that that I want to change. That is why we want to get rid of the national targets and get rid of some of the top down national bodies. We want to replace that with local accountability and, when it comes to the idea of directly elected commissioners, what is proposed there is simply getting rid of the directly elected police authorities, which nobody has heard of no-one knows how they work, and replacing them with someone who would be clearly identifiable to the public as the means for local accountability.

What I find, when I go round the country talking to police officer after police officer is that they say, 'If we were responding to local concern, there would be far greater emphasis on antisocial behaviour, on visible policing, instead of the things we are being told to do from the centre'. It is that change, above all, that I really want to bring about.

The gentleman who said to ask the public what they think, rather than having specific targets. As I said, we are going to sweep away those targets. Clearly, you need some measures of success and crime rates are a good measure of that, but when you suggest asking the public what they think and respond, I would say Yes, that is the whole point of directly elected commissioners. We would have a way for the public to be able to say to the police more directly, 'This is what we want'. The police would find that incredibly invigorating, instead of the depression of the endless orders coming from above and the feeling you have outlined in your very good report this week, that you are beginning to find targets turning you against the very people you want to serve.

**Speaker:** Mr Cameron, we have seen a lot of changes over the years to our conditions of service as police officers. To name a few things that have been taken away, there are the detectives' allowance, plain clothes allowance and so on. There are over 140,000 police officers who have wives, husbands, partners, other family members, all of whom have a vote. What unequivocal promises can you make us to secure our current conditions of service and ensure that we get better consideration in the future?

**Dave James (Devon and Cornwall):** It is nice of you to have come here this morning and tell us that you love us. I would like to say that I love you but I am not sure I know you well enough yet. When it comes to dealing with you, are we going to find ourselves dragged into an alleyway by your party in the same way we have been in the past, and find ourselves mugged at knife point because you know that we are unarmed?

**David Cameron:** All I can say is that we have put, I think, more effort than any opposition party has probably done in Britain's history into looking at how we can build on Britain's great record of policing, how we can get rid of the targets, how we can give you back discretion, how we can build a police service that we are all incredibly proud of. I have huge admiration and respect for the police. I have worked in the Home Office under Michael Howard as an adviser, at a time when we made some really important changes to our criminal justice system – amending the right to silence, cracking down on offending on bail – that the police had enormous support for. I will always remember, as I said in my speech, the job that the police do for us and you can see from the quality of the work – not all of which you will agree with but these are consultative proposals that you can tell us about – that we take this issue, as I know you do, incredibly seriously.

To the person who asked what clear promise we can make: as you know, there is the Booth review taking place. We are not satisfied it is a proper, independent review. That is clear. *[Applause]* Yes, we have to move on. Edmund Davis was right for its time but we have to look to the future. But there was something in those proposals in the past that we have to remember, that you as police officers give up your right to strike, that you as police officers put yourselves in the front line, that you as officers can be open to vexatious complaints from the public and can be assaulted and abused and so on. That makes your job special and any pay review has to recognise that and understand it. *[Prolonged applause]*

**Ian Leyland (Merseyside):** The service for the last six or seven years, in particular, has lurched from crisis to crisis. We have had amalgamations on, we have more people coming in. They have felt like a live experiment. We are still not clear what their roles are even though they may have a job to do, it has never been clearly explained. The problem is – and from what I have heard from you today – that there is a bit more tinkering and party politics. What we need is a holistic review. We think that that should be a Royal Commission. I have heard Nick Herbert saying he did not agree with that. If it is not a Royal Commission, then what are your alternatives for a strategic review of the right shape of police service, the right numbers, the right staffing, the right rewards? That should not be done piecemeal, it needs to be done together and I would like to hear from you what you have in place of a Royal Commission to give us the confidence that you are taking an overall view of what policing needs today.

**Speaker:** Do you support the introduction of civilian staff custody officers in Thames Valley Police – a quick Yes or No answer.

**David Cameron:** The gentleman from Merseyside: I do not believe that what I am putting forward is tinkering. We have said very clearly what we want to stop – amalgamations; those things we want to scrap – top down targets; and those things we want to change – directly elected police commissioners. And it is a holistic, strategic and well thought through piece of work. I do not believe that a Royal Commission is the right way forward. As Harold Wilson said once, ‘These things take minutes and last for years’. We had one on the House of Lords something like five or six years ago. Has any progress been made? A Royal Commission is often a substitute for well thought through action, rather than a way of delivering it and it is not the right approach. I want us to do the thinking, in Opposition, with you, with Jan and others in the police service, to get this right and to show that we know how to deliver a police service that has more local accountability, less central control, political independence but the freedom to trust in your professionalism. That is at the heart of everything I am saying. You are trained professionals. We, the politicians should, therefore, trust you to get on with the job. That is at the heart of what I am saying.

Civilian staff in custody suites: in parts of the country this has been done – in Sussex, for instance – and it is working, so I would not do that –

**Nick Owen:** I think the question was more specific, about PCSOs –

**David Cameron:** No, it was custody staff.

**Speaker:** It is replacing the sergeant in custody with a civilian staff custody officer. Do you support that or not?

**David Cameron:** There is a role for the private sector in custody suites. The specific issue of the sergeant is a very difficult one that I want to look at carefully because it is absolutely clear, particularly if we are going to give back the police the role of charging, that you have to have a police sergeant. So that is the test that we will be putting in place.  
[Applause]

**Nick Owen:** I am sorry, time just rushes past us.

**Mark Gale (Wiltshire Police):** I am proud to be a police officer working for what your organisation referred to as an inflexible workforce. I regularly have my shifts changed to cover staff shortages. I regularly work overtime to cover staff shortages. We have our rest days cancelled so that senior politicians such as you can come and visit us and go about in complete safety. I really would love to be a flexible person – can you tell me how to achieve that?

**Simon Fuller (South Wales):** Are you going to remove the bureaucratic shackles which prevent us improving performance *before* you expect us to improve performance, or afterwards?

**Steve Garmston (Humberside):** In the history of bureaucracy, one of the major own goals was the introduction of national crime recording standards. Will you commit to looking at these so that we can focus on what we need to focus on?

**David Cameron:** Let me answer those as directly as I can. The officer from South Wales – will we take the bureaucratic shackles off before expecting you to change? In many cases, yes. Let me give you an example. The Stop form that is, as you know a great long form you all have to fill in every time you stop someone on the street – that would go straight away. [*Applause*]

The issue of flexibility – the officer from Wiltshire: of course, police officers have to work incredibly flexibly because you are thrown into difficult situations. You are suddenly taken off to another force area to deal with a major incident. I know and respect that and I completely understand that. But everyone in the police force would recognise that there is some inflexibility within the system, the fact that the only way to get paid more is to serve for longer or to be promoted – that is an inflexibility that teachers do not have now and there is room for greater flexibility. Someone earlier mentioned the issue of direct entry. Nobody is talking about people coming straight into the police service without ever spending any time training as an officer. Of course not, but take one example. We all know we have to build up our Special Branch capability. Are we really saying that talented people coming out of the Army could not be trained just that bit more quickly to get us to help fight the terrorist threat in Special Branch? That is surely not the case and that is the sort of flexibility I would like to see.

The question from the officer from Humberside, the national crime recording standards: I would have to look at that I will ask Nick Herbert, who is going to be here all week, to find you and talk to you about that issue.

**Nick Owen:** Thank you very much.

**Mark Craig (Metropolitan Inspectors):** You acknowledged that crime has a detrimental effect on families, but one group of families that you politicians in general do not include as victims are our families, who do not see us for days on end. I have data of officers working regularly over 80 hours per week and in one case, over 100 hours, whilst

armed. Will you get our police chiefs to enforce the working time regulations of this country and help our human rights? *[Applause]*

**Nick Owen:** Answer that one, please, David!

**David Cameron:** I was transfixed by the leather jacket!

**Nick Owen:** Leather jacket in a moment!

**David Cameron:** Oh dear! *[Laughter]* Obviously, the way we work has a big impact on our families. That applies to every profession and it has to be a matter for your managers and for chiefs to make sure that happens in a way that helps keep families together. This does not all have to be dealt with by top down regulation – that would be my approach.

**Mickey Roberts:** If you are intent on reforming the police, you have mentioned government targets and you have mentioned bureaucracy and IT systems. Can I suggest in your manifesto you have to look at the way that we are led by our managers in ACPO. *[Applause]* The majority of bureaucracy and the IT systems come about because of bad management. A lot of the performance things are bad management. Are you going to come up with a system of monitoring them? Because at the moment, we are literally lions led by donkeys.

**David Cameron:** One of the advantages of moving from police authorities to directly elected police commissioners is that chief officers would have to be more accountable. If you are dealing with a diverse range of people on a police authority, it is easier for them to be captured by the chief officer and convinced that everything in the garden is rosy. If you have a directly elected individual who is there to call the chief officer and the force to account, we can see from evidence in other countries that does pull them up and makes sure that they deliver on the things that the public wants. And that will make a big difference in terms of accountability. That is why some of the chief officers are not totally keen on it but it is the right idea. It has worked in parts of America, where they have seen huge cuts in crime and great public confidence in the police and we can deliver that revolution here as well.

**Nick Owen:** There have been a lot of calls for this session to be extended, but I am afraid Mr Cameron has to go at 11.00, so we have to curtail it. The gentleman with the nice, quiet jacket at the back, but bracketed with the red leather jacket as well!

**Jerry Laxton (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea):** We have heard that the Booth report has been put together by Labour supporters. No doubt your report has been put together by your supporters. If you are ignoring the independence of a Royal Commission, will you take the 'Royal' away from Kensington and Chelsea as well?

**Sue Kelly (Essex):** A bit of a frightening colour for you, Mr Cameron, isn't it?  
[Laughter] [Applause]

**David Cameron:** People wearing red in Essex never makes me happy!

**Sue Kelly:** I'll remember that. You mentioned several times today and obviously in the document you produced recently, about taking politics out of policing. Yet you have suggested that these commissioners would be elected locally and no doubt they would be of one political persuasion or another – maybe red or blue or orange? So I would just remind you that we are answerable to the Crown and, at the moment, Her Majesty the Queen is our boss. I would like you to review that suggestion perhaps and look at another way because we feel that we are answerable only to the Crown and no politics should be put in policing. [Applause]

**David Cameron:** Thank you. To answer first the officer from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea: no, I do not want to see that come off and I tell you why I think do not think your comments are right. This report is not being written just by a bunch of Conservative supporters. It is based on many hundreds of conversations with police officers up and down the country. Nick Herbert and his team have made a real effort to see all the different forces, all the various parts of the police service, to talk to all ranks, not just chiefs but to spend a lot of time with constables, with sergeants, with inspectors as well. That is the work we are doing. I do not want to make an easy pledge of a Royal Commission that I can fulfil in two years time if we in the election, then wait for another three years while it reports then another three while we implement it. This work is too important to put off. Fighting crime, making our society safer, building confidence in the police force: that has to happen now. I do not want to wait. But please, work with us. That is why Nick has been here all week. That is why we are really committed to getting this right. Work with us, and make sure we get these proposals right, so we can put them in place properly in office.

In answer to the question from the officer from Essex in the red jacket: of course, the point about accountability is right but today there is police accountability through police authorities. All I am suggesting is replacing those police authorities, which virtually nobody has heard of or knows how they work, with an elected individual. It is the same powers they would have but it would be a more effective way. It is not a massive change, therefore, in terms of putting a politician in charge of the police force. That is not what I am suggesting.

It is about accountability and the key is this: all of you, as officers, want to serve the people who are on the ground, who are living in your towns, cities and villages. You want to be accountable to them. What we have had in this last decade is far too much orders from above and officers feeling they have to be accountable to the latest set of targets. I have run out of the times I have been told by officers, 'I am having to arrest people to meet the target for sanction detections. What I want is to be visible on the streets, dealing with antisocial behaviour and crime in the way that I know best. I want to be a professional, accountable to local people'. That is what I want to give you, the police service. That is what all this is about. But please, work with us to make sure that we get it right. Thank you. [Applause]

**Jan Berry:** I just wanted to thank you for coming along today. The people in this hall, the people we represent, all try to be really professional. Sometimes we do not get it quite right, but we are there to learn and to do a better job next time. We have worked really hard with Nick and his team to make sure of the document you put together and we should probably be flattered that there are so many contributions in that book from the Police Federation. At the moment, we are working to put together a reply but again, we will do that with Nick and with David Davis.

My thanks to you for coming here today.

**David Cameron:** A pleasure, thank you. [Applause]

**Speaker:** I am looking at the clock and I know that you have been sitting on very comfortable chairs for two hours, so would you like a 20 minute break?

[Break]