



Tony Judge

What price loyalty, Mr Brown?

Yet again, the Police Federation is confronting an obdurate government that seems determined to override any arbitration award above the below-inflation level laid down for the public sector by Gordon Brown. This means that the police are fighting for the same objective as the trade unions that are lining-up to take, in the words of last month's decision at the TUC conference, 'co-ordinated' industrial action, including strikes.

There are, of course, certain distinctions that prevent the Police Federation from making common cause with the public sector unions. Some unions have members working in the service who could be picketing police stations even as you read these words. Not only are police forbidden to strike, or to take any action that could be construed as disobedience to lawful orders, there are penal sanctions awaiting any individuals who cause 'disaffection' among the police.

This was the crucial principle that exercised Lord Edmund Davies's inquiry into the police in 1978. His Committee's report said that the absence of the right to strike was 'a serious deprivation' of the rights of any worker, adding that it was essential that the police should not suffer from the absence of the power to strike. It added that the Committee's very generous pay award reflected the absence of the right to strike. Lord Davies clearly did not anticipate a situation in which a government would declare its intention to ignore an arbitration award even before the case had been heard.

In fact, the Edmund Davies' pay standards have been amended, to the detriment of the service, on several occasions since 1978. The Sheehy Inquiry set up by the Tory Government was openly contemptuous of the Edmund Davies report. Then, in the immediate aftermath of the Sheehy Report, Michael Howard blew the good ship Edmund Davies out of the water when he insisted on the abolition of housing allowances and other fringe benefits. These decisions dismayed the service at the time, but the reaction was mild compared with the anger that is evident,

following Gordon Brown's diktat on public service pay. But in the big picture, this government will not be concerned about angry police officers who, come what may, will do their duty. The real spectre that haunts Ministers is the same as that which destroyed Jim Callaghan's government thirty years ago; rubbish in the streets, the unburied dead, and anarchy in the hospitals.

Promises, promises....

Watching the TUC Congress on TV last month, I was amused to see the commuters' champion, Bob Crow of the RMT union, striding to the rostrum to call for mass union support for the Prison Officers' Association's motion to restore their legal right to strike. He called for concerted action to support the POA, and the delegates gave him a huge ovation. I suspect that comrade Bob is not too familiar with the history of his own union. Back in 1919, the National Union of Police (NUPPO) and Prison Officers, a union affiliated to the TUC, called on its brothers to support its strike against the Police Act 1919, which outlawed the police and prison officers' union. The only trade union to pledge its unreserved support for the police and the prison warders, was the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR). When NUPPO went on strike, how many NUR members came out in solidarity with the coppers and screws? You've guessed it – none. My advice to the POA is; don't put your trust in your brothers' promises.

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.