

# BRIGADE OFFICIALS IN KEY CAMPAIGN MEETING



## **Pensions, control and rank to role on the agenda**

Pensions, control and rank to role were discussed at length at an FBU brigade officials' meeting held in London on March 7.

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist led the briefing and discussions on pushing forward the Union's strategy.

Assistant General Secretary Mike Fordham also talked in more detail on rank to role. National Officer Paul Woolstenholmes gave the details on Pensions, while National Officers Geoff Ellis and John McGhee talked on the Control CARE campaign and the parliamentary work the Union is doing to support these campaigns, respectively. President Ruth Winters also made contributions.

The objective of the day was to ensure brigade officials were

informed of the actions taken by the Union at a national level in respect to these three key issues and for the Executive Council and national leadership to get the latest information on how the membership felt about these issues.

It was also an opportunity for brigade officials to highlight to their colleagues in other brigades and to the General Secretary, President and National Officers the challenges they faced in leading and co-ordinating these campaigns locally.

There was a broad range of questions and contributions from officials from a range of brigades across the UK. The views expressed and information provided by brigade officials will be reported back to the Executive Council at its next meeting and will help inform the decisions of the EC on these key issues.

Brigade officials were also urged to send in details of local agreements to the LRD for the FBU Pay and Conditions Database and to encourage members in their brigade to use the political lobbying tool on the FBU website.

### **Pensions:Lobby Your MP Now!**

New letters are now available for members to send to MPs to ensure they keep the issue of OUR pensions in the forefront of their minds as they seek votes from us and our families in the General Election.

Click on the "Lobby Your MP" link from the home page of the FBU website ([www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk)), enter your post code and your MP will pop up. Then enter your name, address and email, and "send". It takes just 3 clicks and less than 3 minutes. It's simple - really.

A number of members and officials have used this facility but many haven't. If you fit into that later category do it - NOW! The election - mostly probably May 5 - is just round the corner.

### **Received a response from your MP? Let us know**

Members are asked to forward copies of any responses from MPs to John McGhee, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston Upon Thames, KT2 7AE or by email to [pensions@fbu.org.uk](mailto:pensions@fbu.org.uk).

Those who met their MPs during constituency week last month - or in November - please also let us know what your MP said by

mailing/emailing us at the above postal/email addresses.

### **Control CARE campaign - SW**

FBU South West has called for the Government to stop playing political games with the people of the South West and make public its decision on the location of the proposed South West Regional Fire Control Room.

The FBU believes that the Government is delaying the public announcement of the site until after the General Election due to the adverse publicity this decision will bring throughout the South West from public, Control Room staff and firefighters alike despite the fact that this decision has already been made.

FBU members in all 7 Fire Control Rooms are being treated with utter contempt by Ministers and Civil Servants in the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM), it is impossible for our members to be able to plan their lives when they have this level of uncertainty hanging over their heads.

South West Regional Official John Drake said:

"The FBU calls upon the Government to make public the decision it has made in private. The people in the South West have a right to know where the Government plans to locate these call centres, not just in the South West but nationally.

"Our members are unable to make fundamental decisions in their

lives due to the political shenanigans that the ODPM are playing. The public have a right to know so that they can make a fully informed decision when it comes to any elections."

## **Control CARE campaign - R7**

Members from all the five control rooms in Region 7 - Hereford & Worcester, West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire and Shropshire - attended the protest arranged at the regional management board meeting on Thursday March 3. Regional and national officials also attended.

"The RMB seems intent on pursuing the idea of a regional centre despite the arguments against from the outline business plan," says Dave Limer, regional secretary.

The regional Control CARE campaign group is set to intensify its campaign with local politicians and the public, warning them of the dangers if a regional control centre goes ahead.

## **Lobby Your MP - Controls**

Send a letter to your MP calling for their support in our campaign to stop the madcap plans to regionalise emergency fire controls. Follow the the "Lobby Your MP" link as described above.

Please forward copies of any replies you receive from MPs to National Officer Geoff Ellis at Head Office or email them to [CARE@fbu.org.uk](mailto:CARE@fbu.org.uk).

## **London against IRMP cuts**

FBU London has called a march and rally against the proposed cuts in London, which could lead to the loss of 180 firefighter jobs. The event will take place on Thursday 17th March, the day when the Fire Authority meets. The rally will start at 12.30pm at City Hall, The Queen's Walk, London SE1 2AA. London regional secretary Matt Wrack will be speaking, alongside local councillors and MPs from a variety of political parties.

FBU General Secretary Andy Gilchrist will be putting the case against the cuts and for a safer London, alongside the chief proponent of the cuts, London fire chief Ken Knight, on BBC London's Politics Show this Sunday lunchtime (starts 12.30pm).

*Members are urged to sign write to their MP to ask them to support Early Day Motion 551: London Fire Service cuts. A model letter which can be sent via email is available on the FBU website. Click on the 'Lobby Your MP' link from the homepage.*

## **West Mids against IRMP cuts**

The Union is mounting a major campaign to counter the cuts proposed in the latest draft IRMP of West Midlands fire authority. The IRMP proposes cuts in appliances at night between the hours of midnight and 0800 hours which will see a reduction from 62 in the daytime to 47 at night - effectively a 25% reduction during these hours. The Union has held a meeting at Westminster with Midland

MPs, which resulted in a parliamentary adjournment debate being held, and a large petition as well as thousands of letters are to be handed into the Fire Authority.

## **Staffs against IRMP cuts**

The Union has also mounted a major campaign involving the public and local press against cuts proposals under the IRMP in Staffordshire.

The Fire Authority is seeking to remove five retained pumps to from multi pump stations and announced at the recent budget meeting that there would be 16 uniformed job cuts. An aerial appliance also faces the chop. FBU members and officials in Staffordshire have collected some 8,000 signatures in a petition - and the Union hopes to soon gain as many as 20,000.

## **Stop the racists**

The BNP finished in third place in the by-election held in Stoke on Trent East Valley ward last Thursday thanks in part to efforts of local FBU members and officials.

The poor result for the racist party came as a blow since the BNP were using this election as a spring board for the forthcoming mayoral election and general election in Stoke-on-Trent.

The BNP had 150 people canvassing in the ward every day. But North Staffs Campaign Against Rascism and Fascism - in which a number of FBU members are active and of which regional treasurer Chris Woods is chair - counter-acted this activity

by getting people out every night and weekend right up to the election day.

Some FBU members were attacked by members of the BNP and the police were called. The BNP then rang the local media and said we had attacked them!

BNP leader Nick Griffin was in the ward on many occasions flanked by six bullies intimidating voters at the polling stations. But Staffs Campaign Against Racism turned up and stopped them.

"The BNP finished in third place. They were absolutely gutted at the count they were using this election as a spring board for the forthcoming mayoral election and general election in Stoke on Trent.

"We must at every opportunity stop these fascists and we can by working together. We need trade unionists to work with other anti racist groups all over the country where the BNP raises its ugly head and get rid of this cancer once and for all," says Chris Wood.

*To receive the e-bulletin and other FBU campaign news/information by email go to [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk) and subscribe.*

### **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.