

FIREFIGHTER

Pensions Special February 2nd 2006

THE THREAT TO RETAINED MEMBERS

A special bulletin for members working the Retained Duty System

"The development of new pension arrangements should recognise the principle that the RDS is one of a range of duty systems and that RDS staff should therefore have pension rights commensurate with those for staff employed on other duty systems."

The Fire and Rescue Service Retained Duty System – a review of the recruitment and retention challenges, ODPM February 2005.

FOR ALL THEIR TALK OF EQUAL RECOGNITION FOR FIREFIGHTERS WORKING THE RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM, THE HYPOCRISY OF THE ODPM IS EXPOSED WITH THE CLEAREST OF MESSAGES TO OUR MEMBERS WORKING THAT DUTY SYSTEM. THEY CAN EXPECT PLATITUDES BUT NOT DECENT PENSION RIGHTS.

AS YOU WILL SEE BELOW THEIR IDEA OF EQUALITY IS:

- THAT OUR RETAINED MEMBERS WILL ONLY BE OFFERED ACCESS TO THE NEW AND WORSE SCHEME PROPOSED FOR FUTURE WHOLETIME MEMBERS ONLY;
- TO FORCE THE FBU TO GO TO THE HOUSE OF LORDS IN AN ATTEMPT TO GET PARITY FOR CURRENT RETAINED MEMBERS RATHER THAN ACCEPT THE PRINCIPLE OF EQUAL STATUS;
- TO END THE CURRENT USE OF WHOLETIME EARNINGS FOR CALCULATING AN INJURY PENSION FOR RETAINED MEMBERS AND IN FUTURE TO BASE IT ON RETAINED EARNINGS;
- THOSE CURRENT RETAINED MEMBERS SHOULD BE EQUAL TO EXISTING WHOLETIME MEMBERS IN HAVING THEIR ILLHEALTH AND INJURY PENSIONS CHANGED!

Your Current Rights

Did you know?

The current pension entitlement for Retained Members is as follows:

When a Retained member is injured on duty and forced to retire from their fire service employment, they are entitled to an **ill-health** pension and an **injury pension** under the existing Firefighters' Pension Scheme.

The value is equal to that of a wholetime Firefighter at the equivalent rank and length of service and is calculated on the

pensionable rate of pay for that **wholetime** Firefighter. This current benefit for Retained members comes without having to pay any contributions into the FPS.

This is an essential benefit for members working the Retained Duty System. If you are injured in the fire service then the system provides some protection in the event that you would be unable, for example, to carry on with other employment. That is only right. **Unfortunately it is under attack.**



HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS!





General Secretary Matt Wrack says.

The attack on pension rights affects every single member of the FBU, wherever you work, whatever duty system you work. We have campaigned for many years for the pension rights of members working the Retained Duty System. This has recently included a high profile legal challenge made by the union on behalf of Retained members. This case has gone to the House of Lords and we await the outcome. We have also been raising the issue at the Firefighters' Pension Committee.

If you work the Retained Duty System, you currently have some important rights if you are injured in your fire service work. You have the right to an injury pension based on wholetime earnings. This provides you with protection should you be unable to do other work as a result of such an accident. Incredibly the Government has not denied that they now propose to worsen this by making future payments based on retained earnings only. This would result in a huge reduction in your entitlement and would also create serious hardship for members who were unable to carry on with their primary employment.

It is vital that this is resisted. The FBU will continue to campaign for the rights of members working the Retained Duty System. This campaign involves all of us. That is why I urge all members working the Retained Duty System to support the campaign and if necessary, to support the ballot and any subsequent call for industrial action.

It's your future and your rights that are at stake.

The proposals from the Government:

Injury/ill-health pensions to be based on 'Retained earnings only'

Under the Government's proposals, the current injury pension will be replaced with a new *Compensation Scheme*. This has not yet been published. However, the civil servants at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister have stated that in future, compensation for members working the Retained Duty System **will be based on Retained earnings only.**

This would be a devastating blow to Retained members. It would mean that members face the possibility of being forced to

retire as a result of an injury received on duty but not being properly protected. Such Retained members may well be forced out of their primary employment but the compensation from the service would take no account of this threat to their livelihood.

This is an utterly disgraceful proposal. It will do nothing to address the difficulty of recruiting members to work the Retained Duty System. How can the Government expect members of the community to serve as Firefighters with all the associated risks but without the knowledge that they will be properly protected if anything goes wrong?

The FBU is campaigning to

ensure that the rights of Retained members are protected and increased. This attack is unacceptable.

Vote Yes to support the campaign

Vote Yes to defend your pension rights

FBU awaits law Lords decision on pensions

The FBU's legal challenge for the inclusion of Retained members into the existing Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS) was blocked by the high court upholding the Government's nonsense assertion that Retained Firefighters do not qualify under law as part-time workers because they do not do the same or broadly similar work to wholetime firefighters. The FBU has conducted a legal appeal and is awaiting final judgement which is due in the next few weeks.

"The Government are applying double standards, by trying to use both ends of the argument. In all of the documentation from the ODPM a Firefighter is a Firefighter. The Employers are on record as saying it is only another form of duty system.

If the truth be told they are looking for a Fire Service on the cheap, the arguments used to keep Retained firefighters out of the existing scheme with its benefits are flawed, and an inferior new scheme is unacceptable."

**Tam Mitchell
EC Member Retained**



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