

Date: Thursday, 29th May 2008

ALL MEMBERS

Conference 2008 Resolutions

Dear Brother/Sister,

Members will be aware that the 83rd Annual Conference was held in Southport from 20th May until 23rd May 2008, a number of important resolutions that will impact on all FBU members both locally and nationally were carried, these included-

Emergency resolution 1- Firefighter Fatalities

Conference notes the decision of the HSE in January 2008 to issue an Improvement Notice against Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Authority (Warwickshire County Council) and the subsequent decision of the County Council to appeal this Notice.

These events follow the tragic loss of life at the incident at Atherstone-on-Stour on 2nd November 2007. This incident saw the highest number of Firefighter fatalities at a single incident since 1972. Conference is deeply concerned that this incident, along with a number of other fatal incidents in recent years, indicates a rising trend in Firefighter fatalities at operational incidents.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to fully re-examine all recent incidents in order to identify whether any trends appear from the investigations in each case. This inquiry should consider the impact on such incidents of:

- The introduction of IRMP and the removal of national standards of emergency cover.
- The policy vacuum in relation to the development of national guidance on operational matters.
- Current training regimes.

- The shift in emphasis towards preventative community safety measures often at the expense of planning, preparation and investment in intervention activity.
- Current policies in relation to weight and speed of attack at operational incidents.
- The introduction of the regulatory Reform Order and current fire safety inspection regimes within the service.
- Any other relevant matters.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to give urgent consideration to the findings of this report. Conference further instructs the Executive Council to develop a campaign around the issues identified including lobbying appropriate bodies. This campaign should focus around the need to invest in Firefighter safety and ensure that safe systems of work are put in place to protect our members.

Executive Council

Emergency resolution 4- **PAY**

Conference congratulates those public sector workers who took strike action in a number of sectors on April 24th. Conference condemns the attempt by Central Government to restrict the pay rises of public sector workers in response to fears about inflation. Conference does not accept that there is any proven link between public sector pay settlements and movements in inflation. Indeed the pay of public sector workers has often tended to lag behind inflation leading to cuts in real pay for public servants.

Conference pledges full support to any group of public sector trade unionists forced to take industrial action as a result of these policies. Conference urges all members to attend picket lines, rallies and demonstrations in support of such campaigns and calls on Brigade and Regional Committees to coordinate such support. Conference pledges support for the TUC lobby on the issue of public services on Monday 9th June. Conference urges all regions to arrange a delegation to attend this event.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to continue current pay negotiations in pursuit of the continuation of the Pay Formula linking increases within the Fire and Rescue Service to movements in the average pay of APT employees. This Formula was agreed for 2005 and 2006 and the percentage pay rise resulting from this Formula was successfully achieved in 2007. Conference believes that the operation of a Formula is the best way to address the issue of pay within the Fire and Rescue Service for the benefit of all. Should the employers not agree to the pay rise due as a result of the operation of the APT formula then the Executive Council are instructed to initiate consultation with members with a recommendation for national strike action.

Executive Council

Emergency resolution 5- Ill Health Pensions

Conference notes with disappointment the outcome of the Judicial Review over Ill-Health Pensions on 15th May 2008. Conference cannot and will not accept that firefighters who are injured at work or who are otherwise unable to continue with their employment due to health problems could be left in a position without a job or a pension. Conference instructs the Executive Council to discuss with our legal advisors the possibility of an appeal against this decision with a view to launching such an appeal.

Conference notes that this situation – of firefighters facing the prospects of no job and no pension simply as a result of ill-health or injury- was a direct result of actions by government. This matter could have been resolved months ago if government had immediately responded to the concerns of firefighters. Once again, it has been clearly demonstrated that only the Fire Brigades Union is in a position to defend the interests of firefighters and their families.

Conference congratulates all members who have participated over the past ten months in the FBU campaign- Justice for Firefighter Pensions. Through this campaign the FBU has highlighted the disgraceful treatment of the three retired members whose pensions were stopped and the threat to thousands of firefighters and their families. Ill-health and injury protection are essential in the Fire and Rescue Service and Conference is determined to defend ill-health and injury provision by whatever means may be necessary.

Conference welcomes the revised guidance on ill-health matters issued by the Scottish Government for implementation on 1st May 2008 and the revised draft guidance issued by CLG on 15th May 2008 for consultation (Attached). Conference instructs the Executive Council to continue to discuss this matter with CLG and with fire and rescue service employers in order to ensure the continuation of ill-health and injury protection for firefighters throughout the UK.

Conference is not prepared to tolerate such treatment of firefighters in the future. Should any member be placed in a similar position either:

- As a direct result of central government guidance or policy or
- As a result of the actions of an individual authority

And further,

- Should the revised CLG guidance not materialise, or
- Should any of the guidance be detrimentally changed

The Executive Council are instructed to initiate an immediate campaign of opposition. This shall include consultation with members with a recommendation for strike action.

Executive Council

Emergency resolution 3- Control Regionalisation

Conference remains implacably opposed to the CLG's FireControl regionalisation project for Emergency Fire Control Rooms in England. We believe that this project, which is being forced through at enormous expense in the face of widespread opposition, will:

- Not result in the savings being claimed
- Result in reduced call-handling capacity and resilience
- Impact upon the safe and efficient mobilisation and control of fire appliances, personnel and equipment
- Lead to a worse service for the people of England
- Lead to a loss of jobs for Firefighter(Control) FBU members
- Still leave much work currently completed by Brigade Controls to be carried out by individual brigades

We will continue to campaign against this project at every opportunity and to expose the misleading claims of the CLG. Conference applauds the decision of the Scottish Government not to centrally reduce the number of Emergency Controls in Scotland. However, we note that the Westminster Government remains wholly committed both politically and financially to the FireControl Project and that the nine Regional Control Centre buildings are all at an advanced stage of construction or have been completed. We also note that Directors and other staff have now been recruited for the new Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs) required to run the Regional Control Centres. Further, we note that brigades in the South West region have now written (in March 2008) to the FBU giving advanced notification of consultation on proposed redundancies. We totally condemn the issue of these notices and the manner in which these letters were sent, without any forewarning or consultation with the FBU officials, either locally or nationally. That is not an acceptable way to treat loyal, hard working and professional Emergency Fire Control Staff.

The primary objective of the FBU continues to be to defend the jobs, pay and working conditions of its members. That remains the case even if this misguided project proceeds. To that end, the Executive Council, in conjunction with the Control Regionalisation Advisory Group (CRAG) and the Control Staff National Committee (CSNC) have adopted a "twin-track" approach whereby, in addition to campaigning against the Regionalisation project, we have been taking the necessary steps to ensure any Control Rooms are employed on Grey Book conditions, with FBU recognition.

In the event of the Westminster Government forcing the project through unabated then the minimum aims of the FBU must be secure:

Guarantees of no compulsory redundancy for any FBU member, to be achieved primarily through continued employment performing "out of scope" fire control functions or redeployment, supplemented by the use of voluntary severance or early retirement if this is necessary.

NJC Grey Book conditions as a minimum including FBU recognition for all staff required to work in the proposed Regional Control Centres.

Therefore Conference instructs the Executive Council, Regional Committees and Brigade Committees to use all means available to pursue these aims, including such industrial action as may be appropriate.

Executive Council

CCTV

Conference welcomes the recent research undertaken by the Labour Research Department with regard to acts of violence towards firefighters and firefighters (control), and notes the comments and recommendations contained within that that report.

Conference is particularly concerned with the growing use of Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) equipment on fire appliances and vehicles as a strategy adopted by employers in violence at work policies and/or procedures. This strategy has had a counterproductive consequence of detrimentally impacting upon our neutrality within the community and in some cases increased the risk of attack on our members.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to enter into negotiations with the national employers as a matter of urgency, to ensure that a national violence at work protocol is pursued, with the removal of any CCTV equipment used to capture images primarily to be used in criminal prosecution procedures to be achieved as a priority. Conference instructs the Executive Council that a report on this issue is to be completed and put to FBU Annual Conference 2009 for decision.

Merseyside

Composite 1 – Unisex Facilities

Compositing Motions 24 National Women's Committee and 25 Merseyside

This Annual Conference is concerned by the growing development and use of unisex facilities in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS). This Annual Conference does not support the idea which is being pursued by some FRS equality and diversity managers that the adoption of unisex facilities can challenge and change the culture of the FRS.

Women members repeatedly inform FBU officials of the need for privacy at work in regard to toilet, shower and changing facilities and as such this Annual Conference opposes the use of unisex facilities in the workplace.

This Annual Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to enter into negotiations at the National Joint Council regarding this issue, with the aim of ensuring that our members do not suffer from a lack of privacy and dignity whilst at work.

Members can see that there are tough challenges ahead if we are to stop the piece by piece dismantling of the National Fire Service under the guise of 'Modernisation'. The recent partial reversal of the Government guidance on ill health pensions clearly shows that a position of strength seems to be the only position that the Government and Employers understand. It is also important to note that, on the above issues and many more issues that were discussed at conference, that the Fire Brigades Union is the only union representing fire service employees effectively. With so many issues both local and national it is important that branches continue to hold regular branch meetings to keep members informed your Brigade Officials will happy to attend these meetings.

Yours in Unity

Mark Rowe
Assistant Brigade Secretary