



Tony Judge

Flanagan – scourge of bureaucracy, or same old flannel?

Just before that much loved comic, Bud Flanagan, died in 1968, he recorded *Who do you think you are kidding?* I am tempted to ask the same question of old Bud's namesake, Sir Ronnie Flanagan, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

Home Secretaries and chief officers have been going on about the red tape that strangles police effectiveness for the past 30 years, but the mountains of bumph grow and grow, and police resilience and quality of service go down and down. The idea that the chief HMI, chief officers, and scrutinisers of this, that and the other will banish all the bumph is frankly laughable. What is the betting that their first step will be to set up a new HQ department for 'Bureaucracy Reduction'?

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Try this test; get hold of a current edition of the *Police & Constabulary Almanac*. Compare it with any edition from the 1950s or 60s, an era of high detections. Note how few officers in those days were 'non-operational' and then count today's kaleidoscope of departments for 'this, that and the other'. Then you begin to understand why today's police service has lost the plot.

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the service, but box-ticking has been adopted with enthusiasm by senior officers who benefit, career-wise and financially, from achieving objectives that are as irrelevant as the indiscriminate bombing by air forces in World War II.

Meanwhile, ministers and chiefs insist that crime and disorder are down. Joe Public doesn't buy it, and neither does the thin blue line.

Safety first?

Chief Constable Frank Whiteley defended his 'single crewing' policy when it was challenged at last month's annual meeting of Northumbria Police Federation. He said that if he was provided with evidence that double crewing works better, he would "bite your hand off for it".

Why not try it in reverse, Frank? Send out your PCSO's on their own, and see what happens.

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.