

**Jan Berry speech on the Police Federation's Day of Action**

**Wednesday 23 January 2008**

Firstly, I would like to welcome you all here today and to thank you all for your attendance. I never doubted you would turn out in your thousands but your presence on the streets of London today conducting a dignified protest is a turning point for the police service and a historical event that will never be forgotten.

May I also extend gratitude and a warm welcome to our guests from parliament, some of whom will address you this afternoon. Also to the media, both national and regional, who have made sure that everyone from Lands End to John O'Groats know what we're doing today.

I speak today on behalf of the whole police service, for this is one issue that has united every rank and seen our police staff colleagues from Unison and PCS joining with us too.

And standing here I have a deep sense of pride and a deep sense of justness in our position.

Whatever may come of our day of action you should all be comforted by the dignified and professional way in which you have handled yourselves both today and in recent weeks – you, as ever, remain the worlds finest.

It is apt that we are gathered here today in the Methodist Central Hall, as it was here that our colleagues gathered almost a century ago for the first annual conference of the Police Federation of England and Wales, after it was created by statute in 1919. How ironic that we meet here today, with talk of wishing to ballot on whether to lobby for industrial rights in the very room where our predecessors first celebrated the protection of the Office of Constable and a no strike clause for police officers.

Let me briefly remind you why we are here.

For the last 28 years we have had harmonious pay arrangements; our annual pay rise was linked to pay in the private sector by an index. It was simple, fair and transparent.

For the past two years the government have seen fit to interfere in the process and consequently we have landed up at arbitration.

In 2006, the Independent Arbiters awarded 3%, John Reid, the then Home Secretary, honoured the award.

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In 2007, the Independent Arbiters awarded 2.5%.

The Home Secretary refused to honour the pay award in full, reducing its value to 1.9%

She has tried to claim that not paying the award in full is a matter of the 'utmost national importance'.

Along with the Prime Minister and her colleagues she has repeatedly told us, that this decision is vitally important to keep inflation down.

This is the argument they want to have - this is the 'political' stand they want to take - with your income and your livelihoods - this Government wants to look tough.

But I do not want to talk about specifics today - I believe, as is right, pay negotiations are for the negotiating table – and the Police Negotiating Board is where these discussions should happen.

Instead I want to remind you, (not that you need me to tell you), but more importantly our Government - what makes police officers special, why we need a pay structure we can put our faith in and ultimately a Government we can trust.

As police officers we regularly face danger in the course of our duties. We put ourselves at risk to protect others.

Our private lives are restricted - and we must be willing to present ourselves for duty at any time without exception.

We are accountable for our actions at all times - on or off duty.

I do not believe you can compare all workers in the public sector. I do not believe it is right to say, well if we pay you this then we'll have to pay them the same.

I do, however, believe in playing fair.

Police officers are prevented by law from being members of a trade union. (Recognise Brendan Barber)

We are prevented by law from taking part in any industrial action. It is a criminal offence.

We have put our livelihoods in the hands of an agreed and established pay settlement process that acknowledges and recognises this lack of bargaining strength.

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And the Home Secretary has undermined this process. She has broken her word. The government has not played fair with the police.

Together with colleagues I will be meeting with the Home Secretary and Police Minister later and will again be making this very point. It was direct interference from the Home Office in the PNB process that brought us to this very point. We will make it clear the ability to overturn the decision of independent arbiters must be removed from the Home Secretary. The Arbiters must be required by statute to take account of the "national interest" and any economic arguments.

You are right to voice your anger and frustration - and you deserve respect for giving up your own time today to demonstrate your support.

Can I take this opportunity to both introduce and thank those political speakers who have joined me on the platform today.

Keith Vaz MP, Chairman of the Home Affairs Select Committee

Nick Clegg MP, newly elected Leader of the Liberal Democrats

David Davis MP, Shadow Home Secretary

Elwyn Llwyd, Plaid Cymru

Bob Jones, Chairman of the Association of Police Authorities. Bob is replacing Phil Blundell, Chair of the Warwickshire Police Authority and the Chair of the Official Side of the Police Negotiating Board who wanted to be here today to show his support, but ill-health has kept him away.

We may all come from different personal, professional and political backgrounds - but I genuinely believe we are all united in our support for three things:

1. That police officers need fair, transparent and equitable pay arrangements
2. That in the absence of full industrial rights - arbitration must be binding and honoured by all
3. And that the Home Secretary should reverse this unnecessary decision and honour the pay award in full

You know this could have all been very different.

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This Prime Minister likes to talk about courage. So much so that he has even written books on the subject. He even launched his 'heroes' charter' last year from this very platform. Well perhaps as he researches his next book he should look a little closer to home.

Less than a month ago Constable Katie Johnson, a dog handler from Lancashire was shot and injured during a robbery and regrettably, everyone in this hall will know a colleague who has been injured in the line of duty.

But they would not say they are unique or special – rather they represent and embody the professionalism, dedication and bravery of all of you - the police officers of England and Wales, Northern Ireland and Scotland.

And as police officers we make hundreds of decisions everyday. Often made by instinct, in a split second – but all based on doing what is right

For the communities we serve and the colleagues we support.

As police officers we know that on the streets we rely on our instincts, our training and our integrity.

We make judgements and by these judgements we are held to account - as individuals and as a professional body.

For me, from my very first days starting out in Kent, policing has not been about procedures or targets or even laws

It is about something more important than that – it is about the 'look in the eye' -

- The reassuring glance that comforts a pensioner walking down a busy street
- The assertive expression in a crowded town centre on a Saturday night
- The calm and empathetic response to the family of a needless victim

And within these thousand looks from thousands of police officers on any given day up and down the United Kingdom one simple word sums it up – TRUST.

- The trust of a small rural community in their local Constable
- The trust of your fellow officer, colleagues and friends as you stand shoulder to shoulder walking down the High Street or providing support and compassion at the scene of a violent crime.

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The trust of the public.

Trust in one another

And ultimately the trust that the system you all work so tirelessly to serve and protect will play fair by you.

A two-way system of trust - between communities and their police - and the police and its Government. A system that has provided fair and honest pay deals for 29 years based on trust...

**Prime Minister, I do not say this lightly - you have broken that trust!**

**So let me speak directly to you...**

When you have a chance to watch the news programmes this evening, or perhaps glance at tomorrow's newspapers I hope both you and the Home Secretary take a good look at the faces of the police officers who have given up their own time to be in London today. I hope you acknowledge their anger, recognise their frustration and understand their disappointment.

But I think Prime Minister you know all that by now - so I want you to take a second look at those faces in your newspaper tomorrow, look closer still and see what lies beneath those emotions.

See the pride in the history

The loyalty to community

The determination to preserve dignity and integrity

Each of you here today are Officers of the Crown – you have sworn an oath which you honour, and after today, after this week, this year and next –

When agreements are made, deals are done and personalities (including me) are long gone –

That honour, that allegiance, that pride and that integrity will remain.

I have been asked countless times in the last few weeks why I think the Prime Minister has made this decision, why he has broken his word to the police service.

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Well for me...

It's quite simple – he has “crossed over the road to pick a fight with the police”, showing a complete lack of respect and trust for all we do.

Like all things it would seem with this Prime Minister - you the, police officers of England and Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland were nothing more than a political calculation –

- a pawn to be moved for advantage,
- a polling point here,
- or an awkward decision for the opposition there.

This Prime Minister did not see the backdating of police pay as a matter of principle, a process in which, by all means negotiate tough, but a process to ultimately honour.

He saw it as a political choice: what advantage could he gain, what weakness of the opposition could he exploit.

Well Prime Minister – I hope you are happy with the result.

What after all did you consider to be the fair political price for your decision....

A Home Secretary hung out to dry, defending an untenable position?

A Cabinet embarrassed by the inconsistency of public sector pay and how the friends of the PM seem to get the best deals?

These are significant, but they, like you Prime Minister are political, and no doubt you will overcome them.

So let me tell you what you should consider to be the real 'price' –

You have broken your word to the police service

You have irrevocably undermined the established structure and process of police pay negotiation

Today – police force badges up and down the land shine a little less brightly

The pride and honour of uniform is worn just that little bit heavier

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**Today has been a day of action - thank you all again for your dedication and patience – you have demonstrated the finest characteristics of the British police officer:**

- **Order**
- **Pride**
- **Honour**
- **Fairness**

**Let us all hope our Government can now do the same.**

**-ENDS-**