

PENSIONS : FIRE AUTHORITIES IN OPEN REVOLT



**Fire service outrage over
the Government's reforms
spreads**

Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Board has agreed unanimously to protest "in the strongest possible terms" against Government proposals to change the terms and conditions of the firefighters' pension scheme.

The Board will write to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, expressing its outrage at what was seen by members as a betrayal of one of the cornerstones of the protective services and the inferred intention of splitting public services.

The Board will also urge COSLA's Fire Interest Task Group to bring the united strength of Fire Boards across Scotland to bear on the Scottish Executive over the issue. (see over page for more)

**DON'T LET YOUR FUTURE
SLIP THROUGH YOUR
FINGERS**

**Attend your branch meeting.
Mandate your delegate for
recall conference. Lobby
your MP**

The Union is planning a conference on February 16 in Southport, as part of the campaign for industrial action the FBU intend to take in the face of planned detrimental changes to all FBU members' pensions. The FBU Executive Council has recommended a ballot for strike action over the issue.

Any attempt to cut or delay that pay should be treated like a pay cut. **Back industrial action.**

(Continued from front page)

Central Scotland Board had, in 2004, when asked for comment from the Government on its proposal to align the firefighters' pensions more closely with the Local Government pension scheme, said: "The Board strongly rejects this view and deplores the imputation that firefighters are less valued than other members of the emergency services."

Convener of the Fire and Rescue Board, Councillor Tom Coll said: "The view was expressed very strongly at the Board meeting, across all parties, that our firefighters' pension rights should be protected in exactly the same way as the other emergency services."

Shouldn't be treated differently than other emergency services

"Rightly, Central Scotland Fire and Rescue Board, took the view that our firefighters are required to put their lives at risk in the course of their duties and should not be treated any differently when it came to pension rights than the police or ambulance services."

Councillor Coll went on. "We protest any change which would diminish the firefighters' pension scheme and call on COSLA's Fire Interest Task Group to rally all the Scottish Fire Boards to bring as much pressure to bear as they can on the Scottish Executive in support of our firefighters."

www.falkirk.gov.uk

West Midlands joins revolt against pensions reforms

West Midlands Regional Management Board has called on the fire minister Jim Fitzpatrick to protect existing members' pensions or risk provoking national strike action.


David Hinton, Chair of the West Midlands Regional Management Board, wrote to Fitzpatrick to "express the concerns of the five Fire and Rescue Authorities in the region over the situation that is emerging over the proposed changes to the firefighters' pension scheme and the threat of industrial action by the Fire Brigades Union."

"The Regional Management Board supports the need to make changes to the pension scheme, but believes that existing members should have their scheme protected, particularly in view of the fact that assurances were previously given. Not to do so will almost certainly lead to either a national strike or strike action in selected authorities."

"In light of Ministers assurances previously given and accepted in good faith by firefighters, West Midlands Regional Management Board urges you to find a resolution to the pensions issue before the situation escalates into strike action."

Northern Ireland fire authority gives unanimous backing to FBU campaign

Northern Ireland fire authority has given unanimous backing to the FBU's opposition to the proposed



detrimental changes in the pension arrangements of existing firefighters. The decision was made at a meeting last week.

FBU Northern Ireland has been holding meetings with a number of political parties and reports that they are ready to offer support to local firefighters in their campaign.

Pensions: Chief fire officers in revolt too..

Tom Carroll, President of the Chief Fire Officer's Association, has described the Government's reforms of fire service pensions as "derisory- and possibly vindictive".

Speaking at the Fire 2005 conference in November last year, he said:

"The FBU is not the only voice within the fire service to raise concerns about the treatment of our pensions. There are widespread concerns, we have not been a lone voice in the wilderness.

Why fire rescue service treated differently than other sectors?

He added: "While we fully appreciate the need for change, it is difficult to understand why the fire and rescue service should be treated differently to other sectors.

The recent settlement of the public sector pensions issue shows us that there is a way of reaching agreement in such cases and is an example of how the firefighters

pension issue could be easily overcome. To offer less must be seen as derisory - and possibly vindictive."

Two minutes to save your pension!

The Government proposals affect ALL members - wholtime, retained, officers, firefighters (control).

Let your MP know how angry you are about the detrimental proposals. Go to the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk and follow the Lobby Your MP link.

There you'll find letters on the Firefighter's Pension Scheme, the Local Government Pension Scheme and on retained pension rights.

Hundreds of members already emailed their MPs - join them!

In the past few days, hundreds of members and officials have emailed letters to their MPs using the FBU website - if you are not one of them, do it now!

Officials are encouraged to organise mass emailings of MPs after every branch meeting they hold.

It takes 2 minutes to fire off a letter to your national political representative. Make sure they know how you feel!

For more information on what the changes the Government is proposing to your pension mean for you, visit www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/pensions/

Control campaign: New fire service poll finds government should halt regional plans

Only 3% of fire service personnel surveyed support Government plans to shut emergency fire controls and move to a regional-only service shows a new poll. Firefighters, officers, managers and control staff do not believe the new controls will improve either firefighter safety or the response to incidents.

The poll asked three key questions about Government plans to close every fire brigade's emergency fire control and move to regional control rooms.

No, No and No!

Do you believe regional controls will improve firefighter safety? 95% said NO, 2% said YES and 3% said DON'T KNOW.

Do you believe such a move will improve fire service response to incidents? 95% said NO, 3% said YES and 2% said DON'T KNOW

Based on your knowledge, do you believe the Government should proceed with its plan to move to regional controls? 94% said NO, 3% said YES and 3% said DON'T KNOW.

Matt Wrack, FBU General Secretary said: "The poll findings are a body blow for these plans. In some regions you could not fill a phonebox with those who support them.

"Those who really know the fire service and what these proposals mean have given them a massive thumbs down. Those who will have to deal with the consequences of these proposals clearly have little confidence in them.

Government failed to win support for regional controls

"Despite intense propaganda, the Government has failed to win support for these plans from those who know most about them. The clear message from the frontline is that we do not want Whitehall-imposed regional control rooms.

"The union has put forward alternative proposals which would be a better, quicker, cheaper and less risky way of achieving Government aims. The distant corridors of Whitehall have to start listening to the front line of the fire service and ditch these plans."

The research was conducted between 11th and 17th January 2006. YouGov PLC contacted individuals registered on the FBU's membership database, with an invitation to participate in an online survey. There was also a link to the survey on the FBU website.

Read the Union's alternative strategy

The Union's alternative strategy is explained in detail in *Regional Control: National Resilience*. This document is available on www.controlcare.org.uk.

Solidarity with Notts members fighting co- responding

Nott members are paying a minimum voluntary levy of £5 per week into a Hardship Fund to assist the 34 members at Retford.

Send your donation to:

BANK DETAILS: NAT WEST BANK PLC
ACCOUNT NAME: NOTTS HARDSHIP FUND
ACCOUNT NO: 68013868
SORT CODE: 55 - 61 - 17

£25bn to spare on war but can't afford our pensions

The same Government which tells us that our pensions are too costly and must be downsized is considering a £25 billion replacement for the Trident nuclear weapons system, which will only make the world an even more dangerous place.

Write to your MP to support CND's early day motion - EDM 1197 Replacement for Trident Weapons - calling for the fullest possible public debate on a decision to replace Trident, including a debate and deciding vote in parliament. Go to the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk and follow the Lobby Your MP link. For more on CND's campaign visit www.cnduk.org.

You think we are under attack here...

If you think we're under attack here - and there's no doubt of that - it's even worse for trade unionists and workers in Colombia. The most recent figures show that

99 trade unionists were murdered in the South American country in 2004 alone. Firefighters, teachers, community workers and predominantly poor men, women and children have also been the victims of assassinations and terrible human rights abuses in Colombia.

Encourage your MP to support EDM number 355, which calls on the British Government to end their secretive military assistance project in Colombia. Visit www.fbu.org.uk and follow the 'Lobby Your MP' link. For more on the campaign visit: www.justiceforcolombia.org

FBU freephone legal advice line

0808 100 6061

For advice on personal injury, family law, wills conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU rep.

DON'T TAKE THE KNOCKS ALONE -
CALL

0800 783 4778

FBU confidential Stress Helpline

Keep informed!

Get the e-bulletin and other FBU campaign news by email. Visit www.fbu.org.uk, type in your email address and hit the "Sign Up" button.