

Date: 14th May 2007

ALL MEMBERS

Annual Conference 2007 Update

Dear Brother/Sister,

The 82nd Annual Conference of the Fire Brigades Union took place on the 9th, 10th and 11th May 2007, Merseyside FBU were represented by five delegates, one observer and a number of Merseyside members also attended as visitors. Please find below a brief account of the daily events and important debates and decisions of FBU Conference, a more detailed account will be published by our Union in the Record of Decisions;

Wednesday – Tommy Mann, Lord Mayor of Sefton and, at present, Tory councillor on Merseyside Fire Authority gave a brief address and was followed by the Secretary of Southport Trades Council. Members may be aware that Cllr Tommy Mann lost his seat in the local elections.

A number of resolutions were then passed with regards to our Accident and Injury fund and FBU finances.

The General Secretary of the TUC, Brother Brendan Barbour, then gave an excellent address to Conference and singled out Merseyside Fire Authority and management for some very severe criticism, and Merseyside FBU members for some welcome praise. Angela Smith also addressed Conference with a lukewarm reception but gave no real detail or any commitment to addressing the important issues facing FBU members across the UK which was not entirely unexpected, except that improved local dialogue was expected from her and Government.

In the afternoon a number of very important resolutions were passed on a number of issues including ARA's, flexible working, PH's and IVR's, downgrading of fire cover, ITOP/ADC's and secondary contracts.

Thursday- The EC statement on co-responding was opposed by an emergency resolution brought by Merseyside after a frank and honest debate, Merseyside's resolution was carried by an overwhelming majority. Many delegations congratulated Merseyside FBU for its defence of Conference policy and our rulebook.

Ruben Linares addressed Conference from the Venezuelan TUC with an excellent, inspirational and uplifting account of what has been happening recently in Venezuela

and how through Trade Union support and resistance they have thwarted political and military attacks to the benefit of all the people in Venezuela who are now reaping the rewards of a long struggle.

On Thursday afternoon another raft of resolutions that will form Conference policy were passed concerning political issues amongst others, Conference took another overwhelming decision not to reaffiliate to the Labour party but to work with local politicians at all levels for the benefit of FBU members in the UK. Resolutions on violence at work, pensions, education and ill health retirement were also carried by Conference in the afternoon.

Friday- continued the endorsement of the annual report and had a guest speaker, Peter Marshall, who spoke on behalf of the Australian, New Zealand and American firefighters unions offering us unity and support and also gave us an insight about just how similar the management attacks are around the world. Many important resolutions were also passed with regards to Control staffing, victimisation, health and safety, workplace related cancers, TRV's and operational crewing levels. A harrowing account of just how many FBU members are contracting cancers that can be linked to the workplace was given, on one station **nine members** have contracted cancer from a workplace riddled with asbestos. Our members need to start re-focusing on all aspects of our Health and Safety and make sure that our management are not "let off" in their duty of care towards all FBU members.

Many of our members who came to observe and visit Annual Conference could not have failed to notice the high esteem in which Merseyside FBU members are held by our brothers and sisters from around the UK. It is a testament to our unity and strength that despite the continued political and managerial attacks and the treatment that is metered out to us all, with daily edicts, puzzling decisions and many managers inability to abide by local and national agreements or even read the Grey Book, we still remain a collective fighting force that cannot and will not bow down to financially driven, morally bereft managers who choose to ignore the long term effects and human cost of their managerial style.

FBU members and officials from around the country continue to support and respect Merseyside FBU members and our membership have now been asked to support a national demonstration taking place on May 31st in Truro, Cornwall against a Fire Authority who want to downgrade the last two wholetime fire stations in Cornwall for "efficiency" savings. Merseyside members do not need to be reminded of the support freely given to us from around the UK during our dispute and this is an opportunity to return some of that support.

Yours in Unity

Mark Dunne
Brigade Chair