



FIRE BRIGADES UNION
SERVICE ★ STRUGGLE ★ SOLIDARITY

Matt Wrack General Secretary

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Circular: 2015HOC0317MW

To: ALL MEMBERS

15th May 2015

Dear Brother/Sister,

FIREFIGHTER PENSIONS IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GENERAL ELECTION

Firefighter pensions were high on the agenda of the FBU conference that took place in Blackpool this week.

The Executive Council submitted an emergency resolution 'Firefighter Pensions in the aftermath of the general election' which was debated and discussed by delegates from every brigade in the UK.

The Conference debated the current position and the Executive Council stressed that the campaign continues.

POST-ELECTION ISSUES

The recent general election result is clearly a serious setback for our campaign. It was clear that a change of government provided an opportunity for progress to be made and members have previously been informed of the discussion which the union had held with the Labour front bench. Members will be aware of this and circular 2015HOC0242SS included the letter from Lyn Brown to the General Secretary which outlined these areas. Unfortunately the general election result means that this option is no longer available. This will clearly be seen by members as a significant setback.

LOBBYING CONTINUES

FBU delegates were told that the Executive Council will continue to make our case at Westminster and with other governments as the imposed schemes are still unacceptable. At the time of the debate no announcement had been made regarding the new DCLG fire minister.

The FBU has already lobbied and pressurised MPs outlining why the pension schemes are unworkable and why the legislation should have been annulled. We have set out a significant amount of evidence which supports our concerns enabling us to win every argument on every occasion, in every forum. The pressure from members forced the previous coalition government to debate the legislation in Parliament in December 2014. This legislation was only supported when the former DCLG Fire Minister misled MPs by suggesting she had given firefighters a clear guarantee in relation to how firefighters would be treated if they could not maintain their fitness as they aged. The union has exposed this promise as worthless and

following up this issue is now required. Conference delegates agreed that this political pressure should continue.

CAMPAIGN WILL CONTINUE

FBU members in England have already taken over 50 periods of strike action as well as prolonged periods of action short of strike. In congratulating members for the fantastic unity shown, Conference agreed that the industrial action option remains.

The union will continue with a strategy that integrates the legal, political and industrial elements. The Executive Council will assess the situation following the general election and consider the new challenges that a Conservative government brings. Members in every brigade will be consulted as part of this assessment. Head office officials have already attended meetings in several parts of the UK. Please take the opportunity to attend these meetings when they are scheduled in your brigade.

PENSION CHANGES FROM THE CAMPAIGN

Delegates were reminded that the strategy so far had provided some improvements. These have only been won through the campaign by either industrial action, legal action or political lobbying.

This is demonstrated most notably in Northern Ireland where the union successfully negotiated a normal pension age of 55 for the firefighters' pension scheme. In Scotland the union has negotiated: a real guarantee that firefighters will not be sacked for simply getting older, an improved position on protection, and a lower actuarial reduction for firefighters who choose to access their pension benefits at age 55.

This lower actuarial reduction is also available for 2015 scheme members in Wales. Conference was informed that discussions will continue in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as there are outstanding issues and concerns that need addressing.

However, in England there are still significant issues which have not been addressed and the imposed 2015 scheme remains unworkable.

NEXT STEPS

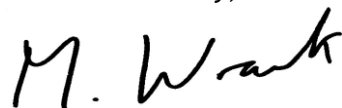
The FBU will;

- Attempt to meet with the new DCLG fire minister as soon as possible to ascertain if there is any potential for further improvements through negotiation,
- Mobilise members to bring the greatest pressure on elected representatives in England and elsewhere,
- Continue to assess the situation taking account of the challenges that a Conservative government brings,
- Continue with a strategy that integrates the legal, political and industrial elements,
- Continue to keep members involved through circulars, films, bulletins and other means so that members are ready to renew action if it is necessary,
- Consult with members in every brigade and consider all issues that are raised and views as to the way forward.

Conference overwhelmingly supported this position giving a clear message that the campaign must continue and that FBU members are not going away.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally,



MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

MW/SS/jr