



Jan Berry's response to the Home Secretary's Christmas message

20.12.07

I do not usually have need to respond to the Home Secretary's Christmas message, but I simply cannot contain my disgust at the merriment in Jacqui Smith's words to the UK's 170,000 police officers during the peak of a dispute over a fair pay settlement. Although I dare say the words were drafted by the same advisors who offered such bad counsel on pay and landed her in the hot water she is currently in.

It does seem the Home Secretary is determined to twist the knife even further considering the current plight of serving officers this Christmas time.

She makes swift mention of how impressed the Home Office is with our commitment to our duties so far this year. However, not so impressed as to ratify the pay award we not only deserve but was independently decided through arbitration.

We do not need reminding of the dangers police officers put themselves in every day to protect the public by a Home Secretary whose message at this time can only be described as thoughtless and patronising. Police officers continually brave the daily challenges of fighting crime but are left feeling disheartened, disrespected and betrayed by the government's recent decision. If we were really as valued as her message suggests then the right and honourable thing to do would have been to honour the arbitration decision and back date our pay to 1st September.

The next few months will indeed be even more challenging for us as we prepare to not only fight against criminals but also to fight on for a fair pay deal. We must remember this battle is not just about a worthy pay increase but is more about a relationship between the government and police which should be built on trust. The police service no longer has any faith or trust in Jacqui Smith as a fair or even informed decision maker. She may well believe that signing her name to a joyous festive greeting can right all the recent wrongs and in that case she really is as far removed from the views of the police as we expected.

Unfortunately the Home Secretary should expect nothing less than a frosty response from a frustrated and angered police service.