



Tony Judge

Is overtime the next target?

During the London Mayoral election, David Cameron and Boris Johnson cited the Metropolitan Police as a target for cost-cutting, which is rather at odds with the Tory pledge of an all-out attack on crime and disorder.

Other voices in police authority and Home Office circles have been talking about drastic reductions in overtime costs, with no loss of police services, by reverting to the old system of time off rather than payment.

In my time as a young constable payment for overtime was almost unheard of. The regulations provided for payment if, after two months had elapsed, time off had not been granted. In practice, supervisors ensured that this did not happen. If an officer had time owed, he would be ordered to take it off half way through a night shift, or at the beginning of early turn, times which caused the least inconvenience to the force. The officer's wishes did not come into it.

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It took the Federation many years to secure payment as the norm. It also took the Federation many years to get the working week reduced from 48 to 40 hours. The reduction was negotiated at a time when most of the urban forces found it difficult to recruit extra constables. Officers in these forces became accustomed to getting the extra money on a regular basis in their pay packets, and police authorities did not mind paying the extra money because it was far cheaper than hiring extra officers.

After the Sheehy Report, inspectors negotiated a ‘professional salary’. They surrendered payment for overtime in return for a significant increase in annual pay. This did not please a minority of the inspector ranks who were used to hefty regular overtime payments, but the majority found themselves better off at first.

However, the solemn assurances of Home Office Ministers and ACPO that there would be no abuse of the

system were soon forgotten, and the inspectors have had to wage a long campaign to oblige chief officers to observe the requirements of the European Working Time directive.

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Mounting Olympia

It cost the Met Police £746,000 to protect the Olympic flame from a few Tibetan protesters. The spiralling cost of London 2012 has taken the gloss from the rejoicing when London outbid Paris. It's a far cry from the 1908 Olympiad, immortalised by the dramatic climax to the marathon. That was the year when the City of London won the gold medal in the Tug of War.

There is a link between the Police Federation and the 1908 Games. They were due to take place in Rome, but after an earthquake in 1906 were relocated to London.

Well-known athlete, William Henry Grenfell, a close friend of the future King George V, assured him that he could stage the Olympics at no cost to the public purse. Together with other wealthy sponsors, he did so. A decade later, when he was Baron Desborough, he was brought in to sort out the problems in the police service following the upheavals of 1918-19. The resulting report elevated the police to the top of the public service pay league, brought the service under central direction, and established the Police Federation.

What would Lord Coe, and London council tax payers, give for such a philanthropist today?

Tony Judge has been involved with the Police Federation for 50 years. He was the youngest police officer on the Joint Central Committee and founded *Police* magazine in 1968.