

## Glen's Open Meeting speech to politicians

You may think it strange but I'm going to begin by offering some words of re-assurance to the Government.

A fortnight or so ago, researchers at the Ministry of Justice made a startling prediction.

They said that by the year 2014, the prison population in England and Wales may have reached a crushing 102,000, far outstripping the space available even in an expanded prison estate.

Well, I'd like to re-assure ministers that it isn't going to happen.

It isn't going to happen because there won't be enough cops to catch the perpetrators in the first place.

And there won't be enough cops because unless the Government changes its policy of devaluing police officers by cutting their pay in real terms, officers will leave the Service wholesale while potential recruits will look at the demands and dangers of the job and then at the dwindling rewards on offer and quickly decide there are better careers to pursue.

Am I being alarmist? No, I'm not because it's happened in the past.

Awarding police an annual pay decrease is bad for officers, bad for the Service and bad for the community it serves.

Furthermore, it is completely out of order and I am going to tell you, Minister, here and now that we are simply not – that's N, O, T – going to tolerate it.

Let's remind ourselves briefly of the agreed formula – well, agreed until this year – for calculating police pay, why it was introduced in the first place and why every government except this one has understood the need to honour it.

Almost 30 years ago, policing was in a parlous state. Pay had been allowed to sink so low that officers were quitting the service in droves.

It was a big story in the press, which found some officers who were on supplementary benefit.

The Met was especially hard hit, with officer numbers dropping a full 20 per cent below establishment.

All attempts to rectify this situation through recruitment proved fruitless.

Because who, for the meagre reward on offer, would take on a job in which they were accountable for their actions both

on and off duty, could be required to report for duty at no notice regardless of the impact on their domestic life, faced the ever-present possibility of physical danger and were banned from taking industrial action.

The Government of the day simply couldn't ignore the looming threat to order and security which this evaporation of the police force was provoking.

So it asked Lord Edmund-Davies to conduct an inquiry into what should be done to rectify this policing crisis.

His Lordship's conclusion was simple.

The role of the police officer, he said, was unique and the formula for rewarding police officers must reflect this. And the Government of the day accepted the findings as fair and right.

But lo! Suddenly, we are no longer unique – by decree of Whitehall! By a stroke of the ministerial pen!

Well, Minister, here in this hall are 2,000 street cops – two thousand extremely angry street cops – who want to know why they were unique last year but are somehow much less unique this year.

You owe them an explanation.

Right now.

You owe it to them to explain exactly why the Government has decided to treat them with utter contempt.

Following the Sheehy Report of 1993, police pay was linked to the increase received by private sector non-manual workers, rather than the national average.

But every Government down the years has honoured the spirit of the Edmund-Davies agreement.

So, in effect, a contract was established. The police accepted the penalties and personal sacrifices that the job demanded and the state agreed to reflect this in their pay.

Now one side has decided to arbitrarily ditch their obligations under this contract. And, ladies and gentlemen, it isn't us.

So the situation we have now is this.

YOU... are still expected to report for duty at the drop of a hat when ordered, regardless of the disruption it may cause to you or your family.

YOU... are still expected to deal with the mad, the sad and the bad, the violent and the murderous whether you're on duty or not.

YOU... are still expected to be fully accountable for all your actions. Again, whether you're on duty or not.

YOU... are still expected to be the front line against international terrorism and the suicide bomber

YOU are still banned by law from taking any industrial action in defence of your terms and conditions; in defence of your ability to properly provide for yourselves and your dependants.

Not only that. Everything you do is open to criticism in the media and every failure of criminal justice is laid at your door, even though you are not at fault.

Only this week, the London Evening Standard published a story illustrating how many prosecutions in London collapsed last year as a result of failings by the CPS.

But to the public, the police are the law in its entirety and when things go wrong, the blame attaches to you.

And in what other profession would you be hounded by publicity-hungry zealots such as those on the Independent Police Complaints Commission?

They strain every nerve and muscle to find fault with police officers and trumpet their activities to the skies.

They claim to help the police by identifying good practice. But in reality, they trade in blame, blame, blame and give every indication of relishing it.

This Government, ladies and gentlemen, this Government has decided for its part that it will treat you no-industrial-action, accountable-for-everything public servants in any way it wishes.

Let's cut police pay. While, of course, insisting that officers honour their side of the contract.

To the absolute letter.

Well, I trust you're hearing me loud and clear, Minister, when I tell you that the frontline officers in this hall along with their colleagues across London will never, ever bow to such underhand, shabby treatment.

And if you still intend to cheat police officers, then all I can say is: 'On your head be it'.

Ladies and gentlemen, this Government has some harsh plans for your pay in future years, too.

I've no doubt you've heard of Sir Clive Booth, the former civil servant who last year, at the Government's behest, conducted a 'review' of police pay.

By the way, isn't it interesting how the Government has ignored requests for an independent Royal Commission on policing which all sections of the Service now want – even Acpo?

One might be forgiven for taking the jaundiced view that it only instigates reviews which are more or less guaranteed to produce exactly the results they want.

Anyway, the good Sir Clive conjured the idea that in future police pay should be linked to the pay of 10 groups of public service workers whose salaries are under total Government control.

This would produce – as it has this year – a pay offer far below the one we have a right to under the contract which we're keeping and they're sneering at.

And in future, under the Booth master plan, there would not be an across-the-board wage increase. The Police Service would get a 'pot' of money, only some of which would be shared equally among officers.

Quite what would happen to the remainder isn't yet clear but the popular betting is on some sort of performance-related award.

Ah!

Performance related pay.

How about performance-related pay for MPs and Ministers, ladies and gentlemen?

Do you reckon that's an idea?

More pay for the top-performing MPs and a corresponding pay reduction for the rest?

Can't see them voting themselves that, somehow.

I've no doubt our guests would say: well, how do you measure an MP's performance?

Well, precisely.

Who is the top performer between these two officers: the schools officer who warns a kid about the danger of drugs and then keeps the youngster clean or the investigating officer who solves a drug-related killing?

Tricky.

Yet someone's financial wellbeing could depend on that choice.

And what about an officer who is compulsorily transferred from a front line unit where they have the chance to shine to a more mundane job where they do not?

Are they stripped of the performance-related element of their pay?

A sort of supplementary pay decrease to their main pay decrease?

We already have a 'pot of money', don't we? It goes to fund the failed, divisive, Special Priority Payments which every part of the Police Service demands are scrapped forthwith.

The Government says that police pay must be fair and affordable.

Well, we've dealt with the question of what the Government considers 'fair'.

It's light years away from how most people would define the word.

And affordable?

Affordable for whom?

Not affordable for police officers.

You probably all know of officers who commute hundreds of miles to their job because they simply can't afford to live in the capital. You may do the same yourself.

Fat chance, then, of getting a police service in London which reflects the community it serves.

I would like to quote you some words from Lord Deare, who is a former Chief Constable of West Midlands Police and one-time Chief Inspector of Constabulary.

You may think he knows a thing or two about policing.

In June of this year, he instigated a debate in the House of Lords on the future of policing.

He reminded their lordships of – and I quote – {the shameful situation that was last seen in the late 1970s when the best often did not join the police, the best still serving left in droves, and morale plummeted.”

He added – and I quote again – “Current suggestions that Service should once again be opened up to market forces ignore the lasting damage that we saw before the Lord Edmund-Davies review of 1979 and fly in the face of history.

“In the future, the task is going to become more complex, more difficult and more dangerous and we need a service populated by people who are up to the job.”

Close quotes.

While we’re on the topic of quotes, here’s a short quiz for you.

Who said this?

“One of the things I’ve been most impressed with since taking on this job has been the dedication of police officers to really making a difference in tackling crime and anti-social behaviour and protecting us from serious threats such as terrorism.”

Get it?

Yes, it was the new Home Secretary Jacqui Smith, answering questions from the public in a Government webchat.

How about this?

“Today, we are celebrating the bravery of so many police officers – people on who we depend, people who risk their lives in the service of the community, people who have done extraordinary actions in support of their fellow citizens.

They give us not just their time and effort but their service and sometimes their lives. We are so grateful.”

Well, that was Gordon Brown, speaking at a Downing Street Reception after this year's Police Bravery Awards.

He has an extraordinary way of showing his gratitude, hasn't he?

He orders a pay cut.

Disgraceful.

Honest, decent, hard working people demand that the police protect them from the yob, the terrorist and any number of other predators that threaten society... whatever it takes officers to do this.

Their demand is right and proper. You, ladies and gentlemen, meet it daily.

And our demand is right and proper.

We are paid what we are owed. We are not devalued on a  
Whitehall whim.

We are the blue line. And we are now drawing a red line.

The Government attempts to cross it at its peril.

And Minister: you'd better believe this.

We will not be devalued. We will not be demeaned.

We will not be conned or cheated.

Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.