

# FBU IN SOMERSET TRADE DISPUTE



## **Union prepared to launch ballot for industrial action over new dimension insurance cover**

The Union will launch a ballot for industrial action in Somerset should the fire authority refuse to reverse its decision to leave the families of firefighters injured or killed while attending a terrorist incident bearing the financial burden of any loss.

The moves comes amid a continued failure by Government to heed the Union's demands that it get to grip with the lack of insurance cover for terrorist attacks.


A trade dispute between the FBU and Somerset, registered May 25, demands that the fire authority confirm that in the event of death or injury arising from a terrorist incident they will make good any shortfall in payment to FBU members and their families; and that until this happens all New Dimension activity and demands on staff to participate in New Dimension is

stopped. Should the fire authority fail to conform to the Union's request, the Union will consider balloting Somerset members for industrial action.

A letter from Somerset Assistant Chief Fire Officer Davis on 17 March confirmed that insurers do make exclusions in respect of terrorist incidents. But, having concluded that the risk of death or serious injury is remote, his response suggested that the financial impact of making good the resulting shortfall would be so huge that it would be unacceptable for the County to take ownership of the risk.

Somerset's Chief Fire Officer, in a letter dated 19 May 2005, confirmed that arrangements would proceed for New Dimension incidents without any insurance protection in place for members and their families.

The Union has been in correspondence with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister since March 2004 over the issue of



insurance cover, but steps have not been taken to remedy the matter.

While treating the issue of insurance cover as a low priority, the Government centrally and fire authorities locally such as Somerset have stressed the immediate and heightened risk of terrorist incidents. And they have pressed on with planning and preparation for New Dimension incidents.

Somerset members are urgently seeking confirmation that this matter will now be resolved so that they can attend terrorist incidents in the knowledge that their commitment will be recognised and their families protected in the event of death or serious injury at such incidents.

### **Members force West Mids to suspend 90-day notice threat**

West Midlands Fire Authority has suspended the issuing of 90 day termination of contract notices until after a technical advisory panel (TAP) hearing on Tuesday looking at proposals for radical new shift systems.

The move followed a massive show of strength and determination not to be intimidated among FBU members in the Brigade.

The Brigade had threatened to issue the 90 day notices tomorrow, Friday 10 June, ahead of Tuesday's TAP hearing.

At a mass meeting in West Midlands on May 31, FBU members expressed a willingness, if

necessary, to take legal strike action to support their fight for change to working conditions to be negotiated with the FBU, not imposed.

The FBU's Executive Council earlier this week authorised a ballot for strike action in the West Midlands.

Yesterday, the Fire Authority wrote to employees stating that, as a gesture of goodwill, it was suspending the issuing of 90 day notices until the TAP hearing.


### **Avon members hit the street**

Avon Fire and Rescue control staff took to the town centre of Bristol on Friday 3rd June for a public awareness day to bring to the public's attention the dangers of Control regionalisation by the Government.

Nine members of Avon Control parked themselves outside the Swallow Royal Hotel at the bottom of Park Street and were accompanied by fire crews from Brislington, Bedminster and Temple to assist in this awareness day.

Kicking off at approx 1200 hours, we explained to them what was happening and how it will affect themselves, friends and relatives - many from local offices on their dinner breaks also stopped to listen.

Petitions were asked to be signed and in the short space of approx two hours we managed to get somewhere in the region of 600 signatures - a good effort.



We aim to hit strategic areas where a large number of the public congregate. Yesterday the Union hit Weston Super Mare high street.

Other dates for your diaries are:  
June 9th Bath Centre  
June 13th Yate Town Shopping Centre

## **Lobby Your MP - Control**

So far 13 MPS have signed **EDM 229: Risks Associated with Regional Emergency Fire Control**, which was tabled in the House of Commons by the FBU's new parliamentary group.

Make sure your MP has signed it. You can do this simply and quickly.

Log on to the FBU's Control CARE website - [www.controlcare.org.uk](http://www.controlcare.org.uk) - and then tap in your postcode. It will find your MP's e-mail address and you can zap it off to them.

Alternatively, follow the "Lobby Your MP" link from the main FBU website - [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk).

The 13 who have signed so far are: Dismore, Andrew; McDonnell, John; Lloyd, Tony; Clapham, Michael; Jones, Lynne ; Drew, David; Spink, Bob; Illsley, Eric; Marris, Rob; McCafferty, Chris; Breed, Colin; Corbyn, Jeremy; Taylor, David.

## **Fighting Stornoway sackings**

The Union and eight firefighters from Stornoway retained fire stations sacked by Highland & Islands Fire Board are taking their battle for their jobs to the Minister for Justice, Cathy Jamieson MSP.

The firefighters last week lost an appeal heard by five Fire Board councillors, who decided to uphold the decision of the Chief Officer, on a 3 to 2 majority decision, to sack the firefighters for failing to respond to a single fire call in October last year.

All eight firefighters now intend to submit a further appeal to the Minister for Justice, Cathy Jamieson MSP.

Roddy Robertson, FBU Scottish Chair said: "This decision is unheard of. These men have given 130 years service to their Community. To be sacked for failing to notify the Brigade of their availability on this one occasion, is scandalous. There is no Brigade Instruction or indeed any recognised Custom & Practice, yet the Fire Board considers their actions to constitute Gross Misconduct. It's an absolute disgrace."

"This is on the back of seven years of managerial failures in Stornoway. The Brigade has now stated that they expect a minute to minute account of Retained Firefighters' availability. The detrimental consequences for all Retained Firefighters in Scotland are extremely worrying."

"We intend to appeal this decision to the Minister for Justice, whom we hope will apply common sense and fairness to this matter."

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