

Pay 2005

Well, after a record three logbooks in October I had intended to give everyone a rest and return this week with a December edition and some festive cheer. However, this morning's news of the Board's decision to implement their pay offer against the wishes of staff has put something of a dampener on that.

The latest Pay Notice again highlights comparisons against other departments as the main justification for the imposition of the offer - that the Commission could afford to make a fairer offer if it wanted, is not in question.

Yet when it comes to bench-marking we know from their own notices that HR have not done the job properly. Firstly instead of objectively comparing the jobs done by FC staff against those done by colleagues in other departments they have chosen to ignore the significant differences in our grading structure and simply focus on salary scales, apparently according to Pay Notice 6 because to do otherwise would be 'difficult'. Further, in looking at the pay scales they have then chosen to arbitrarily discount those departments whose scales are higher than the FC's, with the end result - lo and behold - that we are apparently 'amongst the best paid in the Civil Service'.

Given that I believe that staff would have been willing to agree to an alternative which would not have cost the Commission one penny more, it is surprising that the Board have chosen to impose an offer which is neither fair nor acceptable.

But beyond this frankly bizarre approach, there is a broader issue about

the willingness by senior managers to respect the views and opinions of staff. Because whilst the latest notice may wish to use the language of rejecting the *unions'* proposals, what they are of course doing is rejecting all our views as expressed in the various ballots.

Over the last ten years since the introduction of delegated pay bargaining we have had to face many difficult and potentially contentious issues, and I believe that it has been to the credit of those involved that a compromise and a way forward has always been found. It is therefore disappointing that HR now seem to have such contempt for the views and concerns of staff that they are unwilling even to discuss the issues highlighted by the rejection of the pay offer.

So, where to from here?

Clearly this is disappointing news, made more so because of it coming immediately before Christmas. A meeting of the joint unions has been set for 6th January, when we shall decide on the next steps; which will no doubt involve coming back to all union members in some shape or form to seek your views on the action which we need to take.

Anyway for now may I and all the union team wish you a happy Christmas and a relaxing break, because one thing's for certain, 2006 will be an interesting year!

Edward Shephard

Secretary

19th December 2005

Join a Union NOW!

If you would like further information about the unions or a membership pack then please contact Sue Gillingwater or Fiona Hopkins via:

Forestry Commission Trade Unions,
231 Corstorphine Road,
Edinburgh, EH12 7AT

Tel: 0131 314 6195.
Fax: 0131 316 4822.
Email: unions@forestry.gsi.gov.uk