



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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CIRCULAR 2011HOCO317MW

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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother / Sister

PAY 2011 - EMPLOYERS REFUSE TO MAKE AN OFFER

We reported in circular 2011HOC0215MW that the union had registered a claim for a pay rise for 2011 and that we still consider the matter of pay for 2010 to be unresolved. This latest claim was discussed with the employers at the National Joint Council recently. The employers responded by stating that once again, they were not in a position to make an offer on pay. We made very clear to the employers that their stance and the imposed pay freeze were causing increasing hardship among FBU members.

Since the pay freeze began last year, prices have continued to rise, meaning a fall in living standards for our members and others in the public services i.e. real wages have been cut. Even using the government's preferred inflation measure the Consumer Price Index (CPI), prices rose by 2.6% for 2009/10 and (so far) by approximately 3.7% for 2010/11. In addition, a feature of recent inflation has been that prices for key items of expenditure such as fuel, food and travel have risen significantly, hitting FBU members and other working people particularly hard.

We outlined these concerns to the employers and explained that we were aware that fire authorities had budgeted for a pay rise last year - a pay rise which was never delivered. We also explained that the many new roles taken on by our members had been as a result of the pay and conditions agreement of 2003. If the gains in terms of pay are undermined, our members would be justified in asking why they should carry on delivering change while suffering falling living standards.

The employers responded to our comments by stating that they understood the concerns of the union and understood that their employees had suffered from the imposition of a pay freeze. They suggested that discussions could commence as soon as possible on the issue of pay for 2012. We again made clear that the union does not accept that the matter of pay has been resolved for 2010 or 2011. Nevertheless, on the understanding that the employers understood this was our position we felt that those talks should commence as soon as possible. That was agreed by the employers' side. We will be setting up these discussions shortly and will report any progress.

We have also raised with the employers our concern about the impact of their position (i.e. a pay freeze) on those members affected by the agreement previously reached on protected pay points (Station Officer, Fire Control Officer, and Principal Fire Control Officer). In 2010, a variation was agreed in relation to this agreement as a result of the employers' refusal to make a pay offer. We are not able to report the employers' response on this issue as yet but will pursue the matter and report back as soon as is possible.

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The issue of pay and the pay freeze was also debated at our conference in May, and delegates made it clear that we could not and would not accept a return to the low pay which existed in our service before 1977. The Executive Council has asked all branches to consider a range of issues, including pay and pensions as we build our campaign against the austerity agenda. I would again urge all branches to continue to meet to consider these multiple attacks. There is huge and growing anger in the service as a result of the attacks on our pensions, but we cannot and will not forget that we are also facing this attempt to drive down our living standards by means of a pay freeze.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

MATT WRACK
General Secretary

MW/jh