

CHAIRMANS SERGANTS CENTRAL CONFERENCE SPEECH 2008

Pay and the Political Perspective

The sergeants of England and Wales are not happy. We are not happy because this government, led by Gordon Brown has lost the trust and respect of the police service in the United Kingdom. How a Prime Minister can be so mal-adroit as to lose, within a few months of coming to office, the special relationship the police service has had with successive governments for over thirty years. It demonstrates almost mind boggling incompetence.

It is no wonder Vince Cable, when he was the then acting leader of the Liberal Democrats described Gordon Brown on the floor of the House of Commons as having managed to go from being seen by his own civil servants as Stalinesque figure to becoming within a few months in the eyes of the public the personification of the comic character Mr Bean.

It has become clear, if there were ever any doubts, that Gordon Brown is by nature a real Mr Bean, a bean counter, a money man, a man who sees the world through figures and bottom lines.

He seems to have difficulty in understanding simple human dynamics such as cause and effect and that when you treat people appallingly badly the effect is that they lose your respect and trust. Surely he can't be surprised that?

Before I go into detail on Gordon Browns actions I would like to thank all those politicians, men and women, within parliament, from all parties, who have shown support for us over the past months.

However, one man in particular, Keith Vaz, the Labour Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee, has been a stalwart supporter of ours and I would like to thank him for the comments he has made and the actions he has taken that have assisted us. He is not alone in The Labour Party but his efforts to ensure fairness in our fight on pay have been outstanding. He has proved himself to be a true parliamentarian.

So what has Gordon Brown done?

Well, it appears he began by surrounding himself with people who he knew would, like the old Soviet Unions political commissars, do exactly what he wants.

Jacqui Smith has to be admired for becoming the first female Home Secretary but she can't be admired for much more than that. It is clear that she has merely been the conduit for Gordon Browns own centrally controlled diktats. Sadly, it appears that she is The Home Secretary in name only. And that's bad for us and it's bad for the public. We need a Home Secretary who

understands policing and is prepared to fight for the police service and the public. We don't want a Home Secretary who is no more than a manager of Gordon Browns policies and some-one who we have called on to resign.

Gordon Brown must know that as police officers we don't like unfairness.

Earlier this year Gordon Brown told the country that he would have loved to have given us more money but he couldn't.

Yet the week after The Prime Minister was telling us he had no money to pay the £30 Million that we lost, he was in China. And what did Gordon Brown do in China? He gave the Chinese a £50 Million gift Prime Minister, you can't say that you don't have any money to give to the British Police Service and then give a another country £50 Million a week later.

It's also worth remembering that this apparently cash strapped government that couldn't pay us the £30 Million has committed up to £30 Billion to Northern Rock. That's 1,000 times more than the £30 Million we believed we were owed.

It is also the government that recently found £50 Billion from its back pocket to give to city bankers and the government that allows enormous tax breaks for international billionaires living in London while doing away with the 10p tax threshold for the poorest people.

This is a government who, for people like us, people who are restricted in being able to stand up for ourselves, at least at the moment, are people who they can do what they want to, while with the other hand they are doling out fortunes to help their rich city friends.

Gordon Brown also stated that public sector workers had to have a less than 2% pay rise because he had to suppress inflationary pressures within the economy. This is an absolute imperative we were told. Yet The Governor of The Bank of England, Mervyn King, stated categorically that any pay rise in the public sector under 4% would not be inflationary.

How can our wage settlement be inflationary if they were to award us more than 2%, when the teachers pay award isn't inflationary at 2.5%, or the nurses pay award, which was even higher? Perhaps it's because people like Ed Balls, The Education Secretary, is Gordon Browns closest confidant and political ally and gets special favours. Or perhaps it's because the teachers can strike and therefore Gordon knows that they can stand up to him.

But if Gordon Brown is correct and he really can't afford to pay us £30 Million, that's less than one twenty thousandth (1/20,000) of the annual tax revenue the government rakes in, then perhaps the economy has gone *from Blair, to Brown, to Bust.*

How feckless, how incompetent and how very imprudent Gordon Brown must have been to get us into this dreadful state.

In a recent YouGov Opinion Poll Gordon Brown had registered the fastest fall in popularity of any British Prime Minister in living record.

If he continues to treat the likes of us in the same way I can't see any route back for him.

I have a special word for The Home Office Advisors who advised the Home Office that, in effect, they could do what they liked to the police service within the pay arena because we might huff and puff but we can't actually do anything to stop whatever they bring in. Well, that might be right in the unnecessary battle that they are intent on fighting with the police service but they have forgotten what their political masters principal objective is. Their political masters principal objective is to stay in power and the advice to treat us the way that we were is seen by the public and many commentators within the media, as unfair. We don't like it but more importantly, the public don't seem to like it either.

I have no doubt that the advice will contribute to what happens to at the next general election. One last point about advisors. Surely to advise means by definition they must know something about the subject they are advising on. But apparently, that isn't a requirement to advise in The Home Office.

I find it incredible that one of The Home Offices main advisors refuses to learn about the police service, he just wants to modernise it. That is extraordinary. Surely, you can't change something effectively if you have no understanding of what you're dealing with?

No wonder the advice the Home Office is getting is so often off the mark.

Let's be absolutely clear here. We want to be able to work with a government that we can trust whatever their political colour, a government that understands the special nature of policing and the unique role of the office of constable.

23,000 police officers shouldn't have to march through London to try and get a fair pay deal. That we were forced into that action is a national disgrace for the government. Shame on them! Thank you those of you who were able to turn out on the march. It was a magnificent effort.

Hopefully though, things might be changing. After the Local Council Elections earlier this month Gordon Brown said that he wanted to listen to people in future.

So, I say to him this, any future pay award has to be a truly negotiated settlement within parameters that are fair and reflect the real economic environment within which we have to live.

The retail price index measure of inflation is now at 4.2% and appears to be rising. The real inflation rate for many families is 6% or 7%, not the 2% that

was chosen by Gordon Brown within the Consumer Price Index, which incidentally is now standing at 3% and is forecast to rise to 3.7% in the near future.

Conference, 1.9% pay awards will rapidly make the police service an unattractive profession as we see our standard of living falling fast in real terms.

Pay settlements must not be imposed on the Police Service.

We are not living in the old East European Communist States. We want to live in a modern world not in a regressive one.

Any future deal must be fair and it MUST be negotiated.

When New Labour came to power they did so with the anthem, 'things can only get better'.

Unfortunately, under Gordon Brown the anthem for those of us who can't defend ourselves appears to have changed to, 'things can only get worse'

I hope this isn't the case conference. But if it the anthem has changed we need to look to defending ourselves effectively.

Conference, I do not apologise for spending some time on pay as it is the single issue that rightly excites our members and I will return to our pay again later but now I will move on to other areas that I believe need addressing.

Police Custody Sergeants

The role of custody sergeant continues to be a contentious issue. Ian Rennie, our General Secretary has produced a report, 'Police Custody Sergeants, The Linchpin of the Criminal Justice System', that supports the retention the custody sergeant.

This has been widely circulated to opinion formers and stakeholders within the policing and criminal justice system.

In his conclusion he states, the custody sergeant is the linchpin of the criminal justice system – a fact recognised by all stakeholders, including the Crown Prosecution Service and The Law Society, who have both expressed support for the retention of the custody sergeant.

The replacement of a fully warranted police sergeant by an employee would have serious consequences for both individuals and the criminal justice system.

The introduction of the staff custody officer will not produce the cost savings that police modernisers believe are possible.

It is important to look beyond any anticipated cost savings.

The distress suffered by relatives and the damage to the reputation of a force by any death in custody, or death following police contact enquiry would far outweigh any financial saving.

Given the length of training required and the likelihood of having to deliver such training on a continual basis, it cannot be cost effective to train members of the public to the level of the custody sergeant.

The essential link between operational policing knowledge and experience on the streets and the custody suite would be lost.

The introduction of the staff custody officer would remove the effective supervision of officers detaining and dealing with persons in custody.

The public deserve to know that persons in police custody are treated and cared for to a very high standard, a publically accountable standard that can only be achieved by maintaining the unique status of custody sergeant.

I know our National Custody Committee representatives will be giving an update on other custody matters as well, so I will limit my comments to those I have already mentioned.

But well done to Ian Rennie on an excellent report.

I would also like to thank Ian Johnson, President of The Superintendents Association for his very public support recently for the retention of sergeants in the role of custody sergeant. His support and that from many others in the policing world, is very much appreciated by us.

Sir Ronnie Flanagans HMIC Review

We are still waiting for the HMIC to finalise their findings in their thematic review but we might get some clue to what it will contain from Jane Stichbury in the forum debate at 11 o'clock this morning.

However, it is worth looking at some of the salient issues that affect sergeants around the country.

Some of you might have seen the article I wrote in Police Review last week addressing some of the issues we face and I will touch on some of them here today as well.

To illustrate what is going on around the country I have obtained a series of quotes from sergeants in one force to illustrate our lot.

I am very grateful to Dave Cartwright from Norfolk for passing to me some of the comments he has been receiving in his force and to Steve Evans of the Sergeants Central Committee for making me aware of the report.

I think you'll agree that these comments encapsulate what many sergeants feel around the country.

- *The training for custody sergeants is not fit for purpose.*
- *There is no formalisation of meal breaks despite a recent ET against the Welsh Forces*
- *There is no strategic direction. We have to be all things to all persons.*
- *We're unable to properly supervise staff due to abstraction levels.*
- *There is an abrogation of responsibility by the organisation by the e-mail or 'made aware' culture.*
- *How is the PDR process supposed to be effective if we the supervisors are not trained correctly?*
- *It's simple really – Give sergeants the training they need to do the job we are being paid for. Just because we have passed a national exam it doesn't make us managers or effective sergeants.*
- *Whilst I'm very grateful for being promoted I feel it's just a case of sergeants muddling through.*
- *It seems ironic that we tutor new police recruits and PCSO's coming into the job but we don't invest in training sergeants properly.*
- *There is lack of communication. Minimum staffing levels have been reduced and no reasons given.*

And these last two will I think resonate with just about every sergeant in the country.

- *There is a lack of a pay differential between Constable and Sergeant, despite a considerable step up in relation to responsibility both operationally and corporatively.*
- *We are slowly dying in a sea of bureaucracy.*

I know we can all emphasise with that last comment.

It seems to me that for every form done away with in a crack down on bureaucracy, like the gorgon Medusa, two new forms will spring up to replace the old one.

To further illustrate how the performance culture and bureaucracy are strangling the police service I will refer to some correspondence I have received from an Inspector in The Metropolitan Police who informs me that his sergeants now have to report on over 22 key performance indicators on his team.

He has become so disillusioned about the bureaucracy he wrote the following e-mail to his Borough Commander,

'It appears to me Guv, that whilst we all agree that performance indicators are important to ensure value for money and quality assurance etc, if all the Key Performance Indicators were taken as seriously as I am requested to on a daily basis no police work would actually get done as I, together with my sergeants would spend our whole time chasing our own shadows worrying about generic compliance. I doubt that unless this madness is looked at with fresh eyes that performance across the board will continue to suffer and possibly worsen as a consequence'.

Sadly for the police service my correspondent has given up trying to work within such a bureaucratic culture and is now leaving his force and who can blame him?

I joined the police service to be a policeman not a paper chaser for bureaucrats and I know that is the same for police officers all around the country.

I know from conversations that I have around the country and I know from what I see and hear that the comments made by the sergeants in Norfolk and by The Metropolitan Inspector on behalf of his sergeants would be replicated throughout England and Wales.

If sergeants are to deliver the service that the government wants, whatever that might be, then we have to be;

- Effectively trained
- We have to have sufficient numbers of sergeants
- We need to be rewarded financially to recognise the difference between the responsibilities we have compared to the more limited responsibilities held by constables

There is some good news though, in Norfolk their Chief seems to have at least recognised the parlous state of training for sergeants within the county and is taking steps to change matters.

The Chief is to be applauded for that and he has our support in that endeavour, and it's one which I know the Norfolk Federation would like to be involved in.

Death Penalty for Those Who Murder Police Officers

Conference, some of you might have seen the recent series on television called, 'He kills Coppers'.

It's based on a book written by Jake Arnott, he's good writer and the series has been well performed by actors like Rafe Spall. It's all good entertainment and a good evenings viewing.

For police officers the programme brings back memories of a very dark day indeed. The title of the book and the TV series, 'He Kills Coppers', comes from a song sung to the tune of London Bridge is falling down and goes,

Harry Roberts is our friend, is our friend, is our friend,

Harry Roberts is our friend, he kills coppers.

Let him out, he'll kill some more, kill some more, kill some more,

Let him out, he'll kill some more, Harry Roberts

It is sung by pond life in London.

Conference, I can tell you that Harry Roberts isn't our friend. Harry Roberts is vile lowlife. A man who murdered three unarmed police officers in West London in 1966 at about the time of the World Cup.

Those officers were,

- PC Geoffrey Fox
- Detective Constable David Wombwell

and one of our own,

- Police Sergeant Christopher Head

Incidentally, Harry Roberts came from Kennington in Lambeth, South London. Kennington was the first police station that I was attached to as a young constable.

The three police officers were gunned down in cold blood by a man who should have been hung for his crime.

However, the self appointed liberal guardians of the nation's moral conscience had gone completely against public opinion and abolished the death penalty the year before the murders.

After the murder of the three officers the Home Secretary of the day arrogantly disregarded the public's call for the death penalty to be re-instated.

Conference, it is still the policy of The Police Federation of England and Wales to restore the death penalty for the murder of a police officer.

But instead of being hung for his crime, as he surely should have been, and a more heinous crime it is hard to imagine, Roberts was sentenced to life imprisonment.

The political establishment has been cowardly in refusing to re-instate the death penalty in this country against the electorates wishes.

But if they believe that life should be a suitable penalty for the murder of a police officer, I ask them to at least ensure that Harry Roberts is never released from prison. He didn't just kill one police officer, he killed three brave men.

If this government still claims to be tough on crime, then keep Roberts in prison for the rest of his life. Any-thing else would be an insult to the memories of those who were brutally murdered, including our own, Sergeant Christopher Head.

It would also be an insult to all serving officers to know that the interests of Roberts were being put ahead of those who can no longer say how they feel.

Sergeant Christopher Head and his two colleagues got their life taken away from them at a young age.

They will never be able to enjoy the freedoms that they deserved. They will never see the light of day again.

Home Secretary; don't ever let Harry Roberts have the freedom he took away from our colleagues.

But let him have one thing though.

Let him have what he deserves.

Let him rot in prison until he dies.

Modernisation and the Criminal Justice System

Modernisation seems to mean all things to all people. To some it is used as a semantic device, the very term meaning by implication that any opposition to

'modernisation' must be backward looking, reactionary and bad. In the language of the government, modernisation equals good and an absolute improvement on what has gone before. All that they want to modernise must be bad by definition. It's a clever but obvious device that deliberately fails to take account of the fact that many things that are hailed as modern become discredited as time passes as people begin to realise that what went before wasn't actually as bad as portrayed by the so called modernisers. Sadly, by the time most people realise that they've been conned, it's too late to go back. But when the government uses the term 'modern' to describe any wacky new idea it automatically puts any critic on the back foot as they have to defend themselves against the charge of not wanting improvement.

I fear that government modernisation is going to change the police service into something the people don't want.

A police service that;

- Loses its resilience
- Loses its unique status
- Will become less effective.

At the moment there are a number of pilot sites around the country 'trying' modern ideas. I think we can all pretty much predict what the results will be, all a wonderful success.

But apart from the 'modernisation sites', or the 'wacky way sites' as some have dubbed them, Chief Officers all over the country are implementing their own models.

The crazy thing is that no-one has any idea where we're going, or where we'll end up.

However, there are direct benefits for the government from all this froth. It enables them to continue to deflect criticism from their failing criminal justice policies by indicating that if only the police service was modernised then they might actually begin to deliver on the governments policies. In these terms the longer they can drag modernisation on the longer they can blame us for their failings.

This week-end, The Sunday Times reported the results of The Centre for Crime and Justice Studies at Kings College, University of London's study into youth crime. It found that the governments 3 Billion spend on youth crime, including the Youth Justice Board, had produced no measurable effect on the level of crime since 1997. This despite 11 years of constant modernisation and change. For what benefit? None.

Perhaps the government should get its advisors to speak to real police officers to find out what we do before they make any more changes. I really

hope that is the case, for their sake, our sake and most importantly, for the sake of the public.

However, it is the failing criminal justice system that causes us as sergeants some of our greatest headaches and unnecessary work loads. It is custody sergeants who see the brazen young criminals, and some not so young, coming through their custody suites again and again.

The government can tinker and modernise the police service as much as it likes, it will make little difference to criminals. Police officers and police sergeants in particular, are already dealing with our end of the criminal justice system effectively.

By the age of 30 one third of British males has a criminal record and today our prisons are overflowing with criminals. There are now 82,000 criminals incarcerated in our prisons. So well done to all of you here today. You are working so hard that the government can't keep up with you.

But I keep asking any-one who'll listen in government and elsewhere, 'how many times do you want us to arrest criminals before they are dealt with effectively within the criminal justice system?' Because, until the government begins to impose real deterrent sentences on criminals, with sanctions that really make them change their behaviour, police modernisation is a waste of time.

It's not our end of the criminal justice that needs to change, it's the end of the criminal justice system that hands out inadequate sanctions that needs to change and its governments job to get on and change that.

If we need more and bigger prisons, build them and build them fast.

Unless the government has a Damascian conversion and introduces real, effective sanctions, I believe it will continue to deflect criticism by introducing yet more 'new initiatives' and laws to give the impression of doing something to the poor old public who keep getting conned.

Do you know how many new laws the government has introduced since 1997, 3,000, or two for every day that parliament has sat.

How many of you think these new laws have cut disorder, drunkenness and crime generally? Or, was the real purpose of introducing all this legislation really just to allow government ministers a series of sound bites to make it look like they're doing something? You decide.

To show how weak sanctions imposed on criminals can be under this government I will relate comments by the government some time ago.

They boasted that the government were going to get tough with those serving community sentences. In future, they said, if they failed to turn up to three community service appointments they might face going back to court.

Can they be serious?

How many times were people being allowed to fail to appear to complete parts of their community sentence before then?

How can the government honestly believe it's tough on crime to allow criminals to miss turning up to three appointments?

It seems that a decent member of society who misses a hospital appointment receives more approbation from officials within the NHS than the criminal justice system imposes on a criminal who misses a community sentence appointment.

It's absolute madness conference and can't be right. All criminals are being taught in this sort of regime is that they can take outrageous liberties within the criminal justice system without sanction.

Conference, I can assure you that they would turn up to every appointment if they found that they were being sent back to court and from there to prison if they turned up even 5 minutes late to any appointment. These are people who have learnt throughout their life that no doesn't mean no and the present criminal justice system of sanctions isn't teaching them otherwise. That has to change otherwise we are wasting our time.

All we have are a whole raft of new sentences that are simply designed to keep the prison population down. No more, no less. Until that dynamic changes we are going to see the same people again and again coming into our custody suites to cover up for a government that has a long way to go if it really wants to be tough on crime, rather than being tough on us the crime fighters.

It is amazing to me how a government can be absolutely strict, fixed and rigid with police officers but has never treated criminals in the same unbending way.

When you're in the custody suite processing prisoners I'll let you decide then who you think gets the more lenient treatment from the government, criminals, or police officers and in particular police sergeants who have deal with the failings within the criminal justice system.

And the next time you hear a politician or senior officer talking about modernisation tell them this. If they are really serious about modernisation of the police service

- Tell them that you want to work in a modern organisation that allows its custody sergeants to have a meal break away from their dirty working conditions.

- Tell them that you want to work in a modern organisation that employs enough sergeants to prevent working conditions so stressful that it causes illnesses such as anxiety and depression.
- Tell them that you want to work in a modern organisation that employs you as a leader and not as a functionary form-filler.
- And tell them to allow you to get on with the job and stop politicising the police.

Tell them that conference.

- And tell them that you want to work in a modern police force that rewards you financially for the responsibilities that you hold.

Pay and Conclusion

And that brings me back to pay.

I have spoken earlier about the broad issues surrounding our pay and the political dynamics that affect us as sergeants so I will finish by reiterating what I recently wrote in Police Review.

Conference, there must be a real recognition by our paymasters of the wide range of roles and supervisory responsibilities that sergeants perform.

With the devolution of responsibilities and the reduction of sergeant numbers, particularly, but not exclusively, on the front line, the remaining sergeants are taking on more and more responsibilities.

If the police service wants the best supervision possible it must make the first line supervisors role financially rewarding and that is not the case at the moment.

Conference, the sergeants of England and Wales are the glue that binds the police service together.

Sergeants do an extraordinary job in often extraordinary conditions and that needs to be recognised.

Gordon Brown and his ministers have said that they want to listen. I hope that's true. We really do want to be able to work with them and put the last year behind us. However, the first test for us will be at 11am when Tony McNulty, The Police Minister will be here.

You will have the opportunity to put your questions then. You will be able to judge if the government really is listening, or whether it is merely more spin.

But whatever Tony McNulty says, I can assure you that I and the rest of the SCC are committed to continue to fight for fair pay and fair conditions on your behalf.

Whatever the future holds, those of us on the Sergeants Central Committee will be fighting for you and our members.

Conference, thank you!

Paul McKeever
Chairman SCC