



Volume 32 No. 6 July/August 2004

FIRE FIGHTER



Time to play fair
TIME TO PAY

EDITORIAL

Time to pay up



IT'S time to pay up. The FBU Conference in Southport couldn't have been clearer. No more shenanigans. No more new conditions. No more attempts to introduce elements outside of the June 2003 Agreement – signed up to on both sides – by the FBU and National Employers.

The clock is ticking. The end of July is approaching fast. The National Employers can either throw the book at the modernisation process, or they can embrace it, just as we have, by honouring their side of the bargain.

By now, most branches should have held meetings to discuss the issues and members should have had an opportunity to put questions to branch Officials.

With no movement on the Employers side, come July 30th, the Union will be launching a ballot for industrial action. And all members will be urged to vote yes.

Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Operators just want their

due. They just want the money that is owed them. And they would like nothing more than to get on with their job of protecting the public day in and day out.

But if National Employers, in all their outrageous and dishonourable behaviour, in their bloody-minded intransigence, want a hot autumn then that's what they will get.

If there's one thing many employers – and top management – in the Fire and Rescue Service have got right it is their deep suspicion, if not downright rejection, of the Government's mad plans for Regionalising Controls.

Fire Authority Chiefs up and down the country have made their opposition known and Chief Fire Officers, including East Sussex's Desmond Pritchard, are beginning to add their voices to the chorus of dissent. In short, he believes that Regional Controls will lead to a worse Service.

We know the Tories are opposed.

We know many Lib Dems have their doubts.

The Union for its part is absolutely clear. Attempting to force local Fire Authorities in England and Wales to shut down 49 existing Control Rooms and rely on 9 Regional Control Centres is sheer folly.

The Union is launching a major campaign attacking the Government's moves that will lead to a loss of nearly a third of the staff. At the reconvened Conference we unveiled the control campaign website www.controlcare.org.uk and this will play an increasingly important role in the campaign.

NO less urgent a task than our pay and control campaigns is that of finding a new direction politically, following Annual Conference's historic decision to end our 86-year affiliation to the Labour Party.

We cannot afford to stand still – we have to get stuck in and make



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a difference for FBU members and families, and our communities.

Local and European elections have come and gone leaving no major political force unscathed and now all parties are gearing up for the general elections next year.

Our sisters and brothers in the trade Union movement are working together in an unprecedented fashion to promote a progressive agenda, focused on the needs of working people and their families.

We need to work with them to influence manifestos and policies at local and national level. And we need to build support for FBU campaigns, defending members' jobs and conditions and the Fire and Rescue Service's reputation as the finest public service in the UK.

It is interesting to see positions changing so quickly in the wider Fire & Rescue Service community in response to the FBU's call for a UK wide target of Zero Fire Deaths.

Privately the FBU was told by a number of organisations that it was being totally unrealistic in calling for Zero Fire Deaths. However, we are now seeing organisations beginning to align themselves with the FBU position, albeit belatedly in some cases and with certain 'qualifications'.

The penny may be finally starting to drop that the FBU is representing the views of the people in the front-line of service delivery when it calls for a Zero Fire Deaths target, and the very future of the Service depends on these key staff who are daily working

in the areas of both prevention and emergency intervention.

The language used however suggests once again that the thinking is less than joined up, and CACFOA's (sorry CFOA's) trumpeted alignment with Government's aspirations for the Service apparently doesn't extend to getting the wording the same.

The recent ODPM consultation paper on PSA targets made reference to the FBU Fire Deaths target and went on to clarify that the Government did support a target of Zero 'preventable' fire deaths. The President of CFOA (Alan Doig) however has now stated that his organisation supports the aim of Zero Fire Deaths too, but unlike the ODPM there was no 'preventable' qualification here. He went on to state that the public will soon hear more about Zero Fire Deaths. Presumably Alan is referring to the FBU website launch of FBU clothing promoting our campaign.

Unlike other Fire and Rescue Service stakeholders he certainly hasn't been in touch over our Signal Detector Alarm research project, our CAST methodology, our Intervention Window model or indeed our National IRMP Document yet.



Mike Fordham
Assistant General Secretary

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Brian Joyce returns with help for local Firefighters

Cover illustration: Jim Blair



FBU CONFIDENTIAL STRESS AND SUPPORT LINE

0 8 0 0 7 8 3 4 7 7 8

DON'T BE BULLIED, DON'T GET STRESSED, GET HELP FROM THE FBU FREE SERVICE

NEWS IN BRIEF

BNP FLAGS IN ELECTIONS

The British National Party failed to make gains in local and European elections on June 10, thanks in part to strong campaigning by trade Unionists co-operating with anti-fascist and anti-racist groups. After the biggest electoral push in its history, BNP remains basically where it was before the election, with 16 council seats and no MEPs.

The Labour Party share of the vote slumped to 26 per cent in the local elections, losing 460 seats, on top of the 800 it lost in 2003. In the European contest, with 23 per cent, it recorded its worst vote since at least 1918 – in fact its worst ever result.

The Conservatives gained in the local elections, but they failed to make the hoped for breakthrough – notably failing to advance much in the traditional battleground of British politics in the West Midlands. Their 27 per cent share of the poll in the Europeans was a new record low.

Lib Dems also did relatively poorly, alongside the Nationalist challenge in Scotland and Wales.

In Scotland, where Labour lost one of its existing Scottish MEPs, the Scottish Nationalist Party flagged too. It only managed to retain its two MEPs as its vote slid by 7.5 percentage points to under 20 per cent for the first time in 17 years – and just 2 per cent ahead of the Tories.

George Galloway's Respect failed to obtain any seats, gaining 4.6 per cent of the vote in London and less

than 1 per cent in most of the constituencies it stood nationwide. The Scottish Socialist Party also failed to win any European seat.

The big winner in the election was the Eurosceptic UKIP, led by former TV presenter Robert Kilroy Silk. It beat the Liberal Democrats to third place with an average 16 per cent of the vote, seizing a dozen European seats.

● Conservatives	27
● Labour	19
● Liberal Democrats	12
● Ukip	12
● Green	2
● SNP	2
● Plaid Cymru	1
● Respect	0
● BNP	0

UNIONS STICK WITH LABOUR

Calls for the resignation of Tony Blair at Unison's annual Conference in June were defeated. The leadership said it was at odds with the Government over public service reforms, foundation hospitals, top-up fees and Iraq, but successfully argued that the Union should use its political muscle more effectively to alter Labour policies instead of seeking a "regime change in London".

Delegates at the CWU's June annual Conference rejected a motion to break from the Party but agreed to suspend its £300,000 annual support if the Government did not give a definite and unequivocal commitment that the postal service would remain in public hands.

www.lrd.org.uk
www.cwu.org.uk

PFI IS A POOR DEAL

The Government's masterplan to modernise the Tube by contracting out its infrastructure maintenance to the private sector will cost taxpayers £1bn a year, raising fears that the move will be a poor deal for the public, according to the National Audit Office (NAO).

An NAO report highlights the high costs and delays already incurred in the signing of public private partnerships with companies including WS Atkins, Balfour Beatty, Jarvis and Amey.

The total cost of the project to taxpayers at current valuations is almost £16bn, which will have to be repaid over 30 years.

That will give the companies involved an annual return on their investment of 20 per cent a year – much higher than profits made by companies involved with other Government-led projects.

Edward Leigh, chair of the Commons Committee of Public Accounts, said: "It is not clear at all that the Tube PPPs are good deals for the public sector.

We can say for sure they are costly and complicated deals which contain a great amount of uncertainty."

The NAO also calculated that raising funds to invest in the Tube in the private sector would work out as £450 million more expensive than if it had been done by direct Government borrowing.

www.independent.co.uk

INCOME INEQUALITY AS HIGH AS EVER

Income inequality remains at historically high levels despite the large redistribution towards the poor under Labour, says the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

The Government's big investment in tax credits and welfare to work has, however, produced a fall in relative poverty, with the Government on target to cut child poverty by a quarter when the figures come out later this year.

The Government's redistributive programme had brought big gains for low-income pensioners and for families with children at the bottom of the income distribution. But income inequality, measured from one end of the income distribution to the other, continued to rise as the income of the highest paid accelerated away from everyone else.

In 1979, the top 1 per cent of the income distribution took 3.5 per cent of all income. By 2001, on the latest figures available, that had risen to 8 per cent.

In other work, the institute has concluded that pensioners are no longer any more likely than non-pensioners to be poor, thanks to the rise in means-tested benefits.

Hitting the Government's next set of poverty targets through tax and benefit changes remained "a formidable and probably very expensive task", said the institute

www.ft.com

CWU AND DIGNITY AT WORK

The Communication Workers Union (CWU) has struck an agreement with the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) to help ensure dignity and respect for all workers represented by the Union.

The Union and the EOC began working together after the EOC was contacted by a number of women claiming that sexual harassment had been carried out or supported by postal workers who were members of the Union.

The Union's General Secretary Billy Hayes says, "We are acutely aware that problems of bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment have existed within our industries. With the aid of the EOC we have mapped out a strategy for ensuring our workplaces and our Union are prejudice-free zones."

Work has already begun within the Union. It has run a harassment hot-line for its members for over three years, featured the need for tolerance and the richness of diversity in the Union's membership magazine and ensured that all its representatives commit themselves to support for the Union's objectives.

The Union wants to make it easy for members who consider themselves victims of discrimination to raise the issue without fear or worry.

"One of the worst aspects of harassment is that it can be the victim who feels guilt," Billy says. "We will end that false concept by taking the positive line that reporting

harassment is a laudable step. We need to know when and where harassment is occurring so that we can take effective action against it. We will record all formal complaints of sexual harassment made by our members so that we can analyse and review them thoroughly."

The Union will also establish that each of its 200 branches has a fully trained Equality Officer and survey a sample group of members regularly. It will not only offer full support to members who have been harassed, but also detail actions it will take against any Union members who are guilty of harassment.

www.eoc.org.uk

CRE ACTS AGAINST POLICE

Trevor Phillips, Chair of the Commission for Racial Equality, has announced his intention to commence enforcement action against 14 police forces and 8 police authorities.

This follows the publication of interim findings of the CRE's formal investigation into the Police Service of England and Wales.

The investigation found that more than 90 per cent of police race equality schemes examined by the CRE failed to meet minimum legal requirements. Only one of the 15 police force schemes was fully compliant with the Race Relations Act, and none of the 5 police authority schemes assessed were compliant.

Trevor Phillips said this situation was unacceptable and gave them three weeks to explain exactly how they

intend to comply with the law and no more than 90 days to produce schemes that are lawful. Should they fail to comply, could lead to the CRE applying to the High Court for an enforcement order. Failure to satisfy such an order will lead to sanctions against the force or authority, including in the last resort imprisonment.

The CRE formally decided to commence a general formal investigation into the Police Service on 16 December 2003. Prior to the start of the formal investigation the CRE Chair wrote to all police forces and authorities requesting a copy of their race equality schemes. Although all 43 police forces had a scheme, 3 police authorities did not have one (and were therefore in breach of the law).

The CRE is initiating this enforcement action under section 71D of the amended Race Relations Act.

TORIES DERAIL CIVIL PARTNERSHIP BILL

The Government was defeated in the House of Lords on June 24th at the report stage of the Civil Partnership Bill in a Tory-led move to stall the passage of the Bill.

Peers supported, by a 148-130 vote, an amendment moved by Conservative peer Baroness O'Cathain which would extend the Bill to cover all carers and family members living in the same property. The effect of the change would be to stall passage of the Bill as the necessary legal provisions would be completely different. Lord Alli, the only openly-

gay peer in the House of Lords, spoke against Lady O'Cathain's amendment. It was supported by Norman Tebbit, the former Conservative Party Chairman, Lord Strathclyde, leader of the Conservatives in the House of Lords, and Baroness Wilcox, the Conservative frontbench spokeswoman on the Civil Partnership Bill.

Just three months ago the Conservative Party held a gay summit but today more than 100 of their peers voted to frustrate this measure.

Stewart Brown, secretary, NGLC, says: "As usual the Tories are playing games in the upper house, and are trying to wreck the Civil partnership Bill which the National Gay and Lesbian Committee have long been involved in trying to bring about. Have the Tories really changed, or are they still the Party that gave us Section 28?"

The NGLC urges members to write letters of protest to Michael Howard, Conservative Party leader, and to Alan Duncan, the Conservatives' Constitutional Affairs spokesperson at howardm@parliament.uk and duncana@parliament.uk. For more information see www.equality-network.org or email the NGLC at gal01@fbu.org.uk

LAW AT WORK

FBU victory over terror compensation

The Government has withdrawn plans to remove compensation for accidental injury resulting from taking exceptional risk in dealing with terrorist incidents, thanks to pressure from the FBU, explains Jenny Walsh of Thompsons Solicitors.

IT'S a rare thing for the Government to back off destroying the rights of workers, or more specifically Firefighters and railway workers, without a fight.

But Ministers have listened and used common sense over political dogma by backing away from plans to remove the right of workers injured through criminal acts in the course of duty from claiming compensation.

The Home Office's consultation paper, published in January, sought views on proposals which it claimed were about improving the package of support for victims of crime. There was much media coverage about the Victims' Fund and a surcharge on fixed penalty notices for criminal offences. But the proposals to rob people injured at work by criminal acts went largely unnoticed.

Specifically, the Government wanted to "examine alternatives for compensating workers criminally injured in the course of duty", possibly by placing the responsibility for paying compensation on to the employers. And Ministers wanted to remove altogether from eligibility for compensation what the consultation paper described as "two anomalies whereby compensation can be paid for the trauma suffered as a result of suicide on the railway; and for the accidental injury resulting from taking exceptional risk in dealing with crime".

Ministers may now have backed away from this, but it is still offensive to those workers who take exceptional risk to save lives, and to the railway workers trau-

matized by trespass and suicide that the Home Office could ever have embarked on this discussion. What had changed to make the inclusion of such workers and incidents anomalous? Nothing of course, apart from Government spending.

The consultation paper made much of the amount paid out to train drivers who suffer trauma from suicides on the track, even though it amounts to just £0.5 million of the total £200 million paid a year to the victims of crime. Similarly, "awards for exceptional risk amount to some £1.8 million" the paper said in fairly sensational tones, adding that the majority of awards for exceptional risk are made to police officers injured by accident whilst on duty. "The injury does not result directly from a crime of violence," it stated.

New York lost over 300 Firefighters on September 11. On the Home Office analysis their deaths were not because of a direct result of the initial impact but from the subsequent collapse of the buildings.

Everyone in the Fire and Rescue Service is aware of the reality of the situations which they may face if a major terrorist incident occurs. They will be among the first wave of emergency service workers attending and will be putting their lives at great risk. It is an extraordinarily crass splitting of hairs to argue that an injury or death in such circumstances is excluded from the CICA scheme because, inevitably (for it is their duty), they arrived in the aftermath of the attack. It was always unclear what compensation, if any, a Firefighter or their loved ones would have been entitled to if "exceptional risk" had

been removed from the scheme.

FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist wrote recently to John Prescott pointing out that there is growing and formidable concern throughout the Fire and Rescue Service that certain insurance policies, such as Personal Accident plans or Life Assurance policies, contain exemptions in respect of terrorist-related incidents.

And while there was a suggestion in the CICA consultation of talks with employers and stakeholders of exploring alternatives, there was never any proposal that employers or insurers should pay in exceptional risk cases. So what of the financial losses of the families of those killed or injured attending incidents in the course of their work and to save the lives of others?

David Blunkett, announcing that the CICA scheme was to be left alone, suggested that one consequence of the removal of "exceptional risk" might have been to discourage emergency service workers from taking risks in the course of duty.

"We decided that we needed to discourage the current trend towards greater caution and instead reward those who are prepared to set that aside in the interests of helping others," Blunkett said. He was also concerned that those in the retail sector who face shoplifters and other criminals might be discouraged from apprehending criminals.

Whatever the Home Secretary is alluding to when he talks about the "current trend towards greater caution" there is an unsavoury implication that somehow people take risks for the compensation they might get if they are injured. Compensation is reported in the media as some kind of pools win. In reality it is no more than a reflection of the suffering and loss caused by injury or death – a woefully inadequate reflection in the case of the CICA scheme.

And those who fight for compensation on behalf of the injured and the families of the dead know just what is the scale of the suffering behind the payment.

Thompsons Solicitors was advising the FBU on this issue

CONTROL CAMPAIGN

Regionalisation: Road to Ruin

The FBU has launched a major campaign attacking Government moves to regionalise Controls with a loss of nearly a third of the staff

THE reconvened Conference saw the launch of the control campaign website www.controlcare.org.uk which will play an increasingly important role in the campaign.

The campaign is being stepped up in response to Government attempts to force local Fire Authorities in England and Wales to shut down 49 existing Control Rooms and rely on nine Regional Control Centres. The Union warns Regionalised Control will mean a worse service with the Centres acting as a drain on already tight Fire Service funds. The new Centres will also be less able to cope with major incidents and be more vulnerable to critical failures with reduced back up from other Controls.

The campaign highlights the fact that 43 police forces have 99 Controls and 33 ambulance trusts use 44 Controls. Neither has made serious moves to Regionalise and nine Regional Fire Controls would have to liaise with a total of 143 other emergency Service Control Centres.

The campaign points to the collapse of the National Coastguard control network as a result of a simple computer "worm" developed by an 18-year-old in his bedroom. The Government "modernisation" of Air Traffic Control computer systems meant simple problems grounded every aircraft across the UK on one disastrous morning.

The Government appears determined to press on although there are clear signs there is little enthusiasm for the Whitehall-driven project. While the Welsh Assembly is taking over responsibility for the Fire

SCOTTISH PLANS SLAMMED

NEWLY announced proposals to reduce eight control rooms to between one and three in Scotland have been called "complete lunacy" by some Scottish politicians. The FBU's Roddy Roberston said: "If the recommendations are accepted there could be more errors, more delays and more lives put at risk – both the public and ourselves. If you go to one control room, it also means if that goes down you have to rely on English control rooms to mobilise Scotland."



Service in Wales, behind the scenes pressure is already being exerted by Nick Raynsford to force them on board.

It is understood that Mr Raynsford is threatening to cut £10 million Whitehall supplied funding for the Assembly's Fire budget if they don't agree to cut the three Control Rooms in Wales to one Centre. The Welsh politicians appear unmoved by the threats.

The Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh can also expect to face the same unsubtle pressure from London as that facing Cardiff. With the Labour Party in Scotland historically more likely to buckle under even the slightest pressure from London it may be a tight run thing North of the border.

OUT OF CONTROL: WHAT WE SAY

THE business case rests on inadequate information which exaggerates savings and under-estimates costs to create a false picture;

- **the Government case rests on only counting the number of incidents rather than the number of actual 999 calls which are significantly higher;**
- **fewer and bigger controls make them an easier target for terrorist attacks including cyber-terrorism and viruses;**
- **relying on technology is dangerous as recent catastrophic failures in the national coastguard and air traffic control computers clearly demonstrate;**
- **there will be a loss of local knowledge including details of local fire and rescue plans, operating procedures, personnel, local dialects and place names;**
- **the Government case ignores or perverts international experience including New York where there are plans to move towards five more local rather than a single Regional-style control room.**

CONTROL CAMPAIGN

But the issues in the Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament are mirrored across the UK with almost no local support for the moves among local councillors. The only support appears to be from a handful of career minded senior management in Brigades hoping to impress the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and a few civil

before it is too late." Not exactly an enthusiastic endorsement.

A number of Fire Authorities such as Hampshire have come out publicly against the moves. Gloucester has been vociferously opposed from the start with the Chief Fire Officer describing the move as "madness".

Tory leader Michael Howard described

The Official Government line is that Regionalisation will improve Controls and strengthen the ability to respond to major new dimensions incidents. They rely on the conclusions of a recent report from consultants Mott MacDonald who rehashed an earlier report.

But an FBU report – Out of Control – comprehensively demolishes the Mott MacDonald report and the case for Regional Fire Controls. It warns that local council taxpayers will be lumbered with picking up the tab for the on-going costs of Regional Control Rooms for years to come.

The report says the Government has consistently over-estimated savings and under-estimated costs relying on a makeshift business case based on poor quality – and sometimes wrong – information. In short, Regional Controls may well be a money pit for public money with no real benefits.

FBU President Ruth Winters, who worked in the Lothian and Borders Emergency Fire Control Room, said: "The Government case is wishful thinking and wrong in almost every aspect. The true costs will be a drain on the rest of the Fire Service which is already under-resourced. Money will be drained out of the frontline service to pay for the burgeoning costs of Regional Controls.

"The Government claim Regional Controls will be better when they will be worse. They claim they will be more resilient to terrorist attack when the opposite is true.

"Knowledge of the new local Fire and Rescue plans will be lost in Regional Controls. Local knowledge of place names, geography, topography and specialist skills of individuals will also be lost.

"Emergency Fire Control Rooms are cost-effective, and those who work in them save lives and are highly professional. This is an exercise in the centrally dictated destruction of a system which has been proven to work time and time again.

"Their plans will make an excellent service worse. We want to see an excellent service made even better and we will fight a strong and long-term campaign to make that happen."

LEAKED LETTER WARNS OF 'SIGNIFICANT FLAWS'

THE letter from East Sussex Chief Fire Officer Desmond Pritchard to West Sussex Chief Fire Officer M Burrell dated 7 June refers to the South East of England. But the flaws exposed apply to all Fire Authorities and shows growing disquiet about the plans.

It warns that moves to Regional Controls:

- is being driven by Government civil servants, not local councils
- will weaken local democracy
- will weaken local accountability;
- will lead to a worse service
- strip away local control of resources.

The letter warns the creation of Regional Fire Control Rooms:

"Potentially brings into conflict the ability for a Fire Authority to manage its own resources and deliver its own Integrated Risk Management Plan."

"...to allow the current proposals to go forward will undermine and inhibit the ability of an individual Fire Authority to separately manage its own resources."

"I believe we are allowing civil servants and other stakeholders, including I must say some Fire and Rescue Service professionals, to take us down a path which is politically unacceptable to politicians in the South East."

"We cannot in my opinion however, allow the project to continue in its present form as there are a number of significant flaws which must be put right before it is too late."

The project "will lead to a loss of local accountability, democracy and responsibility for delivering their Fire and Rescue Service and improving local community well-being."

servants hoping to do likewise.

A leaked letter from East Sussex Chief Fire Officer Desmond Pritchard to West Sussex Chief Fire Officer M Burrell dated 7 June exposes the type of disquiet among Fire and Rescue Service professionals and local councillors.

"I believe we are allowing civil servants and other stakeholders, including I must say some Fire and Rescue Service professionals, to take us down a path which is politically unacceptable to politicians in the South East" writes Mr Pritchard.

"We cannot", he goes on "in my opinion however, allow the project to continue in its present form as there are a number of significant flaws which must be put right

Regional Control Centres as "absurd". The Lib Dems are also unconvinced.

The shadow of impending P45s may concentrate the minds of more Labour MPs as the general election campaign has, for all intents and purposes, already started. As a group, they are suddenly being able to spot a lemon of a policy without the need for a detailed drawing.

The decision of the ODPM to secretly seek private sector bids to build the Control Rooms and by-pass local scrutiny of the plans has bombed with local councillors and Fire Authorities. Rumours are rife that Government is considering at least one and possibly two centres being built and operated by the private sector.

GMC DISPUTE

PA PHOTOS



THE events in Manchester between the 18th and 28th May 2004 have been given many labels. "Dispute", "UnOfficial Industrial Action", "Illegal Action" and after the event "A Period of Unrest".

Whatever name given to the events, the facts were these: up to 160 personnel, from Firefighter to Assistant Divisional Officer, were sent home. Four fire stations were closed and padlocked shut. In addition, two stations working with 3 watches and a number of watches with 1-3 personnel were sent home. Numerous other watches were saved from being sent home only because senior managers would not visit the personnel to listen to their statements.

The events started on 14 May when the County Fire Officer received a letter from the FBU Brigade Secretary, outlining the outcome of the Emergency Resolution from Annual Conference. Greater Manchester Branches had received an All Members' Circular with advice on the Resolution and the withdrawal from the Pay Agreement and consequently working to pre-June Agreement and Conditions of Service.

On 18 May the County Fire Officer by chance bumped into the Brigade Secretary at Fire Service Head Quarters and has an "informal" chat about the letter and the All Members Circular. Midday, the Salford Station Commander received a phone call from senior management asking: "What's the feeling of personnel about the contents of the All Members Circular?"

RECKLESS

AT around 0200-0300 hours on May 25th an automatic fire alarm alerted the Fire and Rescue Service to a fire two minutes down the road from Ashton Fire Station, which was closed because FBU members based there had been sent home without pay. The blaze finished up requiring 12 engines and three aerial appliances, many of which were called in from Derbyshire and Cheshire. At the same time GMC had 10 emergency vehicles locked up because of the CFO's reckless actions! The premises were gutted.

Only one crew was at the station as the other pump was on standby. Following a discussion senior management were informed of the feelings of personnel: they were FBU members and would work to their contract, following Union policy advice and guidance. The alarm bells began to ring!

The Station Commander was also asked what his stance was. Now, being a Union Official – Officers Branch Secretary and Brigade Committee member – the answer should have been obvious. It was. He was informed his answer would be passed on and warned of serious repercussions!

A couple of hours later, the Station Commander was contacted by management and informed that two Divisional Officers were en route. They would put two questions to him and the personnel at Salford. If the answer to either question was "no", then they would be sent home with no pay for any part of the shift for partial performance. This message was passed to the Salford personnel. By now the other appliance had returned and the watch discussed the situation.

At approximately 1645hrs the two

GMC DISPUTE



*Salford
firefighters
return to work*

25 MAY 2004

AT 0900hrs today ALL FBU members returned to full duties following an agreement between Brigade Management and FBU Officials. GMC members will continue to work to the Grey Book Conditions of Service as at June 2003 and they have NOT signed a piece of paper.

The support from FBU members and Officials from around the UK has been crucial to the successful resolution to the mess created by Brigade Management.

It was extremely important to know members had taken spontaneous action and were willing to donate money in support. It gave us great strength at just the right time.

The assistance Pete Taylor and myself have received from every FBU Official across the UK has helped settle the 'new boys' into their jobs.

I would like to extend particular thanks to John McGhee, Dave Patton and Mike Fordham.

Kevin Brown

Manchester FBU Brigade Secretary

Divisional Officers arrived at Salford and confronted the Assistant Divisional Officer in his office. In twenty minutes of discussion he was asked if he would use the equipment on the I.R.U. – untrained – and sign a bit of paper, which was not in his contract. He refused. He was told he was being sent home – except that by then it was nearly 1710hrs, meaning he couldn't be sent home because he was off duty at 1700hrs. In the event, he was back on duty at 1700hrs the next day and so they sent home then, but not before he had attended a Road Traffic Accident!

The farce continued while the ADO remained at station as an FBU representative for the personnel. One by one FBU

members went in – and one by one they were sent home. After completing nearly nine hours they were told they would receive no pay for that shift and would not be allowed back until they had signed an internal memo stating they would undertake all duties as directed by their line manager.

At 1800hrs White Watch came on duty and turned out, but on return the Divisional Officers were waiting. At 2000hrs White Watch were sent home. And that's how it started.

However, there was a change when Green Watch came on duty the following day. They were asked: "Would you attend a terrorist incident?" Of course they would, they replied, to which management's answer was "that's okay then" and they remained on duty. That night Blue Watch were asked a different question and not allowed on duty, the next day Green Watch were asked a different question and sent home and so it went on.

Over the next 10 days different questions, different answers, different statements, some personnel sent home some personnel not. The Officers Branch Chair was sent home because he refused to be put in the position of having to send fellow FBU members home. A temporary station commander relinquished his post and went back as a rider station officer for the same reason (if only other officer members had followed their example!)

Soon, the Brigade had reached the point where if they had sent any more personnel home or closed another station they would have seriously compromised the fire cover for Greater Manchester and its inhabitants.

So the message went out: don't visit any more stations and ignore requests or

statements about working to pre-June conditions as per the Grey book or indeed doing 999 calls only. During this period the Brigade, with a depleted appliance fleet of 10 pumps and one special, received 1,764 calls including a 12-pump, two-aerial fire at Ashton Market Hall, all while Ashton Fire Station was closed (see box).

Across the country Brigades were offering support both in action and pledges of money for personnel sent home. These were gratefully received and appreciated.

By now, the events at GMC were having serious implications nationally, although this was never the hidden agenda of the FBU in Manchester.

For the record, it must be remembered where these events originated. It was the decision to send people home with no pay that drove other personnel to support their comrades and colleagues from what can only be described as a crass, bullying management decision on a minor issue that could have been resolved early on by a properly conducted negotiated meeting between management and the FBU.

By this point, management were complaining of receiving threatening anonymous phone calls. Whilst the FBU did not and does not condone such behaviour nor should the threats made by management to personnel: "this could be a career making decision", "your career ends here", "you know your second pump is under threat of removal and this is not helping matters," be considered acceptable.

Since the return to normal working, management have been collating information of "occurrences" to see if any disciplinary action can be administered. But the question has to be asked: "Discipline action against whom?"

Management have once again lost the trust and respect of the work force. Maybe someone up there has a hidden agenda and the personnel's loyalty is being abused. The big stick will only work in the short term, when management understands that the right to negotiation and discussion is the only way forward for a cohesive approach will things get better.

**By Stan and Geordie,
Manchester FBU Firefighters**

The Union's NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign, which was given overwhelming backing at June's Annual Conference, is gathering steam

IT WAS not so long ago that in the Government, Employer and Management circles, our campaign for zero tolerance of fire deaths was trashed as a fantasy – as impossible to achieve.

But now some in Fire and Rescue Service management and politicians are starting to change tack. Perhaps they can hear the tide of opinion turning.

In the July issue of *Fire Magazine* the Chief Fire Officers Association wrote that "the notion of zero fire deaths is also something the public will soon hear more about. CFOA fully supports the aim of zero fire deaths."

Just what kind of policy Chief Officers will be coming up with remains to be seen. Certainly we shouldn't delude ourselves. For, as with some Fire Authorities who have now chosen to back the principle of zero fire deaths, such as East Sussex Fire Authority, the Chief Fire Officers Association declares it a "long term aim", kicking any real commitment into the long grass.

But there is evidently a growing concern among politicians that by simply accepting the unambitious and confusingly varying targets issued by Westminster, Holyrood and Cardiff, they betray to Constituents a scant regard for human life.

Some are also clearly starting to genuinely see the risk of the Fire and Rescue Service, the most trusted of all UK public services, becoming a post code lottery.

The launch in London in the House of Commons in April, hosted by Labour MP Michael Clapham, and the Regional launch in Wales at Tenby at the end of May, has helped sensitise politicians to our NO₂ Fire Deaths campaign.



ANDREW WIARD

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist at the Parliamentary Launch of the FBU's NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign in April. Labour MP Michael Clapham MP (left), Chair of the Fire Safety All Party Parliamentary group hosted the event

Zero tolerance builds

In the devolved Parliaments of Wales and Scotland in particular, cross Party support is building for zero tolerance to fire deaths.

In the Welsh Assembly, a 'Statement of Opinion' – the Welsh version of Westminster's Early Day Motion – was laid in May by former FBU Official Ann Jones, who is now Labour Assembly Member (AM) for Vale of Clywd and Chair of the Local Government and Public Services Committee. It stated:

This Assembly recommends the promotion of a culture of zero tolerance to fire deaths. For the purpose of establishing a zero tolerance culture a preventable fire death should be considered one where effective preventative, detection and/or emergency intervention planning and strategies by local Fire and Rescue Authorities could have saved a person's life.

This must include deaths as a result of arson attacks. All Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales should work towards this goal through proper strategic integrated risk management planning which combines the most effective mix of prevention, detection and intervention measures aimed at securing zero fire deaths. (OPIN-2004-0028, Zero Tolerance of Fire Deaths).

So far nine, out of 46, eligible Welsh AMs have signed up to it.

In May a Scottish Parliament Motion, the Scottish version of an EDM was put before the Edinburgh Parliament by Labour MSP Cathy Peattie. It stated:

That the Parliament recommends the promotion of a culture of zero tolerance of all preventable fire deaths, that is deaths, including those resulting from arson attacks, that could be prevented by the adoption by local Fire and Rescue Authorities of effective planning and strategies for prevention, detection and emergency intervention and considers that all Fire and Rescue Authorities in Scotland should work towards this goal through proper strategic integrated risk management planning that combines the most effective mix of prevention, detection and intervention measures aimed at securing zero fire deaths. (S2M- 1300, Zero Tolerance to Fire Deaths)

The Motion has already gathered signatures from 14 MSPs – independents and a variety of political parties, bar, of course, the Tories. That does leave around 100 MSPs who haven't signed (excluding Scottish Executive Members who typically do not put their names to any Motion). So Scottish – and Welsh members – are urged to write to their political representatives to tell them that if they have the best interests of their Constituents at heart to Say NO₂ Fire Deaths.

Our campaign message is starting to get across. FBU members demand – and the UK public needs for their own safety – a UK-wide target of zero fire deaths.

Log on to the FBU website on www.fbu.org.uk to buy NO₂ Fire Deaths clothing and to download the FBU's National IRMP Document.

POLITICS

What is to be done, now?



At Annual Conference, the FBU cut its 86-year old ties with the Labour Party. It now has to start building a positive and credible alternative political strategy, argues John McGhee

THIS year's Annual Conference was truly historic. An 86-year chapter in the FBU's political history has ended. We rejected our ties with the Labour Party in a Resolution of less than 50 words:

"The aims and objectives of the Labour Party no longer reflect those of the Fire Brigades Union. Therefore, this Conference demands that the FBU disaffiliates from the Labour Party Nationally.

This Conference withdraws the authority given under Rule 29 for Labour Party National Affiliation".

Northern Ireland delegate Tony Maguire, perhaps, summed up best the mood when he told Annual Conference that the Union had been "stabbed, not in the back, but stabbed in the heart."

So where do we go from here? The Resolution did not say.

Yet the local and European elections have come and gone and the campaigning for the general election has already begun.

We cannot step back from engaging with the political process. We must be there – at the centre of things.

We will have to take sides, we cannot stand at the sidelines. Indeed, that was at the heart of the EC Statement that was rejected. It said:

We wish to ensure disillusion with Government should not lead to disengagement from the political process. Our response should be to revitalise and reinvigorate our political work and build a strategy that best serves the interests of members and the public which we serve.

What was plain from the Conference debate was that no-one was saying we should switch allegiance to another political party, although it is clear that this would be welcomed in some quarters.

Nick Wrack, National Chairman of Respect, the left Party formed in January and linked to the Socialist Alliance (which perhaps like Respect will do, emerged to contest one set of elections only to disappear off the polling cards in those that followed) told the *Financial Times* newspaper immediately after the FBU's disaffiliation vote that he would "welcome affiliation from Unions including the FBU". And if they had been asked, no doubt we would have heard the same response from other parties too.

What is also clear is that while we have disaffiliated from the Labour Party, we have not abolished our political fund and we must now learn to use it in new and effective ways.

So should we now rally round a Party – or indeed support any Party or candidate – whose "stated aims and objectives" are the same as ours?

Do they support our No₂ Fire Deaths campaign? Do they support our campaign to defend Control Rooms from cost-cutting Regionalisation? Do they support our demand that Firefighters working the Retained duty system are treated equally and have equal benefits? Do they support our campaign for a fair and professional wage, which National Employers seem so keen on destroying?

Do they respect a trade Union's right to bargain collectively on behalf of its members and a worker's right to take strike action. Do they support public services provided by public sector employees.

Do they oppose PFI? Do they prioritise spending on employment and decent public services over senseless warmongering? Do they support decent pensions in retirement and security at work? Are they truly intolerant of racism, sexism and homophobia?

And supposing we find the ideal Party, should its ability to win power and influence things be a factor? Should our ability, as a National Union, to influence its policies be considered?

As we venture into this new territory outside of the Labour Party, we may have some lessons to learn from Unions, such as NASUWT and NATFHE in education, which are not affiliated to the Labour Party but have a political fund to promote their policies.

We will also need to find an approach that tackles the reality of devolution. How best can we make an impact on decision-makers in Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Regional Assemblies that the Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott seems so intent on bringing to England.

You could say that in disaffiliating from the Labour Party, in renouncing more than eight decades of history and tradition, we have opened a Pandora's Box, out of which will emerge, we should all hope, better things. But there will no doubt be pitfalls.

What is for sure is that we are likely to see a much more complex approach to the political world in the future.

To ensure we are effective while also being faithful to our Union's "stated aims and objectives", we will have to find new ways of managing the use of the political fund.

Annual Conference took the FBU out from the mainstream and placed it among the minority of trade Unions not affiliated to the Labour Party.

The parliament of the Union decided that this was the right thing to do given the absolutely disgraceful way the New Labour Government treated us since the start of the pay dispute. Unfortunately, it provided no road map for the future.

What we must all grasp is that we cannot afford to let the FBU drift into the political wilderness. I do not believe that members want that. And I know they deserve better than that.

We must start the job of revitalising the Union's political work with all the urgency it requires.

John McGhee is National Officer with responsibility for the Union's political work

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2004

The 2004 Annual Conference was the first in two years and hours after it had started in Bridlington on May 11 it was adjourned ... and was reconvened on June 15 in Southport. Dominating the agenda were pay and the Labour link.

THE Bridlington Conference had been adjourned during the Pay debate. National Employers had been given until the Conference to respond to the Union's offer to reach full and final agreement on the implementation of Stage 2 of the June 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement. They did not.

So delegates rallied around the EC's Emergency Resolution 1, which "recommended a ballot for industrial action to be decided by reconvened Conference in June following full consultation with the membership" and in the meantime, the withdrawal from the implementation of the June 2003 Agreement.



General Secretary Andy Gilchrist at Bridlington: "react as a Trade Union"

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist, proposing Emergency Resolution 1, slammed the Employers for "their extreme myopia, their complete incompetence and their total lack of credibility as the agents of positive change in this UK Fire and Rescue Service."

"That has been exposed by the Audit Commission which found that in all but two Fire Authorities in England and Wales they were making progress towards modernisation. But in that time-honoured tradition, our employers were signally failing to communicate and consult with



ALL CONFERENCE PHOTOS: ANDREW BARRETT

staff. Nothing new there," he said.

"At every stage of negotiations following the Pay and Conditions Agreement, this Union proved time and time again its total commitment to the modernisation of the Service, as employers and Government like to describe it," Andy added.

"Let there be no doubt, as the employers still refuse to honour the pay increase due last November, we need to react as a Trade Union to that gauntlet being put down. In the absence of a positive response to our final offer to settle Stage 2 once and for all, we are saying to the Executive we ought to immediately – immediately today – withdraw the implementation of the June 2003 Agreement," he continued.

The General Secretary also explained why it was important to adjourn the Conference:

"To make sure we do not lose the communication war with our membership, to make sure our members are protected, the best place for us and you to be is back in those workplaces with those members... Let's get on with it. Let's get back to our members, support them and lead them."

When reconvened, Conference carried on where it had left off – the pay debate.



Mike Fordham, Assistant General Secretary: "appeal for clarity"

Assistant General Secretary Mike Fordham, standing in for General Secretary Andy Gilchrist, who had reported ill, moved the EC's Emergency Resolution 6.

Mike started by reminding delegates of the need for unity, that the Union could not afford to be "beating each other up". He also made a staunch defence of the Executive Council, National Officials, the negotiating team and above all, Andy.

"Andy will be back. He will be well and he will be fit. Yes, that is what this Union and this organisation needs."

Mike also made an appeal for "clarity and understanding of Conference"

"The EC and everybody else in this room

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and throughout the Union throughout the UK are required to carry out the policies of the Union. Leadership is collective; it is not personal. We are not Blair, Bush, or any of their cronies. We are a democratic, accountable organisation that has got a long and proud history," he reminded Conference.

Mike reminded delegates of the Bridlington Pay Resolution, and to great applause, the subsequent events at Greater Manchester:

"I think this Conference owes tremendous support and thanks to GMC for the action that the membership in GMC, the Brigade Committee and the Brigade Officials took at that time. Their Brigade Secretary, Kevin, seconding the Executive Council Resolution in Bridlington, placed the support of his membership and his Brigade Committee to that Resolution and then went back and delivered... They took a very individual, courageous and brave stance against a very dictatorial management of a Fire Authority that were threatening them with every single thing that it was possible to threaten them with and they still took that decision to abide by the FBU Policy and the FBU Conference.

"The membership's strength, the Brigade Officials, the assistance of the two National Officials Davy Patton and John McGhee, finally resolved that position (a) to the satisfaction of the membership in GMC and (b) still maintained the position that they were carrying out Emergency Resolution 1," Mike said.

Moving onto possible future strike action, Mike asked: "Can we deliver? Can we, the Union, this Conference, our membership, deliver strong and concerted industrial action by our membership?"



Phil Goalby:
"the matter needs to be sorted"

"Our Emergency Resolution places two clear options before our membership. Our membership will decide," Mike continued. "If they decide no, that the offer from the employers is not acceptable, then as I say, in line with many of the other Emergency

Resolutions the Executive Council will recommend a yes vote and urge a yes vote in the ballot."

Seconding the Resolution, Phil Goalby, West Midlands, said:

"Let us get one thing quite clear; the matter needs to be sorted. Stage 2 needs to be paid. The membership has to be involved. Whatever you think about consultative ballots... that is the mechanism that we have used to decide what the members want to date in this campaign."



Jeremy Pagan:
"We have been patient enough"

But, following a lively debate, Conference rallied around Resolution 15 from Nottinghamshire, which recommended going straight to a ballot for discontinuous strike action to commence on 30th July 2004 if Stage 2 and Stage 3 pay increases have not been met in full by then.

Proposing the resolution, Steve Ainley from Nottinghamshire opened by saying: "We all want the money. This is about the employers reneging on a deal."

"The Resolution... has to stop the employers' shenanigans arising, as they undoubtedly will."

"We believe that if the employers have not paid the Stage 2 and Stage 3 by 30 July, we will have three things: we will have a well organised membership; a well informed membership; a membership that is angry and ready to return a yes vote on the Stage 2 and Stage 3 pay which is absolutely necessary if we are going to win anything," he continued.

Jeremy Pagan, from South Yorkshire, seconding Emergency Resolution 15 from Nottinghamshire said: "It is clear that the National Employers have no intention of honouring the June 2003 Agreement. Stand down periods, bank holiday working etc, what next?"

He added: "The Fire Brigades Union have abided fully by the June 2003 Agreement; the employers have not. We have been patient enough."

EMERGENCY RESOLUTION 15: PAY AND CONDITIONS AGREEMENT 2003

CONFERENCE condemns the failure of the National Employers to honour the Pay and Conditions Agreement 2003 by withholding 3.5% of the pay increase agreed for November 2003 and giving no confirmation that the 4.2% due from 1st July will be honoured.

Conference agreed Emergency Resolution 1 on the 11th May 2004, recommending a ballot for industrial action to be decided by reconvened Conference in June following full consultation with the membership.

As a result of the consultation, this Conference recommends a ballot for discontinuous strike action. The ballot process will commence on 30th July 2004 if Stage 2 and Stage 3 pay increases have not been met in full.

Conference further reaffirms that if either the Government, National Employers or individual Authorities impose a settlement, the Executive Council will implement a ballot for discontinuous strike action.

Conference instructs Brigade Committees, that in order to protect national collective bargaining, no agreement shall be reached with local Employers on the implementation of any part of the June 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement.

The Executive Council will identify and confirm all parts of the June 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement covered by this Resolution.

Any proposal, other than the full payment of pay Stages as described above made to the FBU, which is deemed to be suitable by the Executive Council for recommendation to members, will be subject to ratification at a Recall of Conference.

PROPOSED NOTTINGHAMSHIRE



Angry delegates vote for disaffiliation

THE anger expressed in the pay debate was evident in the debate around Labour Party Affiliation.

Mike Fordham, in supporting the EC Statement on Restructuring the Political Work of the Union, delivered Andy Gilchrist's speech in full.

Mike said: "Yes, we are angry about what was said about our members during the dispute by Labour Ministers. Yes, they called us criminals, they called us wreckers, they called us fascists and even worse." But, he said, "we're not alone in those thoughts."

"There is unity around a progressive agenda among the trade Unions. There is a fight back that can rescue the Labour Party from New Labour. Trade Unions are collectively getting their act together. The power is drained from those who hijacked this Government and led us up a dead end in the second term.

"In such a period of flux and change we the FBU need to be there at the heart of things. We need to be there on the inside to help work for a progressive alternative, not standing on the sidelines soaking because we're angry, however justifiable

that anger is."

However, Mike added: "Conference, the Union recognises today the link with the Labour Party is not being used effectively enough and it's not serving our members' interests to the full. The Union recognises that we must make better use of members' valuable money to fight on their behalf. The Union recognises that nothing short of a root and branch review of all the Union's political work is necessary."

That included cutting the FBU's affiliation to the Labour Party and rechanneling

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money into wider political education campaigns and political work, also to take into account the process of devolution. "We should allow members more flexibility nationally and Regionally to use the Political Fund in pursuit of the Union's objectives. But I stress it remains that the EC must have some say on how that is done," he added.



Andy Imrie: "Our job is to fight on"

Seconding the EC Statement, Andrew Imrie from West Yorkshire, said: "Remember friends and workers constantly fighting and flying the banner, the workers' banner. Do we really want to desert them, turn our back on them? I think not. Our job is to fight on. It is to get the right people in the right positions within our Labour Government.

"We built it; it is ours; it belongs to us. The good ship Labour. I know the captain of the ship has lost his way and I know the officers have followed him; but remember a ship cannot sail without its crew," he added.

But Conference overwhelmingly supported Composite Resolution A for disaffiliation.

Tony Maguire from Northern Ireland said: "How did we, a strong, principled, campaigning Trade Union, finish up ignored, cornered without another card to play? Every one of you here knows the reason why. We were demonised and scandalised, and spun right out of the game."



Tony Maguire: "We've been stabbed in the heart"

"Our Party, the Party that we nurtured through the Thatcher years, the Party that we kept the faith with in the eighties and nineties, and the Party that trade Unionists like us give millions and millions of pounds to – and for what? To be stabbed, not in the back, but stabbed in the heart."

Composite Resolution A

"THE aims and objectives of the Labour Party no longer reflect those of the Fire Brigades Union. Therefore, this Conference demands that the FBU disaffiliates from the Labour Party nationally.

This Conference withdraws the authority given under Rule 29 for Labour Party National Affiliation".

PROPOSED NORTHERN IRELAND

"Our members have been betrayed by this Party, and our class have been betrayed by this Party and, yes, they are angry and, yes, they are bitter and they want this mirage of a relationship with new Labour completely and utterly severed."

"We are not looking to replace them with the Tories; we are looking for a new and different agenda; a return to the values and the principles that lifted the workers of this country out of slavery and gave them pride, value and dignity, a real Labour agenda, a socialist agenda.



Sandy McNiven: "They do not listen"

Sandy McNiven from Strathclyde, seconding Composite Resolution A:

"Two years ago I was forced, for a second time, to withdraw my labour in pursuit of fair pay and yet again the Labour Party were in power. Yet again we were faced down by a Labour Government in a dispute between us and our employers, and we were close to reaching a deal with the employers in November 2002 and Labour pulled the rug from under that. They have used every dirty trick in the book against us."

"We have got our head in the sand if we think we can change things from within because they do not listen."

Conference

ASSISTANT General Secretary Mike Fordham moved the EC Policy Statement, Integrated Risk Management Planning, that was passed unanimously.

He opened by paying tribute to Richard Jenkins, the 28-year-old Barry firefighter who was tragically killed by an explosion at a fire he was attending in the Ely area of Cardiff on 23 May, for his bravery and his dedication to his job protecting the public. On behalf of the FBU Nationally and all FBU members, he extended our deepest sympathy to his family, friends and colleagues.

Mike also paid homage to "all those Firefighters who have lost their lives and all those Firefighters who have suffered terrible injuries protecting our communities. For the nature of the job is that you do risk your life. At times Firefighters make the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty. That's because we genuinely do care about the safety of the public, and because it's imperative that Firefighters are also protected as they seek to protect others."

"We in the FBU have long argued for a risk based approach to fire cover that prioritises the saving of lives. The lives of the public and yes, the lives of Firefighters. So we welcome many of the principles of the new approach to fire and rescue planning – our version of it, not the Government's version, not management's version. That is the so-called Integrated Risk Management Planning."

Mike reminded Conference that despite the ongoing dispute the Union has with the employers over the June 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement, Integrated Risk Management Planning, has arrived and National Standards of Fire Cover have gone.

"We are facing a position where we as a Union have to determine how we are going to respond in the future."

Mike outlined the FBU's concerns about IRMP

● how many Authorities are putting the

Conference backs IRMP strategy



principle into practice,

- the removal of National Standards – a safety net for the public.
- local plans being rushed through without being trialled and tested, or based on any real evidence to see if they will work
- the danger of a post code lottery, as we have seen elsewhere in the public services such as the health service.

“Yet,” said Mike, “we have an opportunity of turning this decision of Government into one of the greatest own goals they’ve ever scored in respect of the Fire Service. We have got the opportunity of turning Integrated Risk Management Planning into something that we, the FBU, can campaign, as we are now doing, for greater public safety within the UK.”

Highlighting the Union’s focus on meeting one central target – zero fire

deaths – Mike told Conference that “A UK-wide target of zero fire deaths is not simply desirable; it is also achievable”.

Mike slammed the Government for writing off as “acceptable losses” hundreds of people each year in the UK and thousands of people over the full term of those targets set by Westminster.

He also said that a zero fire death target must be owned by the whole of our membership, by all departments within the Fire Service, at Fire Stations and at Emergency Fire Control Rooms. “It’s a common ownership that will in many ways dictate our chance of success.”

He called for the Union to promote a culture of zero tolerance to fire deaths, which was kick-started by the launch of the FBU’s NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign.

“Today no Emergency Fire Control Operator, no Firefighter ever responds to

an emergency call without an absolute commitment and an intent to save lives. Achieving zero fire deaths begins with us. Those politicians and stakeholders with the aim to block or frustrate the FBU’s vision of zero fire deaths should take a long, hard look at what the people at the sharp end of the service delivery are trying to do – our members. People who live and breathe zero fire deaths at every incident they attend. We don’t turn out to fires thinking let’s try to save 20% of the people trapped. If you want to see real leadership, then look at the people in the Fire and Rescue Service who are trying to make zero fire deaths a reality every single day.”

“We will work tirelessly on behalf of Firefighters and the Emergency Fire Control Operators until those politicians who would frustrate our campaign change their position and support the efforts of front line workers.

Mike then went on to explain the methodology of the critical attendance standard (CAST), which is explained in the IRMP National Document that was pre-released to delegates at Bridlington. “The principle underpinning that CAST methodology is very straightforward. It is about having the right number of Firefighters and equipment arriving close enough together to get the job done.”

“It’s to determine what really makes a difference at an emergency incident, what is needed at emergency incidents to make zero fire deaths a reality. It takes account of the effect of phased arrival on the incident and the ability of Firefighters to carry out standard operating procedures without increasing the risk to themselves above a level which they would normally expect to face.”

“The 1985 Standards were a safety net, true. But they did not take account of the safety of our members. We can use this new opportunity to ensure that the new Standards in fact do.”

“Our NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign is

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the cornerstone of our IRMP strategy which aims to lead UK Fire and Rescue Authorities into the 21st Century. If they don't do it voluntarily we'll drag them there! The campaign aims to raise the profile of fire deaths and so to promote a popular culture of zero tolerance of fire deaths throughout the UK, amongst the public as well as amongst politicians and all other stakeholders. But we're going much further than simply our NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign. We are looking at new ways and innovative ways of making zero fire deaths a reality. As part of our consultation we as a Union are looking at fire detection systems that can save lives and property."

WESTMINSTER LAUNCH

Mike told delegates that at the recent launch in Westminster of the NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign the FBU unveiled an initiative to extend access to multipoint domestic fire alarms which will alert people earlier to the existence of a fire and challenged Fire Authorities and Government to match the £10,000 that the FBU has pledged to develop and promote those alarms.

"In a similar manner to the launch of our Document in the 1960s, the campaign to develop a modern and highly skilled protection and firefighting force, the FBU today once again has done much of the groundwork," said Mike, referring to the National IRMP Document that has now been sent to all members, Government, Fire Authorities and Chief Officers.

"This Document heralds a change in the approach to how Fire Services are organised. At its core is a risk-based strategy, not based on hypothetical situations, it's not been dreamed up by consultants in their distant ivory towers. It's based on the real life, everyday experience of Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Operators.

"The FBU strategy recognises the importance of prevention, but also deals with the matter of emergency response. We have consulted and consulted right through the development and preparation of the Document. That is in contrast to the approach taken by too many Fire

and Rescue Authorities who have made their plans in secret before simply telling once again the workforce and the local community that their plan is the right plan.

"When Fire and Rescue Authorities adopt this planning system into their Local Integrated Risk Management Planning they will significantly improve their chances of reducing fire deaths, fire injuries and other losses.

"The IRMP challenge is huge. We need to create and sustain a popular culture of zero tolerance, to drive fire deaths down to the point of zero fire deaths, and to improve the health, safety and welfare of our Firefighters and our Emergency Fire Control Operators, and in doing so, to deliver an even better UK Fire and Rescue Service which builds upon our reputation as the best in the world and does not deliver us into a post code lottery. We need Fire Authorities to change their attitudes today. This Conference demands that change from Government."

IRMP DEPARTMENT

In closing his speech, Mike told delegates that the FBU's National IRMP department will be expanding in the coming year under the leadership of Wales Regional Secretary Dick Pearson, assisted greatly by his colleague Simon Jenkins. The department, he said, will be taking on more staff and will be moving into new purpose-built premises as an IRMP department. It will include both office and meeting accommodation and it will include a training suite with full computer facilities. It will be expanding the already comprehensive IRMP training programme so that even more FBU Officials throughout the whole of the UK can be trained and supported by our department.

"The FBU recognises that the shift to Integrated Risk Management Planning has the real potential to improve the safety of communities, to reduce the risks to Firefighters, and to reduce property loss at emergency incidents. We, and I hope Conference, intend to build on the FBU's recently launched NO₂ Fire Deaths Campaign, build on our call for a zero tolerance of fire deaths, build on our

campaign for a national signal detector alarm initiative, and build on the systems contained within our National IRMP Document, to ensure that with the advent of IRMPs the UK Fire and Rescue Service, our Document, Planning to Make a Real Difference to All Communities, and all Fire and Rescue Staff is sustained."



Adrian Clarke:
"IRMP positive tool"

Speaking in support of the EC Statement, Adrian Clarke from Cambridgeshire, said: "As soon as IRMPs came out in Cambridgeshire, we saw it as something positive. We saw it as our chance to fashion the Fire Service of the future. Yes, we are frustrated that we are not being listened to, but when I looked at the documents produced by our members, a great many Fire Authorities could not believe the professional way in which they had been produced. They also could not believe the content within them. I think it is a positive tool. I think we can use it and I think we need to embrace it."

Pete Gallagher from West Midlands added his support to the EC Statement and declared himself "proud" to be involved in the launch of the National IRMP Document at the Conference.

"We fully recognise the hard work that has gone into producing this Document and congratulate and thank the people involved in the process of producing it," he said. "IRMPs by their very nature are going to be a fluid Document which will change our response and our response must be fluid also, but we must never change the principle of zero fire deaths and fight for the principles of critical attendance standards. "The Document gives us a good, solid start and I expect this Union to make good progress on the zero fire deaths policy within the next 12 months."

"Initially, the fear is that Fire Authorities will introduce IRMPs to reduce staffing and all costs associated with intervention. It is our job to make sure that does not happen

and to turn them around to implement them in the way that they should be: to improve the safety of the community and the health and safety of our members.

He added: "For that reason we should not fear IRMPs; we should embrace them and use them as a tool to achieve our aims. This can be done. We know it can be done because we have done it in the West Midlands."

West Yorkshire was supportive of the EC Statement, arguing: "We are in a new era of opportunity in the Fire and Rescue Service. IRMP gives us the opportunity to improve the way that we provide the service to the public in Britain."

However, it proposed a resolution, which passed, after an amendment by London, "that in the event of the death or injury of a member of the Fire Brigades Union as a result of the implementation of an integrated risk management plan, which produces a reduction in emergency cover, the Executive Council is to pursue every possible avenue open to them, including Legal Action, Industrial

Action and bringing charges of Corporate Manslaughter, to bring to account the Fire Authority concerned and its Brigade Management."

The West Yorkshire delegate said: "Government, the employers, principal managers and the FBU fully support the principle of risk based Fire Service planning and the concept of risk-based emergency fire cover provision. The move to prevention, protection and intervention must be the way forward to bring about the improvement in our Service that we all agree is very desirable."

"But this improvement must not be driven by budgetary constraints or on the back of principal managers' ambitions which fly in the face of established operational procedures and the safety of our members. Improvement must not be achieved by experimentation which threatens the safety of the public or members of this Union."

"The intent of this motion is very clear. We need to send out a very strong and crystal clear message to all Fire

Authorities and all Brigade managers. Carry on with your radical ideas to modernise our Fire Service.

"Carry on cutting corners in the way we operate and the way we train. But if you do that, make sure that your IRMP provision includes a provision for a decent legal team because if just one of our members is hurt or killed as a result of one of your IRMPs, you are going to need them because we will see you in court."

A delegate from London added: "If Chief Executives and elected politicians make cuts under the guise of IRMPs, it will put our members at risk and they should be held to account. Our members deserve the maximum protection under the law. Send a clear message to these people."

Mike Fordham returned to the rostrum to declare the EC's recommendation to Conference to support the West Yorkshire resolution, amended by London, "accepting, though, the difficulties of bringing about cases as a Union of corporate manslaughter."

Education Review – preparing for the challenges

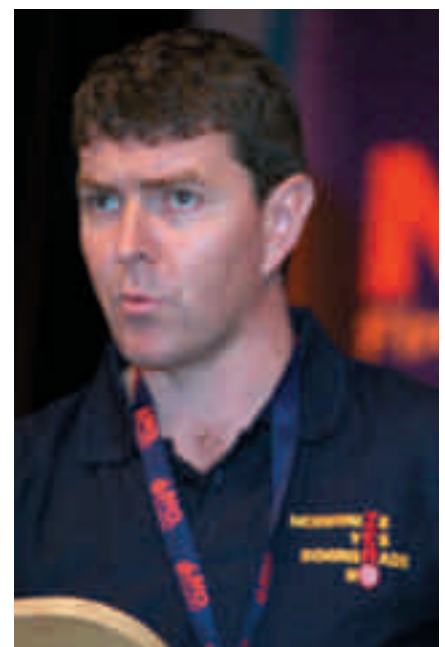
THE Executive Council Policy Statement, Education Review was carried.

In proposing it, National Officer John McGhee said: "They say there is no better education than the University of Life, and for a trade Unionist there can be no better learning experience than the kind of pay campaign and dispute we in the FBU have all lived and breathed in the past two to three years."

"I am talking about the lessons we have learned on the picket lines; the lessons we have learned in coming up against and seeking to influence the political establishment; the lessons we have learned as we felt at times the overwhelming force of the State; the lessons we have learned in trying to get our arguments across with

the media, the so called third estate and with the public; the lessons we learned in seeking solidarity and receiving, without ever asking, from our comrades and other trade Unions in this country and abroad; the lessons we learned in trying to build the widest possible coalition in support."

"Some of these lessons were brutal and some were inspiring. Our national campaign has been a learning experience of a lifetime and something we must build on as we go forward with purpose and direction, because we should all be the wiser, the more learned, for the great struggle we have been waging these past two to three years. That struggle exposed our tremendous strengths and our weaknesses too.



John McGhee: "national campaign the learning experience of a lifetime"

CONFERENCE



"The FBU's education policy must be central to tackling those weaknesses and building on those strengths. Indeed, during the pay campaign there was an extremely strong education programme. Despite some cancellations of formal, regular skills and seminars, the Union ran a string of seminars for campaign coordinators and Officials at all levels designed at bolstering, in particular, their organisational capacities and their awareness and their ability to respond to the coming challenges."

"We had, I believe, a successful National Political School last year that looked at the pay campaign, the dispute and the broader political context in which it is taking place. Yet, we cannot be complacent. There is much to do and the demands on Union Officials, you, all of us, are becoming ever greater and more complex."

John went on to remind delegates the EC's position at the 1998 Conference that the education strategy should continually be reviewed and outlined the EC's conclusions following a review of the Union's education programme by Professor Mary Davis.

The aim of the Education Programme is to fulfil two key functions, he said:

- educating and raising awareness,
- training and development skills;

Professor Davis found "real weaknesses", which the proposed review aimed to address, but, over the past five years, the

Union has succeeded, uniquely compared to other Unions, in raising the political awareness of our members, of developing among members an understanding of the politics of change and the equality agenda and the practical implications of its application.

To deal with the weaknesses and build on the strengths of the education programme, John said: "We should not attempt to do it all...We should stop providing basic training and skills development for Officials for these are general skills required by all Union reps or shop stewards," he said, making "greater use of the TUC courses, including those on health and safety."

ADVANTAGES

This would save money. But there were other advantages of this approach, he said: "This is a lesson we learned very early on in our campaign, that mixing with other trade Unionists and learning from their experiences and other sectors and industries, of course, prevents us from becoming insular in our own trade Union work. Another major benefit of TUC courses is that they are tutor-led and accredited, which is something we have always encouraged inside of this Union."

John added: "All FBU Schools should deal with the concerns of all FBU members working any duty system inside the Fire Service. That is Officers, Firefighters,

Control and our Retained members. We must deal with equality and we will.

"Our current policy does not cater specifically for Brigade, Regional or Sectional Officials.

"Regions must now address the needs of those Officials and assist in the development of skills and knowledge in order that Brigade Officials obtain the tools to carry out their jobs more successfully.

"We must look immediately at the level of negotiating skills, especially given the new challenges of local bargaining that most of you will now face."

"With the emergence of Regional Management Boards, we must be equipped to take the lead on Fire Service Matters," he added.

John continued that the flagship National School would henceforth be called the National Political School and that the policy would remain flexible in order to hold seminars and Schools on any number of Fire and Rescue Service matters, pointing to the recent EC decision to have a School on pensions and a forthcoming National School on Retained issues.

Other novelties of the programme included the establishment of a new National Education Committee consisting of four EC Members, four Regional Education Officers and the Education Officer from B&EMM from the Gay & Lesbian Committee and from the National Women's Committee.

On accreditation, John said: "In line with the FBU's commitment to life long learning, we should also investigate how we can allow FBU members through a credit system, and that is you as well as Officials, to continue their educational journey by progressing to higher educational courses, undergraduate or postgraduate level."

"What is being proposed by the EC is a leap in the quantity and quality of the FBU's education," John continued. "Such a leap we must make if we are to be up to the challenges we face as a Union defending the members' interests and a rapidly changing industrial and political environment."

EMPLOYMENT LAW

The UK – still a reluctant European?



The Government needs Union support for a yes Vote for the new EU Constitution as well as getting re-elected next year. It is unlikely to get it unless it signs up to the social charter, argues Carolyn Jones

GOVERNMENT Ministers are always keen to remind us of the many new rights enjoyed by UK workers following the election of a Labour Government. No doubt such claims will once again feature prominently in the run up to the next election. But how many of those rights are home grown and how many are thanks to Europe?

Many UK rights came from Europe rather than our own Government.

- The introduction of the 48 hour week came from the European Working Time Directive
- The introduction of four weeks holiday came from the European Working Time Directive
- Rights following transfers (TUPE) came from the European Acquired Rights Directive
- Rights to information and consultation stem from the European Framework Directive on Information and Consultation
- Extensions to protection against discrimination come from the European Framework Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment and Occupation.

But in some respects the claims of Labour Ministers are true – Labour did open the door to important new rights. The 1997 Labour Manifesto committed the incoming Labour Government to sign the Social Chapter of the Maastricht Treaty thereby ending the Tory negotiated opt-out. That action alone meant UK workers

gained rights to parental leave, equal treatment for part-time workers and access to European Works Councils. It also tied us in to future rights negotiated at the European level.

But since fulfilling that Manifesto pledge, the UK has been among the most active in opposing any new European employment rights, blocking rights for agency workers, weakening rights on information and consultation and creating huge gaps in working time rights.

This ingrained hostility to spreading European rights to UK workers was confirmed by Jack Straw at a speech to the CBI. Talking about the draft European Constitution, he pledged to block any attempt to reverse Thatcherite trade Union reforms, promising instead to “put the interests of business at the heart of our (European) negotiating position”

Mr Straw said “We will insist ... that the charter of fundamental rights creates no new rights under national law so as not to upset the balance of Britain’s industrial relations policy”. Initial reports on the new Constitution suggest that the UK has succeeded in blocking attempts to include protection for the right to strike in the new Constitution, making such rights a political declaration with no direct legal enforceability.

But all is not lost. Mr Blair needs trade Union support to win a yes vote in any referendum on the Constitution. More importantly, the Labour Party needs Union support to secure a third term

Labour Government. As Union after Union have warned, such support is increasingly unlikely unless basic trade Union demands are written into the next manifesto.

So what do we want to see? Continuing the focus on Europe, there are five basic but important improvements we should demand:

- Revisions to the Working Time Regulations so that employers can not count bank holidays in the basic 4 week entitlement and an end to the opt-out which allows employers to force workers to agree to work more than 48 hours.
- Full implementation of the Temporary/Agency Workers Directive, which provides protection for agency workers
- Better enforcement mechanisms and stricter penalties against companies who fail to inform and consult workers prior to major workplace changes. Returning to the proposal that decisions without agreement should be “null and void”
- Inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the draft EU constitution so that UK workers can benefit from rights enjoyed throughout Europe
- Full and proper implementation of the Posted Workers Directive to protect the rights of migrant workers.

Many Labour Members of the European Parliament have been working with trade Unions at National and European level to win advances in employment rights – despite hostility from the UK Government. They have won significant improvements but they need our support.

The Charter of Fundamental Social Rights can deliver employment rights to UK workers if the political will is there. These rights are important because their repeal requires the consent of other Member States and are therefore safe against any future UK Conservative Government. But is the political will there? If our five basic demands are not in the Manifesto, it is unlikely that Blair will win any Union support. Labour signed up to the Social Chapter now it must sign up to the social charter.

Carolyn Jones is Director of the Institute of Employment Rights.

EDUCATION

Lifelong learning

The FBU is advancing the Lifelong Learning Agenda with a £1.2 million Union Learning Fund Project, reports Trevor Shanahan

SO, YOU'VE always wanted to get back into learning? Wanted to know just what happens when you push the 'on' button of the computer? Would have liked an opportunity to brush up on everyday skills such as literacy and numeracy? Or maybe learn a new language?

At one time or the other we have all probably said to ourselves that it would be good to learn something new but the opportunity has never arisen. So why did we never take up the challenge? No doubt for many reasons: too much work on already, looking after the kids, shift patterns and of course a dread, when you get a bit older, of going back to a college.

So what's this got to do with the FBU? Our Union has always been heavily involved in trade Union education, providing courses in areas such as Branch Officials, H&S, Fairness at Work while also giving assistance for some members taking degrees in political studies. The FBU is now taking this a stage further and is to become involved in the wider world of education and learning by engaging in the lifelong learning agenda.

For many of us learning stopped at the school gate or when we had finished that college course that would get us a job and earning some beer money. For some of us it lasted a little longer when we entered the Fire and Rescue Service and found ourselves revisiting formulae for nozzle discharges and working out how much

water a swimming pool contained!

But things change and as we all know, the Fire Service has and is undergoing a dramatic transformation in the skills we require to be Firefighters or Emergency Fire Control Staff.

New technology and Information Communication Technology (ICT) is now having a huge impact on the way we carry out our role in the Fire Station, Control Room and Fireground. Yet, for instance, if you asked many of our members how good their 'ICT' skills were the answer would tend to be at the bottom end of a one to ten scale.

A recent survey showed that around

Around 400 members have benefited from the two projects providing them with diverse learning opportunities in sign language, Spanish, Orienteering – even forklift truck qualifications!

90% of new jobs in the UK would require the use of ICT and the Fire Service is no different.

It's also true of course about basic skills or everyday skills such as, literacy, numeracy and communication. It's not that we never had them (after all we passed the Fire Service entrance exam) but how often have we had to use them and when you do, how easy do they come back? You will know what I mean if you have ever had to read or tried to decipher some of the accident reports or calculated the fuel returns on station!

Over the last seven years the TUC and its affiliated Unions have become engaged in driving forward and encouraging their members to get involved in learning. A lot of this work has been done through the introduction of Union Learning Representatives (ULRS). I will come back to them shortly.

Firstly we need to look at reasons why the FBU and the TUC consider that encouraging, supporting and opening learning opportunities to Union members carries the same importance as carrying out an H&S inspection.

Some statistics to ponder on: 60 trade Unions are already helping their members access learning opportunities, over 400 projects have or are taking place in around 6000 workplaces resulting in over 30,000 workers completing accredited courses and why?

Well here's some more statistics to ponder: Around 3.2 million people in work have a basic skill need, 56% of workers are sub-level 2 in literacy and 75% are sub-level 2 in numeracy. In another key area, ICT skills, around 91% of workers are sub-level 2, which, given that 90% of new jobs require ICT, is a worrying skills gap.

Alongside this, of those people without work 42% are unemployable because of the skills gap and further evidence shows that workers fail to keep up their skills.

Given the figures it is easy to assess the effect this has on the workplace, the employer and most importantly the worker. It just doesn't stop at work though; the lack of these basic skills can have a big impact on the family lives of workers. For instance, how many of us would love to sit down with the kids and help them with their homework or log on and join them 'surfing the net'?

On a more insular note I feel the need to point out that the Integrated Personal Development System (IPDS) which is being



For many of us learning stopped at the school gate or when we had finished that college course that would get us a job and earning some beer money

introduced across the UK Fire Service and payment for new skills may highlight a learning need for many of our members. If the FBU's promotion of lifelong learning can help our members get a tick in the box then as a Union we need to make sure they have those opportunities.

So how is the FBU going to progress the learning agenda and provide yet another key service for its members?

Over the last two/three years Regions 1 and 3 have been involved in 'testing the water' with successful funding bids through the Union Learning Fund in

England and its equivalent in Scotland (SULF). In both Regions, members have taken on the role of the Union Learning Representatives (ULR) who will offer guidance and advice to staff interested in accessing learning.

The ULRs received statutory backing in April 2003 and they now have similar rights to H&S reps regarding access to facilities, time off to attend courses and time off to meet new learners. As we progress, the Union will be encompassing ULR's in our Rule Book to provide the framework of support they will need.

A major achievement in Region 3 was the opening of the first FBU Learning Centre in Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service. Linked to the TUC and Learndirect, the centre now employs seven staff throughout the Region, who, as well as offering advice and guidance, sign members up for courses. The vast majority of these have been ICT courses that can be accessed from the centre or from home along with support from the staff.

These courses start from the basics leading to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL) of which it is an accredited assessment centre.

Around 400 members have benefited from the two projects providing them with diverse learning opportunities in sign language, Spanish, orienteering – even forklift truck qualifications!

Given the success of these projects, a small sub-committee of the FBU's Education Committee was set-up to look into the feasibility of putting together a national bid for funding from the Union Learning Fund. This was completed towards the end of November 2003 and a project bid completed and submitted to the Executive Council for approval. In December the bid was Officially passed to the Learning Skills Council for consideration. Following a bit of tweaking, we were given the approval of funding for £1.2 million over two years.

Included in the project cost was the funding for a project manager, finance manager and ten Regional co-ordinators. Their job is to oversee the project and embed lifelong learning as a mainstream

Union function. Adrian Slassor and I have been appointed by the Executive Council as the project managers and will be looking to each Region to co-opt a FBU member to become the Regional ULF co-ordinator.

Already a number of Regional Committees have invited members of the group along to give a briefing on what it's all about and how to progress lifelong learning. For more information on how to go about getting the presentation see the e-mail addresses at the end of this report.

Learning should be fun and lifelong learning isn't about taking away the employers duty to train their staff. Yes we will help with real workplace development schemes. However, our purpose of learning delivery is for the individual member.

On a final note, a very important quote from the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Training: 'Learning is the process by which a person constructs new knowledge, skills and capabilities, whereas training is

Lifelong learning isn't about taking away the employers' duty to train their staff. Our purpose of learning delivery is for the individual member

one of several responses an organisation can undertake to promote learning'.

The FBU has always looked forward to challenges on behalf of its own members and those of the wider trade Union movement. Lifelong learning is a worthy subject for a challenge and I am sure we can progress well over the next two years.

For further information contact:

Trevor Shanahan oireo@fbu.org.uk
mobile 07801047618

Adrian Slassor aslassor@northumberland.gov.uk mobile 07876583131

CHARITY

World Firefighter Games

THE UK will play host to the 8th World Firefighters Games on 28th August – 4th September. They are being jointly hosted by South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service and Humberside Fire and Rescue Service.

In the past the games have been held in Australia, France, New Zealand, USA, Canada and South Africa. This is the first time in the UK and will be the biggest sporting event in the country this year.

The games will see up to 4000 competitors from across the world compete in 61 sporting events and fire related activities. The aim will be to raise money for three fire trauma and burns charities.

They will be based in Sheffield centred on the Don Valley Bowl. A huge 2500 seat marquee will be the centrepiece, which will become the games village. This will house the social entertainment for the games as well as some of the 61 events.

Amongst this year's events will be Athletics, Football, Rugby, Tennis, Judo, Wrestling, Challenge Course, Shooting and Volleyball.

There is a competition for everyone. Once registered it is possible to enter as many of the sports and events as possible.

The games will be a fantastic oppor-



tunity to meet comrades from across the World. As well as the sporting events the entertainment will be just as exciting. Entertainment will include a Yorkshire theme night as well as a bodybuilding performance from Mr UK, Dave Steel.

The games are open to Full Time, Part Time, Volunteer, Industrial and Military Personnel employed full-time in a Fire Service, Emergency Medical staff and non-uniformed staff employed by a Fire Service and retired Firefighters.

Anyone wishing to watch the events can do so free of charge. Volunteers are also required. Anyone interested should contact Annie Scott on 0114 2736688.

For more information log on to www.wffg.co.uk or call the office 0114 244 7686

Banner Theatre reaches a 30-year milestone

THIS autumn, Banner Theatre – the only English theatre company working with the labour and trade Union movement – reaches its 30th anniversary.

Founded in 1974, Banner identified working with the trade Union movement as its key priority, making the real-life experiences of working-class people the subject of its productions.

Over 30 years the company has worked with and for trade Unions at local, Regional and national levels, including projects with CYWU, FBU, GMB, GPMU, ISTC, MSF, NATFHE, NUJ, NUMAST, NUM, UCATT, USDAW and Unison.

CURRENT SHOWS

THROUGHOUT 2004 Banner is continuing this tradition of creating topical, hard-hitting, thought-provoking music and song-based multimedia theatre with and for trade Unions and other campaigning organisations.

In March the company opened *Burning Issues*, a new show combining video and live performance, to mark the twentieth anniversary of the 1984/5 Miners Strike, and this has been touring to community and trade Union audiences in the North East, Yorkshire, Lancashire, the Midlands, London and South Wales.

Banner is also touring its internationally acclaimed production, *Migrant Voices*, made with Iranian and Iraqi Kurdish asylum seekers in the West Midlands and the North West of England. The show has been touring since 2003 in both England and Canada.

NEW PRODUCTION

THE company's next major project will be a new anti-racist production, based on work

with local communities in Birmingham and the North West and will tour from 2005.

This follows *Migrant Voices* and *Black and White in the Red*, the 2001 collaboration with the FBU and B&EMM Section, which examined racism in the UK Fire Service, and led to a show, which toured Fire Stations, and a CD, featuring music and songs, intercut with interviews with black, white and ethnic minority Firefighters.

ANNIVERSARY APPEAL

TO celebrate its 30th anniversary, Banner is planning:

- a new CD with music and songs from several shows;
- a songbook and social history, *Singing the Changes*, featuring the company's work with trade Unions and other communities, with stories, photos, lyrics and musical notation; and
- a celebration event with performances, discussions and speakers, featuring Tony Benn and Trade Union Leaders.

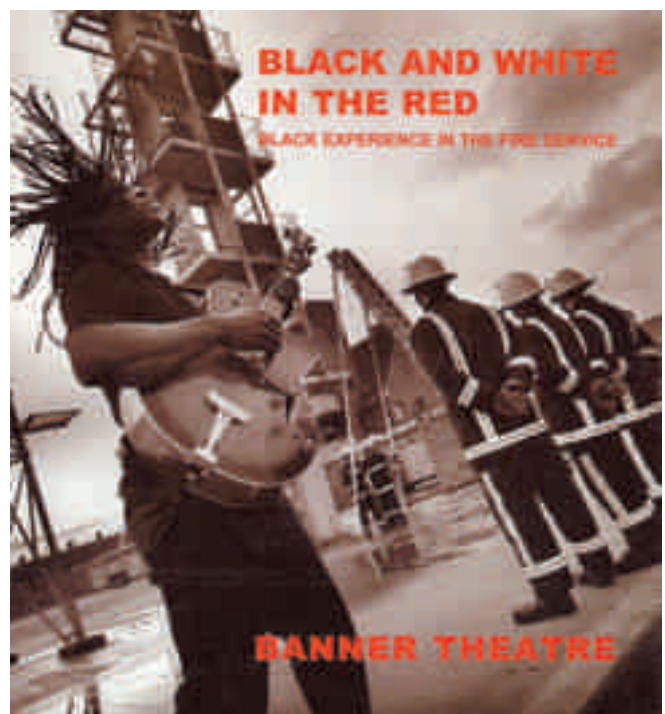
To help finance this, Banner has launched an appeal to trade Unions to raise £10,000 and has received major donations from the NUM, NAS/UWT

and the PFA, with additional support from Amicus, BECTU, CPSU, CWU, GPMU, NATFHE, NUMAST, NUT, TGWU and USDAW. These donations help us access matching funds from the Arts Council and other sources.

If your branch or trades Union council would like to help, please send a donation to Banner Theatre, 23 Endwood Court Road, Handsworth Wood, Birmingham B20 2RX. For more information ring us on 0121 682 0730 or email office-banner@blueyonder.co.uk

To continue our work and mark its significance 30 years on, we need support from our friends in the FBU. Please help us so that we can continue to help you.

Banner is performing *Burning Issues* on 2 November 2004 at the FBU National School at Wortley Hall.



TIMOTHY ALLEN

INTERNATIONAL

UNIONS REJECT SUPPORT FOR EUROPEAN TREATY

Tony Blair's uphill struggle to win a Yes vote for the European Union Constitution has suffered a major blow days after agreeing a draft with other EU leaders with three of the big four Union leaders saying they could not support the Prime Minister's campaign while he took such a tough stance on workers' rights.

The pro-EU zeal of most of the Union movement has – until now – been a much-needed card up Mr Blair's sleeve, as he struggles to persuade the public to support the new Constitution in a referendum.

But the Prime Minister has alienated useful Union leaders by insisting during final negotiations on June 17-18 that the Constitution's Charter of Fundamental Rights could not be used to rewrite national laws.

Tony Woodley of the Transport and General Workers' Union and Kevin Curran of the GMB joined Derek Simpson of Amicus, who kicked off the criticisms when he said the Prime Minister could not count on its backing in a referendum because he had not done enough for workers' rights in the constitution talks.

Mr Simpson, whose Union is in favour of the UK joining the Single European Currency, said: "It will be very difficult for any trade Union leader to persuade their members to be voting, or campaign for the Constitution if it only creates a businessman's Europe and not a working man's Europe.

The Government has got to make clear that it's fully supporting the European social agenda and intending to give British workers the same advantages they have elsewhere in Europe."

Opinion polls show British people would probably reject the Constitution.

During the negotiations in Brussels that led to agreement on the Constitution, Mr Blair insisted that the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the treaty be amended to ensure the UK's business-friendly labour laws remain "as flexible as they are now".

Unions had hoped the Charter would enshrine the rights and protection available to workers elsewhere in Europe. Mr Blair insisted it should not change national laws.

The TUC had joined 60 million trade Unionists in the 25 countries of the European Union to warn that a watered down EU Constitution that offers little protection for workers and consumers will struggle to win popular support in referendums across Europe.

www.tuc.org.uk
www.ft.com

GERMAN WORKERS PROTEST JOBS MOVING EAST

As many as 10,000 Siemens AG employees demonstrated in June to protest plans by Germany's largest engineering company to production abroad. Employees at factories from Berlin to Bocholt are staging marches against a relocation plan that Munich-based Siemens has

said may affect 5,000 German jobs, the IG Metall labor Union said.

German manufacturers are cutting jobs in Europe's largest economy while creating them in the East. Siemens is exploring Hungary as a new location for factories producing phones because wages in the country are 30 percent lower. A worker in Berlin earns 2,700 euros a month, compared with 500 euros a month in another favourite location for German foreign investment – Poland.

"This is about people, not just about technology and costs," said IG Metall.

German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder has said German companies shifting production abroad are "unpatriotic."

US FIREFIGHTERS DEMAND PROFESSIONAL WAGE

Thousands of teachers, police officers and Firefighters packed several blocks of Broadway near City Hall on June 9, chanting and waving signs and at times booing Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg in a demonstration of their demands for raises and new labour contracts.

The hour-long program featured dozens of labor leaders, city Democratic politicians and celebrities pledging their support.

Leaders from the three Unions say the city needs to give the teachers and uniformed workers raises of considerably more than the 5 per cent over three years on offer if it is to attract all the

personnel it needs.

Stephen J. Cassidy, President of the Uniformed Firefighters Association said: "The purpose of the rally is to highlight the draconian negotiating tactics of the Bloomberg administration, which directly hurts my officers, their families and public safety." The Union's 8,500 members have worked for two years without a contract, and for three years without a raise. "The mayor and this administration don't value the special work that we do."

...AND US UNIONS DEMAND BUSH'S HEAD

American Unions are campaigning hard to ensure that George Bush is not re-elected. On top of everything else, Bush is preparing a major assault on labour rights in the USA. In preparing for the Union's congress in June, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) President Gerald W. McEntee said the Union will be running its "most aggressive member mobilisation program ever". AFSCME is one of the nation's largest and fastest growing public service employees Unions, with 1.4 million members, and has a sophisticated hands-on political action program.

INTERNATIONAL



Brian with Firefighters in Basra in the kit he accompanied from the UK.

GUY SMALLMAN

A Promise kept

Brian Joyce recounts his return to Iraq. This time he came laden with fire kit for the Firefighters of Basra and Baghdad.

LOGISTICS, definition, detailed planning and organisation of a large operation: well this wasn't but like most things in life. It certainly caused a few problems, the co-ordinating of the collection of the fire kit, arranging transport, storage, container, shipping and general documentation problems were as they say just to mention but a few. But approximately six hundred sets of fire kit which had been kindly donated primarily from Suffolk and Cambridgeshire arrived safely at the port of Umm Quasar on April 8.

Rather than take the same route as on

my previous visit to Iraq it was suggested by Abdullah my interpreter and the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions representative in the UK to take the far safer option of flying to Kuwait and then depending on the current situation in Iraq to travel by road to Basra.

The words safer option tended to influence my decision and we therefore flew to Kuwait on the April 13. We were welcomed by Officials of the Kuwaiti Trade Union Federation. Without their support, the task we were undertaking would have been made far more difficult. To those who I met and befriended me in Kuwait and the KTUF in general I give my thanks for their kindness and hospitality.

The IFTU believed that we could quite safely travel to Basra and spend time there delivering the kit and speaking to Firefighters, provided they were responsible for my safety. However Baghdad did not appear an option any longer and

therefore my time was to be restricted to Basra. An hour or so by car and I was at the Iraqi border met by Officials of the IFTU and their General Secretary, a man imprisoned for ten years due to his belief regarding freedom and democracy and the right to voice that opinion.

Basra was busy, very hot, with streets full of people, goats, and donkeys. The river running through Basra is a dark red brown in colour, smells strongly and is much polluted due to a slaughter house up river. The pavement and part of the road running alongside the river is hidden under a wall of refuge some four metres high and 30 metres long. Children as young as seven or eight, some carrying babies in their arms, play and scavenge amongst this heap.

The people of Iraq need hope, for they have little else: workplaces are still closed, unemployment is at 60%, and there is no water, food or sanitation for many. Death is still on the streets of Iraq, irrespective

INTERNATIONAL

of religion or politics, or whether you are man, women or child.

Arriving at a badly damaged building used by the Basra branch of the IFTU, the container stood waiting for us on a dusty forecourt. It was decided that rather than us go to the Stations the Firefighters would come to us. With fire appliances parked along the street, we started to unload the container. I was warmly greeted by all. The gratitude was obvious.

It took several hours to unload the container and then to carry the kit up the

Since my last visit five Trade Union Committees have been created for Firefighters in Basra and Officials have been elected. But there is so much more that needs to be done.

three flights of stairs to where the storing and distribution were to take place. I spent some time speaking to those present, explaining about the fire kit and the main-

tenance. The intention was to share the fire kit between the Firefighters in Basra and Baghdad, the IFTU having the responsibility of transporting and monitoring the delivery and issue of the kit in Baghdad.

Along one of the corridors

in the building were hundreds of photographs of people stretching down both sides, a shrine to Iraqi trade Unionists and communists murdered under the Saddam

regime.

Since my last visit five Trade Union Committees have been created for Firefighters in Basra and Officials have been elected. There is so much more that needs to be done, so much more that is required, so much more we could do to assist and help. The FBU has a proud tradition of practical solidarity with its comrades abroad, sending equipment to Cuba, Columbia and Iraq. Long may that remain the case.

Brian Joyce is EC Member for Region 14, South West



Basra firefighters celebrate with Brian the arrival of the kit from the UK



Basra Firefighters in the kit that Brian accompanied from the UK

GUY SMALLMAN

LETTERS

What Blair deserves

Dear Firefighter,
I applaud your decision to sever links with the Labour Party, including the annual donation of £50,000.

It is no less than this wretched Government and its appalling leader, Tony Blair, deserve.

Rick Lascelles
(O.O.T), Lincoln

Dear Firefighter
I think asking the press in this country to respect individuals or their families privacy amounts to spitting into the wind.

However, what I and a number of other FBU reps believe is much, much worse is the constant sniping, name calling and snide speculation by some FBU members and – even worse – by some FBU reps towards one of our own – someone who we employ and who, along with the Assistant General Secretary and President, was given a resounding vote of confidence at Annual Conference and rightly so.

If management, employers, or a Fire Authority were to do the same to one of our members we would be up in arms and threatening, if not carrying out at the very least non-compliance. This amounts to nothing short of bullying and harassment and we all know what the FBU thinks of bullies!

If we are indeed, as was stated so often at the Reconvened Conference, to unite and lead the membership in our fight with the real enemy, the despicable and dishonorable employers backed by this corrupt Government, then we must stop doing their job for them and tearing ourselves apart.

We should ALL examine our own consciences as to why we are in the position we are, stop picking on the easy target and blaming the General Secretary and determine to move forward together. If not, then we may as well all roll over and let the employers have a free rein because there will be no real opposition left!

On behalf of the membership of Cleveland I would wish you to pass on

our best wishes to Andy and his family, our hopes for his speedy recovery and his return to the position we need him in, leading the FBU nationally in these difficult times.

Kev Gelders
Cleveland Brigade Chair

Dear Firefighter
FOLLOWING the conclusion of my successful settlement; (thanks to the help of yourselves and Thompsons solicitors and in particular Mr R Grayson), I am writing with much appreciation for the help and strength of the FBU.

Having served with the Cornwall Fire Brigade since May 20th 1974 until 31st December 2001 when I was retired on ill health I was a member of the FBU and supported all the efforts they made on our behalf to make the Fire Brigade conditions as they are today. I was lucky enough not to have to call on their help on a personal note during my service until the incident in which my life was placed at risk.

The Union proved invaluable in my particular case and for which I am eternally grateful. I would like this placed on record.

Name and address supplied

Dear Firefighter,
HAVING had the backing of the FBU in my recent medical appeal through Richard Jones who in my opinion was most professional and competent in concluding the successful appeal, I would like to make a small donation to the FBU for supporting me over the past year.

P R Howard, Bookham

Dear Firefighter,
THE edited version of my article on broadcasting policy in the May 2004 edition is misleading. It states that all terrestrial channels can now be taken over by non-EU interests. The legislation refers to commercial, not BBC, channels and in my opinion there is no chance that Murdoch will be taking over the BBC. The main danger to public service broadcasting is not from Murdoch

himself but from a Government which is committed to maximising the role of the market in broadcasting. We need to be aware of this in the coming years when the future of the BBC is up for grabs (though not in the hands of Murdoch)

Des Freedman, University of London



The Firefighter welcomes letters from readers.

Please send them to:

FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston Upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE or Firefighter@fbu.org.uk,

including your name, address, branch/Region and a contact telephone number.

OBITUARY

Richard John Jenkins

SUNDAY 23 May 2004, there was an explosion at a fire in the Caerau area of Cardiff. As a result of the injuries that he sustained, Firefighter Richard John Jenkins of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, died. Richard leaves behind a wife and two young children.

These words convey the terrible and tragic news, but there is so much more to say and those words are far harder to find.

Richard had joined London Fire Brigade in February 1995 and following training had served at Euston Fire Station. In January 2002 he transferred to South Wales Fire and Rescue Service and was stationed at Abertillery. In December 2002 he transferred within the Brigade to Barry where he joined White Watch.

Richard married his partner and the mother of his two children on June 25th 2003 in Jamaica.

Richard was moving towards home, he lived in Bridgend and wanted to be nearer his wife Cathy and his son Connor and daughter Charlot, for first and foremost he was a family man. The move to Barry suited him and he enjoyed life on the



Watch and made many friends within the Brigade. He enjoyed physical training and was aiming to compete in a triathlon this summer. He was a quiet guy, thoughtful and intelligent but liked and respected by his comrades. His easy going disposition and ability to find humour in most situations had soon established him as a prominent member of the Watch.

Richard will be deeply missed by his friends and comrades and all who knew him. The thoughts of all of those people and many more besides will be with Richard's family at this time. May they draw strength and comfort from the knowledge of the high regard and esteem in which Richard will always be held.

DIARY



Monday **13 September** **BRIGHTON**
Thursday **16 September**
TUC Conference 2004

Sunday **26 September** **BRIGHTON**
Thursday **30 September**
Labour Party Conference

Friday, **8 October** **WORTLEY HALL**
Sunday **10 October**
FBU Black and Ethnic Minority
Members School

Friday **15 October** **WORTLEY HALL**
Sunday **17 October**
FBU Gay and Lesbian School

Friday **15 October** **LONDON**
Sunday **17 October**
European Social Forum

Saturday **30 October** **WORTLEY HALL**
Friday **5 November**
FBU National School

ON THE MOVE?



Members are reminded to advise their Brigade Membership Secretary of any change of address. Head Office should be advised of any changes of next of kin or nominations for benefits.

REMEMBRANCE PARADE

Lest we forget

Last November saw perhaps the largest and most diverse turn-out on record. Let's start preparing now to make the event on this special anniversary year even bigger, says Arthur Lockyear

AN invitation to Sunderland Remembrance Parade. Sunday 9th November, 2003 saw Sunderland hosting perhaps the biggest Remembrance parade outside of London, with representatives from organisations as diverse as the Household Cavalry, RNLI and Durham Miners' Association who gathered together to pay their respects

The parade was led by four Chelsea Pensioners who were resplendent in their



senting sixteen Brigades from Fife to Merseyside, and London to Avon. We were led by a strong "Colour" Party, and a great

many wreaths were laid on behalf of most participating Brigades, the National Office

and four Regions of the Fire Brigades Union, CACFOA, Women Networking in the Fire Service, the IFE, and HM Fire Services Inspectorate.

The family of the late Firefighter Fleur Lombard QGM were present, and Fleur's father Roger marched with the Fire Service contingent to lay a poppy wreath in memory of his daughter, and all women who paid the ultimate price whether in the Fire Service or not. Also on parade was Rob Seaman, who was awarded the George Medal for his gallant attempt to save Fleur.

It was, comrades, a moving and solemn occasion, and I feel very proud that the Fire Service and the FBU are considered to be the driving force behind it all.

This year the Band and Bugles of the Light Division one of the premier musical

units of the British Army will lead what will be another great parade. For the first time we hope to have representatives from the Merchant Navy Association, Suez Veterans Association and the Region's Sikh community on parade.

On this special anniversary year of the battles of Normandy, Kohima, Arnhem and others, I hope that we as Firefighters, Emergency Fire Control Staff, and of course, trade Unionists can work to ensure that every War Memorial, however small and however remote, has some degree of FBU and Fire Service representation.

We as a Service and as a Union have strength of purpose and sincerity to give our veterans the support and appreciation they deserve.

red tunics, and medals. Following these gentleman were the Royal Naval Reserve, the Coldstream Guards, Royal Military Police, and over one hundred young soldiers from the Infantry Training Centre,



and the Army Foundation College.

The Fire Service fielded one of the biggest individual groups on parade (as part of the Emergency Services Company) with over sixty men and women repre-

ANY FBU member wishing to be a part of the Sunderland Remembrance Parade on Sunday 14th November, or the 60th anniversary parade to mark "VJ" Day on 14th August, 2005, should contact Arthur Lockyear on 0191 373 2035 for details of the parade, accommodation, and the Saturday evening charity concert given by the Band and Bugles of the Light Division

25 YEAR BADGES



Steve Dyke, Homerton Branch receiving his 25 year badge from Group Secretary, Karl Haider



Dennis Westmoreland, East Greenwich, White Watch, receives his 25 year badge from Dickie Lightfoot, Branch Chair



Martin Holman receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Officers Secretary, Pan Poullais



Neal Bailey receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Officers Secretary Pan Poullais



Allan King receives his 25 year badge from Andy Pomroy, Watford Fire Station, Region 10



Edward Gallagher receives his 25 year badge from Andy Pomroy, Watford Fire Station, Region 10



Andy Steedman receives his 25 year badge from Brigade Officers Secretary Pan Poullais



Gary Brown, Chorley Fire Station, Lancashire, receives his 25 year badge from Pete Reilly



Steve Prescott, Chorley Fire Station, Lancashire, receives his 25 year badge from Pete Reilly



Mark Skeggs of Bethnal Green Branch receives his 25 year badge from Matt Wrack



Barry Steele, Bethnal Green receives his 25 year badge from Karl Haider, Group Secretary