

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

MERSEYSIDE FIRE CREWS – RE-INSTATE SACKED UNION OFFICIAL OR WE BALLOT FOR STRIKE ACTION

Merseyside firefighters have said they will ballot for strike action if a victimised union official who was sacked is not re-instated. Firefighter Kevin Hughes, who was based at Whiston fire station, was arrested after assault allegations.

Mr Hughes always denied the allegations and no charges were brought because of a lack of reliable evidence. But Merseyside fire authority suspended Mr Hughes in July last year and carried out their own investigation.

The fire authority case was heard by strikebreaker Kieran Timmins. Mr Timmins, who has never been a firefighter, put on firefighting kit during the 2006 dispute and worked on the small fires unit van with others who became known as the “fantasy firefighters”.

Mr Timmins heard the case and reached the verdict. A colleague of Kevin’s facing the same ‘evidence’ from the fire authority had the charges dropped.

FBU regional secretary Kevin Brown said: “This is a clear case of victimisation of a union official brought before a fire authority’s kangaroo court and found guilty. The police had already carried out a professional and intensive investigation and brought no charges.

“The fire authority brought a weak case before one of their own senior managers with no independent witnesses and no other evidence. There were many witnesses for Kevin, some of whom were independent witnesses.

“The overwhelming evidence was in Kevin’s favour but he has been sacked. Merseyside firefighters are not going to sit back and watch a colleague victimised for representing them.

“Feelings are running very high and Kevin’s fellow firefighters are appalled by his treatment. There is very strong support for strike action.

“We are going through the internal appeals procedure but we’re not relying on the fire authority to re-instate Kevin. It has already shown itself capable of making a bad decision in support of its anti-union stance and we are preparing for more of the same.”

The union has given the fire authority 7 days’ to re-instate firefighter Kevin Hughes or it will start the ballot process.

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