



Tony Judge

Yes, Minister!

By devaluing the award of the Police Arbitration Tribunal, Jacqui Smith followed a path trodden by previous Home Secretaries. Jim Callaghan once told the Police Federation's conference: "Arbitration is like the atomic bomb; the fact that it exists influences events." As the Federation's negotiator, he wiped the floor with the police authorities at the very first arbitration hearing in 1955, securing a pay increase that outstripped the official wages index by 40 per cent. The Tribunal wanted to backdate its award. The Tory Home Secretary, Gwyllim Lloyd George, said "no".

Callaghan mobilised back-benchers on both sides and the government was forced to give way. He repeated the trick a few years later, when the Federation was fighting for special awards to the dependants of officers who were murdered on duty or accidentally killed whilst taking a special risk. The Government tried to rush through a regulation that gave a lump sum to the widows of murdered officers, but nothing for accidental deaths. Thanks to Callaghan, and a mass lobby by angry Federation members, he was forced to concede.

When "Sunny Jim" became Home Secretary, he was the poacher turned gamekeeper, vetoing undermanning awards to several forces.

Last month, Cabinet papers, released under the "30-year" rule, showed how Callaghan, as Prime Minister in the 70s, refused to let his Home Secretary, Merlyn Rees, do a deal with the Federation, when pay negotiations ran up against a statutory government pay policy. Rees and the Federation secretary, the late Joe Martucci, worked out a compromise that would have given the police around 15 per cent. Callaghan vetoed it. He wrote to Rees saying he would resign rather than give way to the Federation. In the end, he was forced to pass the pay issue to the Edmund Davies Committee, which gave the police a pay rise three times larger than the one Callaghan had rejected.

When the Tories returned to power in 1979, their first action was to pay the second instalment of the Edmund Davies pay award a year earlier, which made Willie Whitelaw a hero with the police. Alas, he lost that reputation when he insisted on raising police pension contributions from 7 to 11 per cent, so that he could

argue that a 10 per cent pay rise, payable under the Edmund Davies formula, was really only 6 per cent, and therefore within the incomes policy.

When Douglas Hurd became Home Secretary, he vetoed a negotiated agreement that would have given modest pension increases to a small group of elderly police widows who had been unable to benefit from improvements granted over the years, and were existing, in the case of a constable's widow, on £1.40 a week. Hurd's feeble excuse that the agreement, which was costed at under £500,000 a year, might have repercussions on other public pensions schemes. He rejected pleas from all sides of the House. Hurd went on to anger the service further when he tried to exclude injured police officers from the provisions of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme. Parliament forced him to concede, but with bad grace. Later on, Hurd intervened in a dispute over rent allowance. He warned the arbitration tribunal that he would veto any decisions which added to the overall costs of the allowance. To their credit, the arbitration tribunal refused to be bullied, but it made no difference. A new Home Secretary, David Waddington, promptly vetoed its award. Thus, Waddington became the second Home Secretary to be given the "silent treatment" at the Federation conference. Given these precedents, it is hardly surprising that Home Office officials advised Jacqui Smith that she could get away with anything. After all, what could the police do about it?

Tony Judge has been involved with the Police Federation for 50 years. He was the youngest police officer on the Joint Central Committee and founded *Police* magazine in 1968.