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policebeat

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NO MEETING OF MINDS



37th Annual Conference

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The 37th annual conference of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland was held against a backdrop of increased threat from dissident Republicans, swingeing cuts to police resources, and the impending disbandment of the Full Time Reserve.

The dastardly murder of Constable Stephen Carroll, together with the failure of the SPED scheme to meet the needs of officers in imminent danger and the criticism that police are more concerned with paperwork than solving crimes, left Conference in uncompromising mood.

In his speech, PFNI Chairman Terry Spence left no doubt that frontline officers were seriously concerned at the lack of manpower, resources and support on the ground and urged Government to ensure that adequate funds were made available to ensure a force fit for purpose.

It was a first Conference appearance for the new Chief Constable Matt Baggott, flanked by the new Deputy Chief Constable Judith Gillespie and new Policing Board Chairman Barry Gilligan.

Mr Baggott, who expressed his admiration for the courage and dedication of the PSNI, received a cordial welcome, and note was taken of his assurance that the Federation would be consulted on "all appropriate issues".

In his speech, NIO Security Minister Paul Goggins, who was making his first - and probably last - appearance at Conference, insisted that Government was adequately meeting its financial responsibilities and Northern Ireland had to suffer its share of the £5 billion savings being sought nationally.

However, Conference unanimously backed motions which called for the retention of the Full Time Reserve until the heightened security situation had significantly diminished, and for the adequate resourcing of training and development for rank and file officers facing new challenges.

A Motion which called for the reinstatement of a vote of no confidence in the Ombudsman's Office was lost, but it was clear from the lively Question & Answer Session with Police Ombudsman Al Hutchinson, that many officers feel unprecedented pressure as they endeavour to fulfil their mission to serve and protect the community.