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2020 vision

The Inspectors' Central Committee has the theme of 2020 vision for its conference in May this year. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century we are reflecting on the past and preparing ourselves for what promises to be another decade of great change.

In 1999 I became an inspectors' federation representative three years after promotion. By then I was feeling the pinch. Under yet another reorganisation we went from 11 inspectors to eight. We were told "this is more efficient" and "there will be no drop in performance". The reality was that opportunities for development shrank, it became more difficult to book time off and my working arrangements were altered on a weekly basis. In my frustration I became a federation rep and attended my first ever conference at Blackpool in 1999.

What I did not realise was that between 1993 and 1999 the number inspectors and chief inspectors nationally fell by over 10 percent. It may have been cheaper for the force but it came at a price- and that price was to the well being of the inspecting ranks. I looked for guidance on what my conditions of service now were, only to find something saying I should be given "reasonable notice" on when I was required to be at work, something else that said I was not expected to "work excessive" hours and not more than before and something else saying I should not work any "more hours" that I did before 1994, and that was it.

Although inspector numbers, (but not chief inspector) have recovered to pre-1994 levels, the inspecting ranks across the land still have little or no idea of what is expected of them, and more importantly, neither do their managers. It is inconceivable that over 15 years later, there is no single agreed document that spells this out to one and all.

This is why the ICC has chosen this as its main objectives for 2010. With the changes currently taking place in the work place, and let me be clear workforce modernisation is a euphemism for change, driven by a desire to save money our ranks are vulnerable. We have seen Surrey and Norfolk announce large cuts in inspector and above ranks to save money. These forces

must realise that by so doing the ability of the force to deliver a service that meets public satisfaction is severely reduced. The work will not go away just because you remove the worker. Performance will either tumble or even more pressure will be applied to those left, and this will have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of those officers.

We seek clear and consolidated guidance, for the benefit of the inspecting ranks and their managers to set out in clear terms exactly what is and can be expected of the inspecting ranks. We do not seek to alter those conditions but simply to bring clarity and understanding on both sides.