



Clive Chamberlain is chairman of Dorset Police Federation

Tell us, Jacqui; was it worth it?

Federation views

The annual Police Federation conference is hosted by my force, Dorset, this year. Bournemouth will provide the backdrop for the conference that is an important opportunity for the Federation to showcase the work that it's involved in on behalf of our members.

This year is, however, likely to be dominated by pay, which will hang over the auditorium like a rotting corpse continuing to fester until the Government recognises it has made a terrible mistake and rectifies it. There is also a danger that it could overshadow anything positive that the Home Office may wish to highlight.

“The Government has often spoken of zero tolerance; I think they have zero credibility. And that will be the problem facing Jacqui Smith at conference. How can we believe anything she says?”

It is traditional for the Home Secretary to address the Police Federation conference and I hope the current Home Secretary, Jacqui Smith, continues with that tradition, but I also think Prime Minister Gordon Brown should accompany her. As far as I am concerned, they have both behaved like Victorian mill owners over the police pay issue.

What we mustn't forget is, this isn't about being paid more money; this is about receiving in full a pay increase that was determined under an independent pay review body and taken to independent arbitration. The Government has often spoken of zero tolerance; I think it has zero credibility. And that will be the problem facing Jacqui Smith at conference. How can we believe anything she says?

She may have hoped that the pay issue would go away, but when you're dealing with policing, a profession where integrity counts for everything, that was never going to happen. I'd have to ask Jacqui Smith, was it

worth it? We've had our battles with Home Secretaries in the past, but I cannot recall a time when a Minister was so mistrusted and disliked by the 140,000 police officers of England and Wales.

There are other areas too that have caused concern among officers. The Government came in on 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime' ticket, but their policy of setting offenders free early and encouraging judges not to pass custodial sentences is tantamount to aiding and abetting the criminal fraternity!

Besides pay, there are other issues that will be dealt with at conference. The recent Flanagan review was a worrying publication that caused me to wonder if the author had been the comedian Bud Flanagan, and not Sir Ronnie Flanagan. The current civilianisation programme which it supports will lead to fewer officers and the continued de-skilling of the service. If police staff were to go on strike, I doubt there would be many officers able to step into a SOCO's shoes or cover a control room, and there are considerable implications for that. All in all, it looks set to be a busy conference this year.

Finally I would like to pay tribute to Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation, whose last conference this will be as she is retiring this month. Jan has always displayed a sharp intellect and tenacity that will be greatly missed within the Federation. She has also displayed tremendous integrity which, I have to say, is in sharp contrast to many of the politicians she has had to deal with. I wish her well.