



John Tully, vice-chair of the Met Police Federation

Medals of honour

going to a serving constable. The recognition of distinguished service is to be applauded; however, the list smacks of disproportionality.

Every year we hear about courageous acts, performed selflessly in the face of great personal danger, by officers who have been nominated for the Police Bravery Awards. Yet we hardly ever, if at all, see this heroism recognised through the national honours system.

The Prime Minister and Home Secretary continually make statements praising the “best police service in the world”, and the government’s stance on honours is that they should be representative. It is well past time that more rank and file officers who put themselves in harm’s way to protect the public should be honoured.

Without detracting from the awards made this year, it was predictable that the smallest group within the police service (ACPO) would attract biggest share of the accolades. This is so disappointing. It should be remembered that the honours system has been opened up and any individual can start the nomination process. So if the Home Office and or senior police managers will not nominate more, local federations may wish to take a hand in the process by generating nominations themselves, so that in future perhaps more of those unsung heroes of everyday policing will be recognised with an honour in either the New Year or the Birthday lists.

This year we again see the award of many New Year’s Honours to those who are deemed to have done outstanding service to the nation. But of the 51 members of the UK ‘policing family’ who have received awards, only five are from the federated ranks.

Let’s focus on one award in particular – the Queen’s Police Medal. To establish its origins we have to go back to January 23, 1909, when, at about 10.30 in the morning, two anarchist robbers attacked a wages delivery at a factory in Tottenham, North London.

In stark contrast to the award of the original medals, which were for gallantry, the great majority have this year been awarded to chief officers, with only five going to members of the federated ranks and just one going to a serving constable... the list smacks of disproportionality.

What then ensued became known as The Tottenham Outrage. The gunmen were initially chased on foot by two police constables – PCs William Tyler and Albert Newman – who came from Tottenham Police Station. Eventually, after more than two hours and a pursuit covering six miles, and having discharged an estimated 400 rounds, the robbers both shot themselves dead to evade capture. In their wake, 25 people lay injured, two fatally, including PC Tyler, who had been shot in the head. The incident was so momentous that it resulted in the establishment of a new medal, the King’s Police Medal. The current version of this medal – the Queen’s Police Medal – was introduced by Royal Warrant in 1954.

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