



Metin Enver, Managing Editor

Editorial - March 2010

March scare?

March is usually the month we leave behind the gloom associated with the cold, dark winter and look towards the cheerfulness of spring. But I'm afraid that Professor Roger Seifert's feature in this month's *Police* magazine brings little cheer about future prospects for the police service.

To further compound the issues Professor Seifert raises - force mergers, police officer cuts and greater civilianisation - there were revelations last month of a National Policing Improvement Agency paper which looked at how a reduction of 28,000 police officers would impact on the service in the next ten years. Quite how this body dare call itself a policing improvement agency when it raises such lunacy as this is quite beyond me.

The national Police Federation chairman, Paul McKeever, was absolutely right to condemn the plans, making clear that to lose police officer numbers on such a huge scale would damage the resilience of the police to react to unplanned large scale events and have a detrimental impact on the quality of service provided to the public.

Perhaps we could be more forgiving of this misunderstanding if it was some master plan being poorly devised by Whitehall bureaucrats, but it is our policing leaders who are at the heart of these suggestions. Whether they are key modernisers operating in the name of the Association of Chief Police Officers or past and present senior officers at the National Policing Improvement Agency, they are sworn police officers nonetheless.

These individuals talk the talk about the value of the independent Office of Constable and yet seem ready to sell it off as soon as tough financial decisions need to be taken. Then they wonder why the Police Federation views workforce modernisation with some suspicion. It's not for fear of realising there may be benefits in changing some of the workforce in some areas of policing, it's the fear that you give an inch and the modernisers take a mile.

The Police Federation has long called for an independent review and public debate about policing to decide what the public want and who should be doing it. With a new government in the offing let's finally stop skating round the edges and hope they have the courage to implement one.

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