



The Fire Brigades Union

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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister

PENSIONS UPDATE - POLITICAL - INDUSTRIAL - LEGAL

This week there have been a number of significant developments in our ongoing pension dispute. The dispute is being progressed on three equally important fronts Political, Industrial and Legal. FBU members have been working very hard to maintain the pressure in all these areas.

Political

Over the last few weeks since the legislation was laid in Parliament, FBU members have been very busy lobbying MPs to support our 'Prayer' against the regulations. This 'Prayer,' in the form of an Early Day Motion (**EDM 454**) (which runs until 11 December), is asking for the legislation to be annulled. This can only be done if we build enough support for the EDM and it is debated and voted on in the House of Commons before the process ends on 11 December.

We asked members and officials to focus their efforts on lobbying their MPs and the response has been tremendous. Initially the EDM was laid by members of the FBU Parliamentary Group but was subsequently supported by Labour frontbench MPs Hilary Benn and Lyn Brown before finally being sponsored by Ed Miliband, Labour Leader. This means that there should be no reason why any Labour MP should not now support the EDM. In addition to this members have lobbied and won support from MPs from the majority of parties including from MPs from one of the coalition parties. To-date the EDM has been signed by 260 MPs which include 16 from the Liberal Democrats (one of which is national Liberal Democrat President, Tim Farron).

Building support for the EDM has been a vital aspect of the campaign but the next aim was always to have the 'Prayer' debated and voted upon in the House of Commons. This has proved difficult and has required a number of debates around issues of Parliamentary process and procedure. The FBU's Parliamentary Group have provided tremendous assistance so as to ensure that we get the best chance of having a debate and vote. This work is still ongoing both publically and behind the scenes.

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Labour demands Parliamentary debate and vote

Yesterday, 4 December, the political campaign received a significant boost when we were informed that Labour had formally requested that EDM 454 should be debated and a vote taken on the floor of the House of Commons. A letter was sent to Penny Mordaunt outlining Labour's opposition to this legislation. This letter (from Hilary Benn and Lyn Brown) is now available on the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk.

We need to be clear that even if this debate takes place we still face very considerable challenges because of the Coalition Government majority in the House of Commons. However, our immediate task is to convince as many as we can to support our opposition to this unworkable legislation.

We have been busy trying to establish how many MPs we need to convince:

- So far 16 of the 56 Liberal Democrats have signed.
- 14 of these are Government spokespersons so are unlikely to sign.
- That leaves a further **24 Liberal Democrats** who could.
- There are a further **30 Labour MPs** who could also sign.

Our understanding is that there are potentially 330 MPs who could sign the EDM. It is a huge ask to get all these to sign but the nearer we get to this figure the more pressure will be applied to the Government.

A full list of Labour and Liberal MPs who have not yet signed is available on the FBU website. It is also well worth speaking to your MP even if he/she is a Tory because although you may not convince them to sign, you may convince them to support the call for a debate. You may even get them to support any vote to annul the legislation or to abstain.

There is no doubt that we have only got to this political position because of the tremendous efforts of FBU members. MPs have been inundated with requests to sign and support EDM454. Some MPs have been contacted so many times by members that they have contacted FBU Head Office confirming that they have signed or will sign.

This round of political lobbying has a fantastic display of a determination and doggedness from FBU members and you should be applauded.

Industrial

The FBU Executive has called a 24 hour strike for Firefighters in England, for Tuesday 9 December 2014 to commence at 9 am and conclude at 9 am on Wednesday 10 December 2014. One of the key reasons for this particular strike period was to highlight the opposition to the legislation that was currently going through Parliament and to try and get support for a debate and vote to try and get it annulled.

Possibility of suspension of strike action

Through the lobbying we have convinced the Labour leadership to formally ask for such a debate and vote. The Executive Council have recognised this and decided that should the Government agree to initiate a debate and vote on the floor of the House of Commons to take place before the end of the 'Praying' period that the strike could be suspended.

- This decision was taken on the basis that the demand to win a full Parliamentary debate and vote has been a key immediate aim of recent campaigning.

- If such a debate is confirmed it will be the job of every FBU member to maximise lobbying and campaigning to try to influence the debate and the possible outcome.
- The Executive Council is clear that any call to strike action cannot be taken lightly either in relation to its impact on the public or its impact on our members.
- Please note that this is **not** a formal suspension of strike action but is an early indication to members that this may be possible depending on developments. Any announcement on this matter will be made in due course.
- The Executive Council has been recalled for a meeting on Friday 12 December to assess any developments this week and to discuss the next steps.

Legal

The FBU has already submitted to DCLG a pre-action protocol notice of a legal challenge in respect of the way actuarial reductions would be applied (in the proposed 2015 scheme) from age 55. This notice had a deadline of the 27 November for a response. DCLG's legal team provided a response which defended the Government position. The FBU legal team are now preparing an application for a judicial review which may also include other elements of challenge. This is also an important strand of our ongoing campaign and is being progressed. Further details on this will be given as the situation develops.

What next

We are waiting to see if the debate and vote in Parliament is allowed and, if so, what the outcome would be.

We will then see what happens on 9 December with our strike. I know that it will be fully supported.

We will receive reports on the next steps in relation to our legal challenge(s).

What we can be confident of, is that we have built a campaign which has:

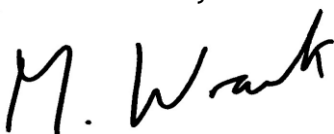
- **beaten their arguments** and shown that they are flawed,
- **challenged their legislation** in the Parliamentary process,
- raised **legal challenges** where we believe their proposals are unlawful.

The biggest thing they need to understand is that after three years, firefighters are still standing together in opposition to the unworkable pension scheme that DCLG are proposing. I urge all members to re-double your efforts to lobby MPs and set out our arguments against these attacks.

Stand Together - Unity is strength

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally



MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY

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