



Gwent Police Federation London march Special

MAY
2012



More than
35,000 join Police
Federation march



Turn-out shows strength of feeling

Travelling to London for the 12 May 2012 Police Federation march, we were expecting a turn-out of around 20,000 officers and were quite happy at that. We wanted to get our key messages across to the Government and the public – 20 per cent cuts to policing are criminal, communities will suffer and so will British policing standards.

I think a turn-out of 20,000 off-duty officers would have delivered those messages quite strongly.

However, as we snaked our way through London – applauded by members of the public and the on-duty Met officers policing the march – word came out that the turn-out was nowhere near 20,000.

Official estimates put the figure at nearer 35,000, around 75 per cent of the off-duty officers across England and Wales on that day. How much stronger could our message have been?

Perhaps the policing minister, Nick Herbert, who earlier in the day tried to downplay the march and claimed that we were only opposing cuts and pension changes being applied to other parts of the public service, will re-consider his stance. Maybe, Home Secretary Theresa May will be a little more nervous of her annual visit to this year's Police Federation conference which opens in Bournemouth on Tuesday.



We can only hope that they have started to listen to what we are saying. We are the experts in policing, our views should be taken into account. Police officers are frustrated, they feel betrayed and they feel under attack from a Government that seems intent on dismantling a police service that is respected and admired across the world.

Would so many officers really give up a well-earned rest day or day's leave if they didn't honestly believe that the future of our policing service was at risk?

Winsor 1 was a bitter pill that we've largely had to swallow. Winsor 2, however, puts forward such fundamental changes to the police service – redundancy, lower starting salaries, direct entry to the higher ranks, working until 60 – that we've had to say enough is enough. These cuts are criminal.

By Jeff Mapps,
chairman of Gwent Police Federation

Police minister defends cuts

If the Government was listening to what officers were trying to tell them, police minister Nick Herbert was not letting on. In a series of interviews with the media, he argued that other parts of the public sector were also facing a two-year pay freeze and changes to pensions as the Government tried to tackle its inherited budget deficit.

He also maintained that the cuts were not affecting the front-line and disputed figures obtained under a Freedom of Information request that revealed 5,000 officers had already been lost from the front-line. He repeated his mantra that it was not about numbers but about how they were deployed.

While the police minister did his best to spin the party line, Federation leaders were quick to launch a counter attack in the media.

National chairman Paul McKeever, vice chairman Simon Reed and the Constables' Central Committee chair Julie Nesbit all strongly argued the case for officers in a range of media interviews while rank and file officers also spoke to reporters along the route.

Public sector strike on day of march

Hundreds of thousands of public sector workers – including civil servants, NHS staff such as paramedics, border force employees and lecturers – staged a 24-hour strike in protest at the Government's pension proposals on the day of the Federation march.

The irony was not lost on police officers who feel they are under constant attack from the Government and yet do not have the right to strike.

And there was a wry smile from many marchers when they heard that prison service staff in England, Wales and Scotland had also walked out, given that police officers are usually drafted in to cover any strike by prison officers.

More than 35,000 join Federation march



Banned from striking, frustrated by Winsor and feeling betrayed by Government attacks on pensions, pay and conditions, more than 35,000 off-duty police officers gave up a rest day to march through the streets of London to show their strength of feeling against 20 per cent cuts to police budgets.

One strong message emerged: cut our numbers and communities will suffer.

"When you cut policing by up to 20 per cent the only thing you get more of is, not more policing, you get more disorder, you get more crime and you get more anti-social behaviour and that's why we are here today to say to the public we don't want to see that," said Paul McKeever, chairman of the Police Federation, adding that forces were not being told which parts of the job they should not be doing now they had fewer resources.

Profound changes being made to the service, including privatisation, were going unnoticed by the public, he said, but were putting the finest police service in the world at risk.

On the eve of the march, the chairman issued a statement saying: "The march is the only way that police officers can demonstrate their anger. We have been inundated with messages of support from our colleagues who cannot attend due to their work commitments. The officers marching are doing so in their own time, that's how strongly they feel.

"The reality of the cuts to policing is really beginning to bite; numbers are beginning to fall rapidly. In the past year alone, we have lost over 5,200 police

officers from the front-line and we are witnessing the privatisation of core policing roles as chief officers struggle to cope with budget restraints. The Government needs to be realistic about the outcome of severe cuts to policing; we cannot afford to compromise on public safety."

To get the point across, 16,000 of the officers taking part in the march wore black, baseball style caps to represent the 16,000 officers that will be lost over four years.

Gathering at Millbank from around 9.30am, the officers – some of whom were accompanied by their partners and children - carried placards showing various messages: "Police officers say enough is enough", "Police for public not for profit", "Police sale to the lowest bidder", "Cutting police by 20 per cent is criminal", and "Utterly betrayed".

While the placards, caps and slogan-carrying t-shirts made the march much like any other protest, the marchers were peaceful, orderly and caused the on-duty Met officers no cause for concern – to such an extent that two groups of around 20 of those lined up near the Cenotaph clapped many of their colleagues past in a show of support.

Setting off at around 12.15pm, a little later than planned, after a rousing speech from the national chairman, officers walked past the Home Office, the Houses of Parliament and back to Waterloo Place – with the last group completing the route by around 2.30pm.

Officer feedback

■ **DC Paul Tozer, intelligence, 21 years' service:** "I marched out of disgust and frustration at how the Government is treating us. Today was well organised but I don't think it will have any effect because the Government doesn't care how it's affecting the service."

■ "I joined the march because I wanted to make a stand against the Government cuts but I think they've already made up their minds." **Clare James, DC Newport CID, six years' service.**

■ "I am totally opposed to the Government plans to reform the police pay and conditions. The march was well organised and well supported and there was a definite feeling of anger towards the Government. But it is too arrogant to listen to the views of police officers. This is about destroying the Federation and the police service." **PC David Hayward, traffic, 24 years' service.**

■ **Inspector Mark Smith, neighbourhood inspector with 20 years' service.** "I marched because I am extremely concerned about Winsor 2. Today was very well organised by the Federation and surely Theresa May has to listen to the Federation and the voice of 35,000 members. I am concerned that this Government will ruin British policing."

■ **DC Tola Munro, volume crime, six years' service.** "I love policing and am gravely concerned about the 20 per cent cuts so I wanted my concerns to be noted by protesting publicly. I really felt part of something bit today and I think it will have an effect – it will force the Government to answer some searching questions from the public, MPs and journalists. Today shows the need for a strong, national Police Federation."

■ "I was very impressed with the overall turn-out but surprised more didn't attend from my station, especially those young in service. But I don't really think it will have any effect – the Government seem to have made up their mind and have public support as, in general, the media and public are against the police." **PC Hayward, response, four years' service.**

■ "I marched today to make a personal protest against the proposed changes and to represent those not able to attend. We made our point but I believe the Government will not change their views and will continue to blame the economy for making change necessary. Thanks to the Federation for making it possible for us to express our opinions today." **PS Andrew Lloyd, business development with 26 years' service.**

■ **T/DS Peter Williams, 20 years' service.** "I am concerned for the future of policing. Today was well organised but could have been better attended by Gwent. I think the Government's mind is made up and this will not change it – they will see it as weak if they change now but they may compromise on minor points to show effort. Being a police officer is no longer an attractive career."

■ "I marched today to show that I am upset and disgraced by the cuts and changes. I hope it will have an effect but Theresa May will not back-track on her work even though she knows she is wrong. And I am concerned about the lack of support. Chief officers are adamant there is support but I feel vulnerable at times as back-up can be 15 minutes away." **PC Jim Andrews, two years' service.**

■ "I joined today because the Government is changing my pay, conditions and pension without my say. The police are being treated with no respect for their unique role and our working conditions. We should pursue the right to strike!" **DI Simon Thomas, business change, 18 years' service.**

■ **PC Ryan and DC Morris, both mid-service officers.** "We marched because we need to support the Federation and are concerned about proposed service changes. Attendance was better than in 2008 – it showed large-scale concern at the proposed changes. All officers should now be supporting the Federation."

■ "The march was very good, I'm happy I joined in but am very cynical so it probably won't have an effect but I hope so. Tory cuts are wrong. I feel there are some professions the Government should leave alone." **PC Darrell Hoare, NPT, 11 years' service.**

■ **PC Helyn Harris, OSD Force Planning with nearly 25 years' service.** "I attended in 2008 and today was once again very well organised and attended. I hope it has some effect but it hadn't made the headlines on the Internet so I'm very disappointed about that. Possible redundancy or working until I'm 60, together with numerous other issues, is not what I took the oath of a constable for. I feel I'm now trapped."

■ **PS Philip Spokes, custody, 30 years' service:** "I marched today to mark the end of the police service. It will have no effect – huge savings need to be made."

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