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24 May 2011

Dear Sir Hugh

It was extremely disappointing that, as the President of ACPO and leader of the organisation that purports to lead the police service, you did not attend the Police Federation conference this year, having decided that there were more pressing policing matters for you to address at a conference in Canada. Had you been in Bournemouth with us, you would have heard first-hand the dissatisfaction and anger that officers in the Federated ranks voiced at the stance taken by ACPO as policing in England and Wales comes under attack from all sides by this government.

It was left to Chief Constable Peter Fahy to represent and defend ACPO's actions by saying that ACPO had had "very difficult conversations" with the Home Secretary. However, it was clear that officers believe that ACPO is in thrall to this government and certain members appear unwilling to endanger their future prospects of employment by challenging the government's contention that 20% cuts in the policing budget are perfectly manageable, without jeopardising "the front line" or the delivery of a policing service to the public. Disappointingly, ACPO seem intent on supporting the reduction in police officers' pay and conditions which has provided them with the most flexible workforce in the country.

Sir Hugh, this is serious.

We currently have the 'perfect storm' in policing resulting from Winsor's attack on pay and conditions, Neyroud's proposals on promotion and leadership, and Lord Hutton's proposals on pensions. Policing and Crime Commissioners will potentially change the political dynamics in the Service and there is a move to remove police officers from the protection of health and safety legislation. Police officers are rightly demoralised by this full-on attack on their pay and working conditions. Experienced officers are leaving, or being required to leave the service, in unprecedented numbers and those that remain will be shouldering an ever-increasing burden of public expectation as crime increases.

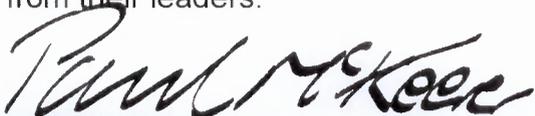
Regrettably, it is being left to the Police Federation to voice the concerns that should be raised by senior officers in the Service and, in particular, by you as the President of ACPO. This is even more disappointing considering that many members of ACPO are privately expressing concern in respect of ACPO's current position on these issues.

The fact that you considered it more appropriate to travel to Canada, and ignore the opportunity to listen and respond to officers and representatives of the government, caused so much concern, that conference passed an emergency motion instructing the Joint Central Committee of the Police Federation of England and Wales to write this open letter to the Association of Chief Police Officers stating that the Police Federation of England and Wales has no confidence in ACPO acting in the best interests of British Policing.

It is important that members of ACPO are aware that during the debate it was identified that this criticism is directed at ACPO the organisation, and not at individual Chief Officers, many of whom we know work professionally and tirelessly both within forces and within the many national policing portfolios, for the benefit of the Service and the public we serve.

We hope that you will be able to respond positively to this matter. Mr Fahy stated that there was little public support for the police service and that officers were considered to be well remunerated. Conference heard from David Rathband who received just £35,000 last year – hardly the most well paid member of the public sector – but one who put his life on the line for the community he served. The Service needs to stand together at this critical time and explain the reality of policing to the public, and to the government. Officers need to be supported for the work they do and the difficult circumstances in which they do it. In particular they need to know that their senior officers support them.

Sir Hugh, the Police Federation is looking to ACPO to defend the UK Police Service. It is the envy of the world, but is in danger of being destroyed by what appears to be, in part, no more than political ideology. Our conference has sent a clear message that officers currently have no confidence in ACPO, as an organisation, acting in the best interests of British Policing. We urge you to work with us, challenge the government where necessary, and to modernise the Service but not at the expense of the Office of Constable and the communities they serve. The officers working throughout the Police Service in England and Wales are deserving of greater support from their leaders.

  
P MCKEEVER  
Chairman

  
I RENNIE  
General Secretary