

## Chairman's Keynote Speech – Conference 2016

Home Secretary ...

... colleagues ...

... guests.

Welcome to Bournemouth.

It's our last year here, which in a way is a shame, as it's almost the perfect venue for conference.

That said, I was lucky enough to visit Rome a few weeks ago, and with conference just weeks away, I was particularly struck by the sight of the Colosseum....

All too often, it has felt somewhat gladiatorial walking into the arena. The Federation Chair squaring up to the Home Secretary.

The Chair strikes first, but is never quite sure what tricks his opponent might have up their sleeve.

Entertaining for many, to be sure. But not always what you'd call good clean sporting fun.

And whilst of course, I'm often mistaken for Russell Crowe – the gladiatorial contest creates distrust and suspicion – and sometimes results in a bloody mess.

But what does that achieve?

Nothing.....

So today, I am drawing a line under that...

As an organisation, the Police Federation has not shied away from putting its own house in order...

We are tackling the difficult issues that will ensure we are an even greater, open, transparent and accountable staff association for police officers.

And so today, while we may not agree with absolutely everything we say to each other....

While we may have differences of opinion in some areas...

I give an assurance that we will work with you, with whoever the government of the day is, to deliver improvements in policing for the public.....

And, in turn, I ask that you give an assurance to us that you will genuinely work with us; listen to us; take on board our views and opinions, to make the changes needed to ensure a police service fit for the future.

That doesn't mean that we will not make clear if we think something is wrong....

Just as I know you will make it clear if you think something is right....

But it means we discuss it properly, we share views, we listen to what the other is saying and we look for agreement to work together for the good of policing and the public we all serve.

[PAUSE]

This year we launched the 'Believe in Blue' campaign ...

... to remind the country ...

....to remind politicians....

....to remind the media...

... and to remind the public ...

... what a brilliant job the British police do ...  
... every single day.  
And to ask them to stand up and Believe in Blue....  
To believe in our men and women in blue.

Police officers are at the heart of our communities.  
We are not only "single-minded crime fighters" ...  
... we are also the glue that binds communities together.

We don't just uphold the law ...  
... we stand for decency and fairness.  
We look out for the vulnerable ...  
... we stand up for the victims of injustice ...  
... and we protect those who are under attack.

On the streets and online ...  
... in our inner cities and rural villages ...  
... in homes and workplaces ...  
... we are the ones the public call on when they need help ...  
... and we can be relied on to answer their call.

We offer the public as much help as our resources allow.  
But, in all honesty, that's a massive under-statement..  
We are selling ourselves short...  
Because we do much, much more than our resources should allow.  
The thin blue line runs ever-thinner ...  
... resources are at a premium ...  
... but it's the police who keep going.

The public need us.

The country needs us.

Even the government needs us (!)

...Even if they do like playing 'hard to get' at times (!).

[PAUSE]

Sadly, like every organisation, errors are made..

Nowhere more so than at Hillsborough ...

... 27 years ago.

The tragic events of that day left 96 families mourning for their loved ones.

And others – fans, stewards and emergency service workers – traumatised by their desperate attempts to help and save lives.

Our thoughts and deepest sympathies remain with the families and friends of the 96 people who lost their lives.

We are the voice of policing in England and Wales. And in that capacity, I would ask you now to join me and stand up.

[Pause]

Stand for one minute as we remember the 96 people who died on that sad and tragic day...

[One minute silence]

Our role at the Federation has been to help search for the truth ...  
... while supporting our members and officers, who were doing their very  
best with the information passed to them, throughout all the  
investigations and inquests.

Nobody should EVER have to suffer again in this way.

Many remain traumatised ...

... by a tragedy that should never – and will never – be forgotten.

It is right that we are held to account...

Whether that's policing a football match, policing a picket line in a long  
running dispute, policing a demonstration, or policing a riot.

But we must draw a line; and we must also draw a distinction between  
the actions of a minority of senior officers decades ago and the  
behaviours of the majority of our members today.

A call for changes to the law and working conditions of officers today  
based on the mistakes of nearly 30 years ago is wrong.

It is, of course, unfair to make the officers of today ...

... culpable for the errors of their predecessors.

They should not be tarred with the same brush.

...just weeks ago PC Lisa Bates suffered a violent assault when she was  
attacked by a man with an axe...

...Attempted murder.

..Lisa is a South Yorkshire officer....

...she encompasses the bravery and dedication of the officers in that  
force today....

So, while we must never forget ...

... we must move on.

[PAUSE BRIEFLY]

And as we do so ...

... we must be held accountable for our own actions and inactions.

Accountable to the law, to parliament and to the public we serve.

We understand and appreciate the role of the Independent Police Complaints Commission ...

... but it is as vital that the police have faith in the system ...

... as it is the public.

Officers need to know they will be treated fairly.

If we are to have any chance of meeting the government's commitment to increase the number of firearms officers by 1,500...

Then those volunteering to take such a huge responsibility must have confidence that they will be treated as witnesses, not suspects, when assisting with IPCC enquiries...

Confidence that enquiries will be dealt with quickly...

And confidence that, should they be compelled to discharge their firearm in a split-second life or death situation, they will not automatically be arrested on suspicion of murder.

[PAUSE]

It is quite right that our shortcomings are scrutinised.

But it also important to put them into the context of the good that we do.

So we appreciate it when members of the government acknowledge that.

As the chancellor said last year, "*the police protect us ...*

... and we are going to protect the police".

We appreciate it when the government believes in us ...

... just as the public believes in us ...

... and we appreciate it even more when politicians understand that police officers do not just appear by magic when needed ...

... and that policing does not come cheap (!)

"Do more with less" ...

... is not a new idea.

It's been restricting us for much too long.

We've cut ...

... we've stretched ...

... and we've pulled.

And it is vital to understand just how hard we have worked ...

... how hard we try ...

... and how far we have succeeded.

And when it comes to police reform ...

... let me be clear.....

...as you were clear with me on the day of the Comprehensive Spending Review, Home Secretary when you told me that this was not the end of police reform.

....we are not inherently opposed .

Policing in England and Wales needs reform ...

It's crying out for reform...

... reform to make it more efficient, more effective and more joined up.

But it might be worth asking what we think!

Home Secretary, you set-up the Police Reform Board.

This came from the National Debate Advisory Group report, which the Police Federation was a counter-signatory to...

A sensible and progressive idea.

At least it would have been ...

... had those discussing reform ...

... included a frontline police officer or two.

But bizarrely ...

... we are not represented on the Police Reform Board.

Not the Federation ...

... not the other police staff associations ...

... nor the police unions.

And I can't help thinking ...

... that we might have something to contribute (!)?

Last year you stood on this stage and said 'Join me and work with me to change policing.'

We want to be part of the discussion....

We would welcome a seat at the table.

Had we been asked ...

... I would have mentioned – as I know you all would ...

... that problems arise when reform is confused with cost-saving ...

... and driven by short-term financial concerns.

Because that leads not to strategic reform, but to under-resourcing ...

... leaving police officers vulnerable ...

... and the public unprotected.

And if I sound like a broken record on this issue, the good news is that people are starting to listen.

If I sound like the boy who cried wolf ...

... well, the word on the street is that there have been sightings of the wolf (!).

It exists ...

HMIC has warned that forces' good performance in preventing crimes is at risk if neighbourhood policing is further eroded.

And only last November, the Chancellor, George Osborne, said "Now is not the time for further police cuts, now is the time to back our police and give them the tools to do the job."

Home Secretary, this was the right decision by you and the government.

An acknowledgement perhaps, that cuts do indeed have consequences...

... and a timely decision to keep the wolf from the door.

[PAUSE]

Unfortunately, while public services deal with the cuts of austerity, criminals do not.

It's not just us who understand that the crimes rising fastest are those that are under-reported.

Online fraud and other cybercrimes are little understood ...

... and evolving faster than anyone can keep up with ...

... and yet this is precisely the kind of crime that the police are currently least well-equipped to tackle.

People who have experienced this kind of crime expect us to be able to deal with it ...

... and the public understands that we need resources to do that.

So let's just make sure the government understands too ...

... and follows through on the Chancellor's promise to protect the protectors.

[PAUSE]

The whole world had a wake-up call with the terrorist outrage in Paris last year.

Our French colleagues did an outstanding job in very difficult circumstances ...

... but they also had far greater resources to call on in response to events.

The British public would expect no less from us ...

... and they understand that means giving the police the equipment we need to keep them safe ...

... but it's not just about equipment.

It's also about respect.

Let's not forget that with our role ...

... comes a significant degree of risk.

We don't want sympathy.

But we do want understanding.

Particularly when so many of our officers have fallen in the line of duty.

In November last year we lost PC Sahib Lalli from the Met Police.

Last October ...

... the whole of Merseyside, the whole of the police service, and the entire British public came together when we lost PC David Phillips.

He, like so many before him ...

... died by putting his duty ahead of his personal safety.

{Play VT}

It is that sort of bravery ...

... and selflessness that earns the respect of the public.

And yet police officers do not always feel respected ...

As a society, we must have confidence that those convicted of assaulting police officers will also feel the full weight of the law...

We have worked with the Home Office this year on improving the data on officers who are assaulted. Operation Hampshire, lead by John Apter is rolling out around the country to many Forces.

We are doing our bit.

We ask the government to continue doing their bit....

....so that those convicted of assaulting public servants doing their duty will be dealt with harshly...

And that the sentences handed down suitably reflect their assault on society.

We see harsher sentences for financial crime than we do for physical assault.

The law must not put wealth ahead of wellbeing.

And so, Home Secretary, I ask you today.....commit to increase sentences for all public servants who are assaulted while doing their job – helping and serving their communities.

For, if, as a society, we believe in blue, we need to show it ...  
... by respecting police officers and what they stand for.

And on a more practical level, those in authority need to pay attention to what police officers have to say.

Nowhere more so than in the Review of Lethal Force announced by the Prime Minister in December.

They need to trust our judgement ...  
... so when we say there should be a wider roll-out of Taser for those officers who volunteer and receive proper training ...  
... we should be listened to.

It's about respecting our integrity ...  
... so when officers do have to use force within the law, their courage is appreciated ...  
... and they are not made to feel like criminals.

Nobody likes to see guns on the streets.  
In an ideal world, nobody would want to see Taser on the streets ...  
... but as long as there are violent individuals at large ...  
... armed with knives, guns and worse ...  
... the public needs to know that those who are charged with protecting them have the tools they need to do that job.

In December last year, in what appeared to be a terrorist attack, an assailant stabbed two people and threatened many more at Leytonstone tube station ...

... before he was stopped by police officers ...

... who put him down using Tasers.

An excellent example of the successful use of non-lethal force to protect the public ...

... and prevent many more injuries and even deaths.

And as the Prime Minister said last December, when referring to Taser – “It is right to look at the resources that our police have in terms of the equipment they have.”

But we know that in most circumstances, the mere presence of Taser is enough to deter violence.

On 80% of occasions when police officers confront potential violence ...

... would-be assailants back down when faced with Taser.

No wonder when we surveyed officers in 2014, 74% said Taser should be issued more widely ...

... 80% in inner cities ...

... and that's not a kneejerk reaction.

In 2006, that figure was just 45%.

But in the years since then we've all seen how effective this technology can be ...

... with 97% of those officers equipped with it reporting that it's been beneficial.

It is now tried and tested ...

... and that's why support for its use has snowballed.

Nobody is saying it should be compulsory, but officers should be allowed to use their judgement and discretion.

It's what you're always telling us to do Home Secretary; to use our judgement and discretion.

And Chief Officers must not hide behind risk assessments which accept the risk of injury to police officers.

No police officer should ever go to work with an expectation that they will be injured.

Home Secretary, the message from the rank and file is clear – we need Taser.

Fewer police officers means those policing are often without the quick back-up and support needed if a situation turns violent.

Taser protects the public; it protects us.

....It even protects offenders.

Don't make Chief Officers use the already depleted police budget to roll it out.

Home Secretary; please give them the extra money needed to do so.

Government always finds money when it's needed.

We should not put a price on public safety.

We must not put cash before coppers.

[PAUSE]

You see, police officers are not only highly trained in the use of whatever tools they use ...

... but as office holders, they embody professionalism, integrity and respect for justice.

We are not hired guns ...

... we are dedicated men and women, sworn to uphold the law and protect the public.

And that is why it is essential that the office of constable remains at the very heart of British policing.

Police reform must build on the solid traditions of British policing ...

... not erode it ...

... which is why we are rightly concerned of any reforms that would increase the powers and roles of police staff and volunteers...

....rightly concerned about the proposals to change the rank structure.

Volunteers do a fantastic job in support of the police ...

... but they are not police officers ...

... and they must not be burdened with responsibilities that go beyond their competence and training.

The public expects its police service to be professional, highly trained ...

... and independent ...

... independent of political influence AND private interests.

That is why they trust us ...more than three times more than they trust politicians.

They are right to trust us.

And that is why we must not ...

... and will not ...

... betray their trust.

[PAUSE]

We do not work alone.

Believe in Blue works both ways.

The public are the police and the police are the public.

We give everything to help the community.

And the community understands that they help us do our job better.

We know the value of every officer...

...but for the majority of the public, they will only ever see a uniformed officer on patrol.

Believe in Blue values and recognises everyone in policing.

The importance of all the work we in the police service do....

...uniform, CID and specialist units all working together...

...working with the public, to fight the threats that face our society.

{Play Believe in Blue VT}

Let me remind us all of the oath taken by every single police officer ...

*"I do solemnly and sincerely declare and affirm that I will well and truly serve the Queen in the office of constable ...  
... with fairness, integrity, diligence and impartiality ...  
... upholding fundamental human rights and according equal respect to all people ...  
... and that I will, to the best of my power, cause the peace to be kept and preserved and prevent all offences against people and property ...  
... and that while I continue to hold the said office, I will to the best of my skill and knowledge discharge all the duties thereof faithfully according to law."*

That's quite a commitment ...

... and one we take most seriously.

It's a commitment you don't get from private security officers ...

... employees who are accountable only to their employers.

It's a commitment you don't get from volunteers ...

... who for all their selflessness, are well within their rights to give up and go home if things get tough.

It's a commitment you don't even get from politicians (!) ..

... because although MPs take an oath of their own, it's quite a bit shorter than ours.

It doesn't say anything about fairness, integrity or diligence ...

... and it certainly doesn't say anything about impartiality (!)

But that's only right ...

... because politicians are ultimately accountable to the voters.

Policing is not like that ...

... which is why the police are not accountable to the government of the day ...

... unlike the police in countries that lack our rich democratic traditions.

Our loyalty is to the Queen, and the traditions for which she stands ...

... integrity, fairness and the rule of law ...

... and above all, a commitment to an apolitical public service.

So while we do our very best to work with any government that enjoys a democratic mandate, police officers are public servants ...

... not politicians ...

... and the public understand that we serve them best by fiercely guarding our independence from the government of the day ...

... as independent office holders committed to protecting the public.

Our professionalism and integrity as office holders is the one thing that is non-negotiable.

We are not glorified private security officers.

We are not the Neighbourhood Watch in uniform.

And we are not fire fighters (!) ...

... which is why any suggestion of merging police and fire service roles is a non-starter ...

... and I know our much-respected colleagues in the fire service will be the first to agree.

[PAUSE]

As professional police officers, we are best-placed to see what kind of reform will actually make our service more effective ...

... rather than making false economies that harm policing.

For example, there is a very strong case for greater integration of police forces ...

... done in a way to enable police officers to do an even better job.

And when it comes to funding, the issue is not just about amounts of money ...

... but also about how it is distributed.

The way various forces are allocated funding is uneven, unsystematic and confusing ...

....So confusing that it even resulted in what the Home Office called a 'statistical error' last year.

But of course, the amount of money matters too.

Police officers have been hit with a real-terms pay cut of 15% over the past six years ...

... even as we are asked to do more.

After the tragic loss of PC David Phillips in October ...

... the Prime Minister commented that:

*"There's no such thing as a safe day if you're a police officer."*

"Yes Prime Minister!"

Absolutely.

We're not asking for spectacular bonuses.

Just respect and adequate, fair reward.

Which has been sadly lacking.

With cuts to pay and pensions, no wonder police officers tell us they are demoralised.

That's why we're asking the Police Remuneration Review Body for a pay increase of 2.8% ...

Last year the Pay Review Body congratulated us on the quality of our evidence and the case we presented.

This year, once again, our submission is supported by well-researched evidence.

... in the scheme of things, 2.8% is a pitiful amount of money ...

... but as you can never really put a price on the dedication and heroism of our police officers, we understand the need to be pragmatic ...

... and that's why what we are asking for is a bare minimum.

Home Secretary....We will accept the recommendation of the Pay Review Body....

...We have to....

.....We simply ask that you do the same .

And we are sure you will treat our case ...

... in the same, open-minded, responsible way that your colleagues in Parliament have treated their own (!) ...

... they accepted the recommendation of the independent body when it recommended a 10% pay rise for all MPs.

No public sector pay cap there.

So, all we ask is that you honour our pay review body recommendation too ...

... even if it exceeds the 1% public sector pay cap.

[PAUSE]

For too long, police 'reform' has been driven by political expediency and cost-cutting ...

... but I believe the tide is now turning.

What we want to see is police reform designed and driven by the people who know best.

The police.

And the Police Federation must be at the heart of that.

For we represent the voice of the frontline.

Locally and nationally we represent the views that matter.

Not the voice of a handful of chief constables.

But the views of over 120,000 police officers out there doing the job - day in, day out.

And Home Secretary, let me take this opportunity to invite you to thank the hundreds of Fed Reps across England and Wales, who do their Federation duty in their own time.

It's a misconception that most Fed Reps are full-time roles.

The reality is that most Fed Reps do their day job – policing their communities – and then help colleagues with welfare issues; support their colleagues, in their own time.

They are the unsung heroes of the police service.

And I wish to place on record my genuine and sincere thanks for all you do – helping colleagues in their hour of need.

Your tireless work and dedication saves forces hundreds of thousands of pounds – whether that's from litigation, or ensuring officers' health and well-being.

For example.....speaking with colleagues from Merseyside Federation, they told me that in the last year their office staff dealt with 812 cases; 945 cases were dealt with by workforce reps; and over 18,000 telephone calls were taken.

And an incredible, one in four members used the services of their local Fed Rep in 2015.

And that is mirrored in every force nationally.

And Greater Manchester Police Federation is rightly proud that it secured Investors in People 'Gold Status'.

That places them in the top 2% of 25,000 organisations.

A gold status for the service they provide locally to members ...

...how they treat people ...

... how they engage with charities ...

... how they identify cost savings ...

... and the work they do to support officers and families in their time of need.

All you do delivers an efficient and effective police service for the public we serve.

And today I want to publicly recognise that.

Thank you.

Home Secretary ...

... you are not dealing with belligerent people.

... you are not dealing with people driven by self-interest.

Nor with people who want trouble.

Quite the opposite.

Police officers are on side.

The Police Federation is on side.

We are on the side of fairness.....

We are on the side of right over wrong.

It is our members who keep the engine of the police service running ...

....They are good men and women.

....They are brave men and women.

....They are selfless men and women.

They give their communities everything they can.

All they ask is that you recognise their commitment...

....that you value their professionalism  
.... that you reward them fairly  
....that you respect their opinion  
....that you trust their judgement  
....that you judge them on their actions today, not the actions of years  
gone by....  
....that you support them  
....that you fight their corner  
....that you take pride in them  
... and, Home Secretary, that you never, ever take them for granted.

Because for the men and women in blue, duty is just the beginning....  
....For they are the finest police officers in the world.

Thank you.