

September 2011

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View from the Chair

Our utmost admiration goes to the officers who policed the riots across England. Their bravery, fortitude and commitment demonstrated to the public the best qualities of the finest police service in the world. The gratitude of the communities we serve was evident in the support officers received from numerous quarters. Officers in many parts of the country even found themselves being applauded as they patrolled the streets. They richly deserved that applause.

How different from the public response was the reaction of Government ministers who came back from their holidays seeking to claim they had resolved the worst rioting on the streets of England in over 100 years. During the riots people died, families were burnt out of their homes and thousands of businesses were damaged. Let us be clear. The cessation of the riots had nothing to do with a few politicians eventually finding their way back to their desks. The rioting was stopped by tens of thousands of police officers bravely putting their lives on the line for their communities. Hundreds of our colleagues were injured and our thoughts are with them as are our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

These riots were predictable. At the Police Federation Conference in 2010 I delivered an address to The Home Secretary highlighting the real likelihood of disorder as we moved into more difficult economic times. Although the catalyst couldn't be predicted, the changing social environment could, as could the likely fractures in society. The response from the Home Secretary was clear. She roundly criticised the suggestion that disorder might occur and labelled concerns as scaremongering. Despite the criticism we received we were undeterred. We tried to assist Government again this May at the Police Federation Conference. We addressed The Home Secretary regarding the obvious and increasing likelihood of disorder. We even played a video montage of recent riots with the tune, 'I predict a riot' to really drive home our concerns based on our decades of policing experience. The Government's response was to wholly disregard us.

Since the riots the Government seems to have wanted to speak and listen to every-one except those who actually predicted the riots were likely to occur. I cannot explain why they have taken this stance but I can say that their active opposition to any suggestion that disorder might increase and the lack of measures put in place to mitigate the likelihood of that disorder resulted in catastrophic failure by Government.

Since the rioting Government has been trying to show that it's in control. The riots were caused by gangs the Prime Minister asserted. Yet a few days later the Home Secretary said that gangs weren't the problem. Eventually a more measured response began to emerge from Government. The underlying problem is the failing criminal justice system Ken Clarke is now firmly stating. Three out of four rioters had previous convictions, many for serious offences. In 2009 at The Police Federation Conference I warned government of the revolving door criminal justice system. To try and make the point stick we even came up with a name for it, 'The Hokey Cokey' criminal justice system,' in out, in out' all the time. Again, we have been disregarded despite constant reminders to Home Secretaries. I am pleased that Government has at last woken up to the problem at least in part.

There is no shame in Government being wrong but there is shame in failing to speak to those who could assist.

The reward for police officers who have continued to put in a magnificent effort since the riots was the announcement delivered with indecent haste by Government that the cuts would not just continue but they would be speeded up; extraordinary. According to HMIC, we are due to lose 16,000 officers in the next few years, exactly the same number that it took to regain control of the streets of London. Government says it has no choice but to cut policing by 20% (based on an inflation rate of 2%, not the present 5%). Government does have a choice. It chose to cut defence by 7%, Education by 8%, it ring-fenced the NHS and increased spending on overseas development by 34% a budget that will be bigger than policing by the end of the cuts. It could still increase spending on overseas development by 26% and choose to cut police spending by 12%, the figure recommended as the maximum limit by HMIC, Sir Denis O'Connor and a figure we support. We are not against cuts but we are against reckless cuts. Why Government is so set on cutting the police budget so far is unknown but it appears to be based on ideology. Its principal references come from think tanks such as Policy Exchange. There is nothing wrong with theories but policies have to be based on practical reality and pragmatism as any Government's first duty is the safety of its citizens. When the Government's theory that police numbers don't matter was blown away on exposure to the reality of the riots 71% of the public said they wanted the cuts to policing stopped. Government must take notice. At the moment they are acting in the same way that those who believed the Earth was the centre of the universe behaved when that hero of enlightenment and science, Galileo, proved their theory wrong. Instead of accepting reality they branded Galileo a heretic and maintained their theories were right. There is no place for that sort of foolish dogma in a modern world. We are not heretics in The Police Federation, we are simply trying to point out the obvious reality of 20% cuts to policing. The author, Will Self, once said that there is always the same amount of madness in the world but it manifests itself in a different way in each generation. I am starting to believe he's right.

The savings Government says it is making through cutting the policing budget so savagely are actually tiny, a fraction of 1% of Government's total budget. The damage the cuts could cause the

communities we serve, particularly the most vulnerable in society, is completely disproportionate to any savings made. The costs from riots alone, damage to the economy, damage to businesses, lost foreign investment and tourism to the UK, not to mention the policing bill are certainly higher than all the 'savings' the Government is hoping to make from policing. This is poor policy and a false economy. It is also worth comparing and contrasting Governments approach to banking reform with that of policing. With banking they say that reform has to be undertaken slowly over many years so as to avoid unintended consequences and failure, yet with policing they say we must rush through reform (cuts) ever more quickly to ensure.....unintended consequences and failure?

Since parliament came back from recess there has been no engagement with us. Government's response to policing appears to have been made through the think tank Policy Exchange. A report was released, from which came the headline, 'police to wear uniform when travelling to work'. Disgracefully, it was released on the day an inquest was hearing how one of our colleagues, David Rathband, was shot and blinded by a murdering criminal who had gone out one day with the sole intent of killing police officers. The report, which clearly represented the views of Government, expects police officers to travel to work in full uniform while perhaps dropping children off at school, or meeting friends and family. No contact with stations, no personal protective equipment. Those in Government expect us to put our lives on the line and now they expect us to put our families and friends lives on the line too. No extra pay, no back up, no thanks. Outrageous, it demonstrates a Government completely out of touch with the reality of policing. It doesn't need saying that the authors of the report have never experienced the reality of wearing a uniform. Many in my family have served in the military. They taught me to be very wary of those who exhort others to put their life in ever greater danger while never putting their own personal well-being on the line except perhaps suffering a paper cut while writing their reports from the comfort of a warm office. Apart from a few Government ministers and Policy Exchange, the only reference I can find to police officers wearing uniform permanently, without time off is in the children's books 'Noddy and Big Ears', where Mr Plod is always on duty. Note to Policy Exchange – 'Noddy and Big Ears' isn't based in real life and neither is your report.

We have heard recently that the Home Secretary Theresa May and Bill Bratton, The Prime Minister's policing advisor, fell out over elected police commissioners last year. Apparently, Bill thinks elected commissioners are a bad idea. Theresa May now won't speak to him. Bill, you are not alone, I know the feeling, there is a pattern developing here. More interestingly, I would like to know why the Prime Minister continues to support the policy of elected commissioners when his chosen advisor, Bill Bratton, seems to think they are a bad idea.

The differences in attitudes towards policing continue to grow between England/Wales and north of the border in Scotland. The Scottish Government has already said no to the recommendations made in the Winsor report on police pay and which are now going through an arbitration process for those of us in England and Wales. The pragmatic stance taken towards policing in Scotland is really exposing The Home Office as being tied up with ideology. Meanwhile Tom Winsor continues to assert that it is police officers who want the changes he is recommending and all those he has contact with support him. So ridiculous is his assertion that I won't even make comment.

The Government has no idea where they are going with policing beyond the reality of 20% cuts. They are taking huge risks with the safety of the public, the police service and the health, future and well-

being of police officers. Their reckless disregard of any advice apart from the diminishing number who speak with the same voice as The Home Office makes their policies evidently and obviously brittle. This is bizarre behaviour for a party that claims to be the party of law and order. The only people who contact me on the social media site Twitter and who are fully in support of cuts to policing appear to be anarchists and revolutionaries. The Government are picking up some strange bedfellows. There is still time for Government to step back and reassert their position as a supporter of the police but that time is running out.

The Police Federation predicted the riots.

The Police Federation identified the fundamental problem within the criminal justice system and its' hokey-cokey revolving doors.

Will our prediction that it will be a 'Christmas for Criminals' come true in the next few years? I'll let you be the judge of that.

Media Interviews

5 x BBC Radio 5 Live

2 x SKY TV News

United States nationwide radio

BBC Radio London

5 x The Daily Telegraph

BBC Radio Merseyside

The Observer

BBC Radio Lancashire

2 x BBC Breakfast TV

2 x Police Professional

BBC Radio Sheffield

3 x Police Review

BBC Radio York

The People Newspaper

BBC Radio Cardiff

3 x BBC TV News

2 x BBC TV News Channel

BBC Radio Newcastle

2 x Police Oracle

The Financial Times

2 x The Huffington Post

BBC Radio Devon

The Sun Newspaper

London Youth Radio

Australian TV Broadcasting Company (ABC)

BBC Radio Berkshire

ITN News

BBC Radio WM

BBC Radio H & W

The Calcalist (Israeli Economic Journal)

2 x The Wall Street Journal

BBC Radio Manchester

BBC Radio 3 Counties + Luton

BBC Radio Cambridge

2 x The Guardian

The Mail on Sunday

BBC Radio Kent

3 x The Sunday Times

BBC Radio Humberside

Salient Meetings/Conferences arranged up to 31/10 (Includes Fed' Open Meetings after that date)

Superintendents' Conference – Kenilworth – Chairman Speaking

Welsh Assembly Government Lobby – Cardiff - Chairman Speaking

Liberal Democrats Conference – Birmingham – Chairman Speaking

- PFEW Policing Fringe
- PFEW/LibDem MP's Dinner

Labour Party Conference – Liverpool – Chairman Speaking

- Main Conference Address
- PFEW Policing Fringe
- Meeting Sadiq Khan MP

Mental Health Fringe

PFEW/Labour MP's Dinner

- Reform Criminal Justice Fringe

Conservative Party Conference – Manchester – Chairman Speaking

- Policing Fringe
- Mental Health Forum
- PFEW/MP's Dinner
- MP's Meetings being arranged

National Black Police Association Conference – Edinburgh

Reform Seminar

MP's Dinner at Westminster

Nick Gargan CEO NPIA

Home Secretary Theresa May

Yousef Dar - MPA

Police Minister Nick Herbert

West Midlands Police Federation Rally – Birmingham – Chairman Speaking

Hampshire Open Meeting

North Yorkshire Open Meeting – Chairman speaking

Kent Open Meeting – Chairman Speaking

GMP Open Meeting

NPIA Board of Governors

Met Friendly 2 Meetings

Charles Moore – Former Editor of The Daily Telegraph

Police Review Awards

National Police Memorial Day – Glasgow

The National Police Memorial day takes place in Glasgow this year on Sunday 25th September.

The Scottish First Minister will be in attendance as will The Home Secretary. Another high profile guest will also be in attendance.

Many fallen officer's families, serving and retired officers and friends of the police service will be in attendance and we send our best wishes to every-one travelling to Glasgow.

We would like to thank Joe Holness and his wife Sharron, for their continued commitment to the charity and for all their stoic work in keeping it going

We would like to thank the communications team at Leatherhead for all their stalwart work during the past few weeks and also to every-one who has assisted the Chairman's Office, of whom there are too many to mention but you know who you are.

Be Proud - Stay Safe

Paul McKeever

Twitter @PoliceFedChair

Simon Reed

@RimonSeed

