



Police Federation Response to David Cameron's speech on Health and Safety

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The following statement by Paul Lewis, who leads on health and safety for the Police Federation of England and Wales, is in response to David Cameron's speech on health and safety and reported in national newspapers on 1 December 2009:

The Police Federation of England and Wales is disappointed with the approach taken by Conservative leader, David Cameron, towards health & safety within policing. From an article in the Daily Mail newspaper yesterday (1 December) it is clear Mr Cameron has been caught up in the myth of health & safety, rather than the reality.

In October this year, the deliverers of policing signed up to an HSE Document entitled 'Striking the Balance between Operational and Health & Safety Duties in the Police Service'. This included all front line deliverers – the press release at the time from ACPO and HSE can be seen below and identifies that the approach by the Conservative Party is out of touch with modern day policing, and appear to be stuck in an era of Dickensian attitudes where they are happy and contented to sacrifice the lives of police officers, support staff and members of the community to win votes:

Judith Hackitt CBE, Chair, HSE said today:

"HSE and senior police officers want to stamp out the myth that health and safety duties prevent the police from doing their duty. Police work is unique in that it involves decision making and risk taking in fast moving situations. This statement will assist senior police officers in balancing the risks involved in their duties to fight crime and protect the public, while meeting their health and safety obligations to their own employees and the public."

ACPO lead for workforce development, Peter Fahy, Chief Constable of Greater Manchester Police said:

"Policing is a very specialised profession and good health and safety practices are vital to the welfare of our staff and the public. Our officers find themselves in situations every day that require them to make tough decisions in often volatile and fast moving situations. They often perform many acts of bravery

and heroism. And that will not change. We cannot foresee every situation or ensure every officer is trained for everything. We are pleased therefore that HSE has recognised this unique aspect of the job and the complex nature of the challenges our officers face. Our officers need the best information, equipment, and training to ensure they make the best possible decisions to protect not just the public, but themselves.”

The ‘claim culture’ that society has evolved into has been driven by insurance companies who are using health and safety as an excuse to not pay out any or restrict claims and this is an area the Conservative Party should be focusing on. Mr Cameron and the Conservatives really need to acknowledge they operate on double standards; it is with interest that a number of politicians including members from his own party recently entered a world conker championship outside the House of Lords to highlight the that H&S is not a killjoy, but there to stop people getting killed and injured. Sound bite politics works in both ways.