



Photography: Police Federation

‘A determining moment’

Thousands protest against government betrayal

Fifteen thousand was the number Federation officials had predicted would turn up. There were rumours there could be as many as 17,000. In the end, 22,500 police officers from across England and Wales took to the streets on January 23 to march in protest over their treatment by the government.

A column of marchers over a mile long, many donning the white caps calling for fair pay for the police, walked slowly and with dignity through the streets of Westminster.

The marchers were led by senior Federation representatives and joined by politicians including David Ruffley, shadow minister for Police Reform, and mayoral candidate and former senior officer, Brian Paddick.

But the day wasn't about the big names in policing. It was about the thousands upon thousands of officers who wanted to make their feelings about the pay offer known.

For many the journey had already begun as they left forces as far away as Cumbria at 2am to show their

contempt for the decision by the Home Secretary not to properly ratify the Police Arbitration Board's ruling to pay officers 2.5% backdated to September.

One group of Devon and Cornwall officers, led by DC Gary Seaton of the Special Branch, cycled 170 miles from Exeter to London to register their protest. Steve Tovaglairi, chairman of the Devon and Cornwall police federation said the trip had been arranged at short notice. "Gary and his colleagues feel very strongly on how the Home Secretary has treated police officers over this issue and he wanted to show their support in some way."

A group of officers from Cornwall, marching behind the Cross of St Piran – a white cross on a black background – which has been adopted as the Cornish flag, had spent the best part of five hours on the road to get to Hyde Park ready for the off. Colleagues from the north of the country endured similar long journeys, but remained in a determined mood. One north east officer told *Police*: "I just hope that when they see how many

people have turned out today, the government'll realise how strongly everyone feels about this. It may not make a difference this time, but we've got to make sure they never do it again!"

For many officers it was the first time they had ever joined in a march and were perhaps more use to policing them than taking part in them.

One Met officer with 28 years service said on the day: "Because we aren't able to strike then this is the only

way we can really get our point across."

Those on the march expressed little surprise at the massive turn out of their colleagues.

Met officer Paul Fitzpatrick took part in the march and rally before going into work on late turn. "We've had public meetings before, but nothing on this scale. I don't think the march will solve the problem – the government's position is far too entrenched at the moment – but this is still important to show how we feel."



Photography: PA Photos



Above: Devon and Cornwall cyclists arrive
Below: Service at the Police Memorial

Above: White caps and placards fill the streets
Below: Marching to the beat



Photography: Anderson Photography/top right



Photography: Police Federation



Photography P14: Police Federation

Above: Public support



Above: Chariman and General Secretary led the march

Among those that joined the march were a number of Scottish police officers whose pay deal has been backdated to September. PCs Stewart Ferguson and Bill Shearer were among a group of 30 Strathclyde officers on one flight down from Glasgow to London, and PC Shearer said there was strong support for the

officer who, while off-duty, put out the flames and then detained one of the terrorists who drove a car bomb into the arrivals hall of Glasgow Airport in July last year.

The march culminated in a rally at a conference centre in Westminster where Jan Berry, chairman of the Police



Above: David Ruffley MP joins the march

officers amongst colleagues north of the border. “As far as I’m concerned, officers in Scotland are 100 per cent behind this demonstration,” said Pc Shearer. “Yes, the pay deal has been honoured in Scotland,” added Pc Ferguson, “but we’re all doing the same job, so we should all be getting the same deal – it’s that simple.” And Pc Ferguson is an obvious example of just how varied and dangerous that job can be; it was this



Above: Surrey Sgt Paul Green takes to the river

Federation of England and Wales in a rousing speech, called the day a ‘determining moment’ in the history of policing.

“I never doubted you would turn out in your thousands but your presence on the streets of London today conducting a dignified protest is a turning point for the police service and a historical event that will never be forgotten.”