

Strike threat over pay cut

Officers could take to the 'picket lines' over threats to their pay packets, warned Jan Berry, chairman of the Police Federation.

Police officers at the Federation's annual conference in Blackpool had already cast a vote to say that around 77 percent of constables would like to 'revisit the right to strike' when Mrs Berry fired the warning shot to Home Secretary John Reid.

A report commissioned by the government into police pay, *Fair Pay for Police* by Sir Clive Booth, has suggested changes to the way police pay is calculated and effectively means officers are facing pay cuts.

Branding the move as 'scandalous', Mrs Berry told the Home Secretary in her keynote speech, 'don't be surprised if 140,000 police officers start demanding the same industrial rights that others enjoy'.

She added: "Personally I believe it would be a tragedy for policing if police officers were ever forced to go on strike. So let me reassure you, it's the last thing police officers want. But push them any further, and the last thing they want might just become their only option."

Officers are facing changes to their pay which means this year it will be frozen at two percent, linked to a number of public sector workers, instead of the private sector, which took into account their unique status, such as the fact they sign away the right to strike.

Mrs Berry said: "Home Secretary, the prospect of police picket lines is something I never thought was imaginable, let alone possible. We take our duties seriously and responsibly. We put ourselves in the line of fire; we give our time willingly and we're never off duty. All we are asking for is a fair reward."

Home Secretary John Reid said: "I've made no secret of how tight the financial situation will be in the coming years. I can't change that, and neither can my successor."

Call for an 'independent review' of police service

The Police Federation has demanded a Royal Commission or independent review into the 'crisis' in the police service.

Speaking on the last day of the Federation's annual conference, Alan Gordon, vice-chairman, said it was essential that the future of policing was addressed in an independent and authoritative manner.

A Royal Commission that would investigate 'policing in the round', including rank structure, sanction detections being driven by targets and resilience would be the best way forward, he told delegates.

However, if this could not be secured, Mr Gordon suggested all stakeholders including ACPO and the Superintendents' Association, should work with the Federation to carry out an independent review.

"What we have been seeing is a catalogue of reviews, most of which have been subject to political interference and spin, we need a totally independent look at policing and how it is going to be delivered. What functions society wants us to deal with and what functions society would want agencies to deal with."

Mr Gordon warned that in the absence of enthusiasm from bodies such as ACPO, the Federation would have to consider undertaking a review on its own which could run into millions of pounds.

He added: "If they refuse to come on board with us [stakeholders], if we are forced to go it alone the first criticism will be that this is not independent because the Police Federation is paying for it."

Over the coming months, the Federation will appoint a project manager to put together a business case for a review. Consultation will take place with membership and branch boards and a decision on whether to proceed will be made in September.

Jan Berry dubbed police pay cuts as 'scandalous'



Photography: Andrew Carruth

Alan Gordon: an independent review is needed



Photography: Andrew Carruth