



The Fire Brigades Union

General Secretary: Matt Wrack

Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE

Telephone: 0208 541 1765

Facsimile: 0208 546 5187

E-mail: office@fbu.org.uk

Circular: 2015HOC0026MW

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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister

RECALL CONFERENCE - FEBRUARY 2015: EXECUTIVE COUNCIL STATEMENT

You will note from the circular issued yesterday that a Recall Conference will take place on 10 February. The Recall Conference will discuss the latest developments in the union's campaign on pensions.

The Executive Council discussed this earlier this week and agreed the Statement reproduced below. This will be submitted to the Standing Orders Committee for consideration by Conference. All Branches should consider this and ensure the views of members are known to Brigade Committees prior to the Conference.

Please note that the Statement refers to a further Executive Council Statement agreed on 13 January. This additional Statement (13 January) provides wider background to the current situation. It is being finalised and will be issued shortly. Both Statements should be considered together. However, only the Statement below will be submitted as business for Recall Conference:

Executive Council Statement to Recall Conference

Campaigning to Defend Firefighter Pensions

The FBU campaign on pensions has developed and unfolded since the General Election of 2010. The Executive Council Statement agreed on 13 January 2015 and issued to Branches sets out a balance sheet of the developments so far.

The Executive Council congratulates FBU members for the outstanding unity and determination shown over the past four years of campaigning. This unity has been maintained despite the potential for division between those on different pension schemes or facing different levels of attack due to the variations in protection arrangements.

This campaign continues against a background of the worst cuts experienced by our service since 1945 and while firefighters along with other public sector workers have seen living standards attacked and squeezed by Government pay policy.

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The continuing attacks on pensions are part of a generalised, international and class-based attack on workers arising from the financial crisis of 2007/8. In this context what is required is a serious, well planned and determined opposition from workers in the UK - and across Europe. Such a movement could force back the Governments and other agencies (including the IMF, European Central Bank and others) driving the austerity measures, including the attacks on pensions.

In the absence of such a movement the FBU has fought and continues to fight a campaign founded on:

1. The unity and determination of FBU members.
2. A strong evidence-based case challenging the affordability, sustainability and workability of the Government proposals; a case based around the real occupational demands of firefighting.

Firefighter pensions are a political matter and decisions about them are taken by politicians. Therefore, this campaign has always sought to shift the position of the politicians making these attacks using every legal, political and industrial weapon at our disposal.

There are four key factors which require the union to assess the latest situation in relation to the attacks on our pensions:

- a. The different approaches adopted by Governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- b. The political campaign around EDM454 and subsequent debate in the House of Commons.
- c. The introduction of the secondary legislation for the 2015 schemes.
- d. The approaching General Election.

The Executive Council congratulates all members who participated in the campaign around EDM454 and the House of Commons debate:

- This demonstrated once again the strength of our evidence-based case.
- It enabled us to challenge and engage with politicians across the political spectrum.
- We gained support from MPs from all parties with the notable exception of the Tories and UKIP.
- We won the support of the Labour leadership on a number of key issues.
- The lobbying and the debate forced the DCLG Minister in the House of Commons to give assurances and a 'guarantee' on the issue of No Job No Pension which clearly influenced the debate and the vote. This 'guarantee' was subsequently confirmed by the Secretary of State in the Communities and Local Government Committee.

Therefore a number of key tasks emerge:

1. To ensure the delivery of the 'guarantee' over No Job No Pension - or to expose this as a serious attempt to mislead Parliament.

2. To continue the lobbying campaign aimed at politicians of all parties in the run up to the General Election.
3. To demand that Labour makes clear pledges to change and improve pension arrangements in the event of forming an administration after the General Election.
4. To consider further industrial action either alone or as part of a coordinated campaign with other unions.

The Executive Council therefore recommends that the campaign on pensions must continue, taking account of the current situation in each part of the UK and of the approaching election. This will continue to include legal, political and industrial action as appropriate.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

MW/sll