

## **Graduation Speech for Barry Gilligan**

**Friday 31<sup>st</sup> July 2009**

Good Afternoon Chief Constable, Graduated Officers,  
Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen – a warm welcome.

My name is Barry Gilligan and I am Chairman of the Northern Ireland Policing Board. It is the Board's job to oversee the work of the PSNI and hold the boss here, your Chief Constable to account for what you, your fellow officers and support staff do in delivering the policing service on a day to day basis. .

This is my first graduation ceremony as Chairman of the Board – and of course the last graduation for Sir Hugh as Chief Constable who leaves at the end of next month to take up the post of President of the Association of Chief Police Officers.

It feels like we have been saying goodbye to Sir Hugh for some time now. I've remarked before that he has had more send offs than the QE2....

That is without doubt testimony to the high esteem within which he is held and I am sure that you will agree that he has made a significant contribution to policing in Northern Ireland – an endorsement that has also been given by Prime Minister's and Presidents.

Now I am not going to say anything more about you Sir Hugh. It is amazing how nice people are to you when they know you are going away. I think I have nearly run out of new nice things to say – but more importantly today is about the officers graduating.

You are of course an incoming President and but I want to draw on the words of another President.

***“Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time, We are the ones that we have been waiting for – we are the change that we seek.”***

Taken of course from the Obama Campaign trail, words that do have resonance today for each of us in this room – but particularly for each of the officers graduating.

You have chosen to be police officers – you have sought the career of a police officer and starting out today as Constables each of you have an important job to do.

Some of you may aspire to be future Chief Constables – but whilst Sir Hugh may be the Chief Constable to you – he is still a Constable – and the values and principles that underpin the top job also apply to each of you.

Today I am quite sure that each of you will be feeling very satisfied with your achievements so far – and so you should.

These past 21 weeks have seen you go through an intensive and challenging course – not least the challenges of the push pull tests and that of keeping your boots ultra shiny every morning when you may well prefer 5 minutes more sleep. Your abilities for this role have been tested to the max at Garnerville and, by

graduating, you have proved that you have the skills required to deliver that service. Now it's time to put the training into practice.

A job in the police is not an easy choice – you will no doubt see the best and the worst that our society has to offer. We have seen from the trouble around Northern Ireland in the last few weeks – the rioting in Ardoyne, Derry, Rasharkin and Armagh and the injuries caused to 21 officers who were doing their duty in keeping the community safe - that there remain those in our society who do not want to move forward. There are a misguided few who seem to want to drag us all back to the past. This will not be allowed to happen – too much has been invested in all our futures.

Communities demand, and are entitled to, a good policing service and one that is responsive to meeting their needs. Your job is about meeting those needs and providing that service. All of your actions and interactions with the public will leave a lasting impression – your engagement will shape their view and perception of the policing service.

We all know that if there is one thing that the people of Northern Ireland like to do is talk – about everything but particularly policing. In your training you will have learnt about forensics and the traces that are left behind after a crime. In a similar vein the traces you leave in all of your dealings with the public will influence and shape views not only of you – but also of the service as a whole. So in doing your jobs – you are not only police officers but you are ambassadors for the PSNI.

The Policing Board puts great emphasis on policing with the community. But the safety of the community is not simply a matter of policing, nor is it a matter just for the police. It is in everyone's interests that our community is policed as effectively and efficiently as possible. The Patten Report used the phrase "Policing with the Community" to describe the policing style which the Commission wanted to see develop in Northern Ireland. This meant the police working in partnership with the community; the community thereby participating in its own policing; and the two working together, mobilizing resources to solve problems affecting public safety over the longer term rather than the police, alone,

reacting short term to incidents as they occur. That said, when the police are needed – the public rightly expect to be able to access that service.

But of course policing does not stand still – and must continue to evolve to meet the needs of our ever changing society. The progress in policing in recent times has been significant and in many respects policing has moved faster than the politics. But we are now approaching the end game with the devolution of policing and justice on the cards.

It used to be the case that police had to police a divided society – now the challenge is to police a diverse society. Of course as we all know we have some way to go in building a shared future – and the issue of hate crime, in whatever form it manifests itself, is one that cannot be solved by the police alone.

Northern Ireland has travelled a long journey on the road to peace and as we look forward, political and community leadership remains essential to achieving a society that is tolerant and respectful for all. We **all** have a responsibility to build a better future.

It was Martin Luther King who said that

***Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.***

We now have full political support for policing in Northern Ireland, a policing service that is representative of and accountable to the community it serves.

But we still have work to do – and **we** cannot become silent on what matters most – building on the peace settlement and playing our part. And that means everyone in our community – strong words of condemnation must be dealt against those who are trying to unpick the progress that has been made.

Policing will continue to play a key part in the peace process and will continue to be subject to scrutiny and oversight in all aspects of its work.

Looking ahead, there will be more challenges for policing. In the current economic climate and in a future devolved administration we will need to make sure we use the resources that we have to best effect to meet present day policing demands. You, along with your colleagues will be out there working to bridge the gap between increasing community expectations and reducing resources.

What matters most within our communities is dealing with crime and criminality – so that our communities are safe and feel safe.

As I said earlier, each of you have chosen the path of public service through a policing career. Of course it was Spike Milligan who rather cruelly said that Police Officers are numbered in case they get lost...

But I know that after your training here – you are not going to get lost. So wear your uniform with pride – and be proud of the work that you do. It is a real achievement in getting this far. It may be a cliché, but this is just the beginning. Being a police officer is the kind of job where you are constantly being tested, learning new skills and doing a job that is challenging and community focused.

In your attestation today you have made an oath to serve the community. That is very important responsibility and one that you must uphold at all times in your work.

So, on behalf of the Policing Board, I hope you enjoy the rest of this important day and wish you all rewarding and fulfilling careers in the years ahead.

Thank you.