

UBU support for the Fire-fighters

This Union Notes:

1. The FBU (Fire Brigades Union) is a dedicated supporter of the student movement.
2. The FBU decision to strike followed a democratic ballot asking, “would you be prepared to strike?” 87.6% voted YES.
3. This dispute has been going on since February. The FBU feels that, through lack of negotiation on the Government’s behalf, it has been rail-roaded into strike action. The first two strikes were cancelled by the FBU as a goodwill gesture to help with negotiations. Fire-fighters don’t want to strike but feel they have little choice.
4. The idea of 40% comes from an independent pay review body, the Employment Review Organisation. This same body was commissioned by the Government for their own pay review and they awarded themselves the 34% (21% for “normal MPs”) advised. Now the Government refuse to recognise the body. This, along with the lack of Fire-fighter representation or knowledge of the Fire Brigade is what made the Bain Report so controversial.
5. A Fire-fighter’s basic salary is £21,531 p.a. In New York, the equivalent is around £32,000 p.a. British Fire-fighters are among the most poorly paid Fire-fighters in the Western world.
6. The Fire Brigade is now a Fire and Rescue Service. The main reason the military did not use red fire engines (County Council, not FBU) was that they are not trained to use the complex equipment on board. Fire-fighters use intricate, state of the art equipment from breathing apparatus, cutting equipment, and chemical suits to defibrillators. They don’t just fight fires anymore. Their work now includes rescues from anywhere (water – boats on weirs, ice, marshes, underground...), road traffic accidents, air accidents, and chemical incidents to name but a few. They are also responsible for education regarding fire safety and prevention.
7. The Fire Brigade is the only Emergency Service to meet nearly all its Home Office targets.
8. The Fire Brigade is the only emergency service guaranteed to come out when you call.
9. Fire-fighters are regularly attacked whilst trying to do their job.
10. A Fire-fighter’s shift system works two 10-hour days, two 14-hour nights, four days off. When calculated to a seven-day week, they work over 42 hours a week.
11. Fire-fighters see some horrific sights (children in house fires, bodies so badly injured they have to be shovelled up or hosed off the road). On Tuesday 12th November this year a Fire-fighter was buried in Leicester after dying in a fire trying to save others. Would we really risk our lives for less the £30,000 p.a.?

This Union Believes:

On the basis of the facts above, that:

1. Fire fighters are risking their lives on a daily basis; therefore they deserve to be paid for it. £30,000 is not unreasonable.
2. Fire fighters are highly trained professionals and need to be paid as such.
3. That if this motion is passed we will be supporting the fire fighters in standing up for what they believe in and what is fair.

This Union Resolves:

1. To educate students and staff about what the fire brigade and other public services actually do and why they're striking through posters, leaflets and Union media.
2. To collect for the Strike Fund.
3. To set up a petition supporting the fire-fighters in order to both raise awareness and to raise the morale of local fire-fighters.
4. To look into displaying a banner showing our support for the fire-fighters.
5. To release a statement to the press declaring our support for the fire-fighters.
6. To organise fundraising events to raise money for the Strike Fund and awareness of the issues, as well as raising the profile of UBU.

Proposed by: Georgina Adkins

Seconded by: Melinda Roberts

Assenters: Martin Trigg
Paul Ketelle
Sian Morgan
Stephen Zigmond
Chris Wells
Sarah Cartin