

**“ PPP ”**

**People for Proper Policing in North Wales**

## **Home front in the Daily Telegraph**

By Philip Johnston Last Updated: 12:01am BST 23/10/2006

### **A policeman's blog is not a happy one**

I spent part of the weekend reading David Copperfield. Not the novel, mind you. This David Copperfield is the pen name of a serving police officer who has just published a very revealing book called Wasting Police Time, based on his online blog.

<http://coppersblog.blogspot.com/>

Pc Copperfield does not want his name or his force to be known, since he would get a size 11 boot administered to his backside by his senior officers.

But I have spoken to him and can testify to his bona fides as a genuine, and extremely disenchanted, uniformed constable. His stories of what goes on in the local nick simply confirm that the guff you hear from government ministers about their triumphant "war on crime" could challenge Dickens himself.

They were at it again last week. Official crime figures enabled ministers to maintain that there had been a 44 per cent fall in overall crime under Labour, and a 43 per cent decline in violent crime, claims that would make even the North Korean minister of wheat production blush.

There have been falls in burglaries and car thefts, which make up the majority of crimes, but only because most of us have alarms and window locks (usually bought after a burglary) and drive cars that are almost impossible to steal (unless you are in them, which is why there has been a rise in so-called car-jackings).

But the complacent way in which ministers respond to the rise in muggings and assaults can only mean that they have lost touch with what is going on in our urban areas, and in country market towns as well. Perhaps it is the ready access to the ministerial car that shields them.

Tony McNulty, the Home Office minister, may take umbrage at being called complacent, since he was at great pains on the day the crime figures were published to say that he wasn't. But when he was asked whether one reason for the growing lawlessness might be the absence of uniformed constables from the streets while they were filling in forms at the police station, he said this was "a tired old myth".

Mr McNulty was right to think that it should no longer be happening. After all, five years ago, David Blunkett, the noted diarist and sometime home secretary, made a big thing out of cutting the red tape that had strangled policing in Britain.

Or rather, he got a big headline out of it. Our report in 2001 said that Mr Blunkett had promised "a radical shake-up of police working practices in an attempt to free officers from red tape... and would bring in laws to streamline police work after a study found that the average officer spent 43 per cent of his time off the streets, mainly filling in forms".

Which brings us back to Pc Copperfield. What his book demonstrates is that Mr Blunkett's promise was just so much hot air. If anything, the average uniformed bobby now spends even more time filling in forms, largely to fulfil legal obligations introduced by this Government.

Pc Copperfield, who describes himself as an ordinary police constable in a nondescript county town with none of the problems of an inner city, says taxpayers would be appalled if they knew how the money they hand over for policing was being spent.

"I love my job, especially the bit where I get to chase thieves and arrest them," he says. "After all, that's why I joined. The problem is, I hardly ever get to do that. I actually spend most of my life filing, stapling and writing forms, reports, statements, e-mails and exhibits."

PC Copperfield says he intended the book to give people "an idea of the depths of sheer incompetence our police are plumbing, how thousands of officers are struggling to keep their heads above a sea of paperwork while their money is wasted and the crime books are cooked in ways that would make Gordon Ramsay proud".

What we have come to realise in the Alice in Wonderland world of New Labour public service "achievement" is that everything is measured against targets set by the Government itself. Hitting these targets becomes the absolute requirement of delivering the service, even if it gets worse as a result.

PC Copperfield is especially revealing about a process known as "administrative detection", which amounts to treating as a crime an incident that a few years ago would never have been considered one, such as a couple of kids brawling in school. The boys are questioned and formally warned, though not charged. However, this amounts to two detections to set against the target. One fifth of all detections are for incidents such as this.

"I'd prefer the traditional approach of a stern talking-to, which takes 10 minutes, than all that statement-taking and form-filling, which takes hours for essentially the same result," says PC Copperfield. "We've artificially inflated our detection rate by artificially inflating our crime rate with 'crimes' we know we can detect.

"What it means is that the detection rates they're bragging about are, effectively, completely phoney. For every one of these non-crimes, we have to go through the motions as though it's really serious. Across the country, this uses up thousands and thousands of police hours and costs millions of pounds – time and money we can't spend on the real thing."

What comes over most from reading PC Copperfield's account of his life patrolling (or, more often, not patrolling) his town is the disjunction between what we are told by ministers and senior officers about what is going on and the reality.

That is why, when the Government tells us that violent crime has fallen by 43 per cent since Labour took office, it is difficult to know whether to admire their brass neck or wonder which planet they inhabit.

**'Wasting Police Time: The Crazy World of the War on Crime' by PC David Copperfield (Monday Books, £7.99) is out now.**

**The PPP comments.....This again, confirms what we have been told about the massaging of stats in North Wales. We have been informed that a Senior Officer is employed full time working on 'opportunities' such as prison visits to 'clear up' crimes.**

**Richard Brunstrom, with an MSC degree and an uncompleted PhD, knows that the most heinous professional crime for a scientist to commit is to 'bash' the experimental (or any other) data!!**

**The PPP emphasises community policing & prevention rather than detection because prevention reduces paperwork and VICTIM trauma!!!**