

Pay 2005

This month's rather belated *Logbook* is dedicated to a quick update on pay.

Firstly with regard to process most of you will by now have seen the copy of the final pay offer from the management pay team, which clearly indicates that negotiations have drawn to a close. Over the last couple of weeks the unions' central teams have been looking at the final offer and considering whether or not to recommend it to members (more on this in a second). Now that the offer has been issued to all staff it will be subject to ballot by all union members; the results of which should be available on or about the 9th November. Ballot papers will be issued to members by each of the unions in the coming days, and if you haven't received your paper by this coming Monday, then please speak to your local rep to ensure that you haven't been missed out.

When each of the unions send out their ballot papers in the coming days they will include with them a full analysis of the offer along with a final recommendation. Clearly it is up to each of us as a union member to decide how we should vote on the offer, however I can confirm that for the first time in many years the agreed view of all of the unions is that members should **vote NO** and reject the offer.

Finally I shall not waste words here by repeating the reasoning behind this recommendation, which will be included with the ballot papers, but below is a short Q&A which gives a quick overview of the unions' position. Further details will be sent to all members shortly; please look out for your ballot paper; and if you have any questions then please speak to your local rep.

What's wrong with the offer?

This year there is sufficient money in the pot for us to maintain the pay progression system and provide all members with an increase at least in line with inflation. Management don't wish to do this and consequently we don't believe that the offer is good enough.

Aren't the union negotiators just asking for too much money – we know the Commission is short of cash?

No. The proposal which we put to management to maintain the progression system, underpin all increases by at least inflation, and maintain the value of all our pensions would not cost a penny more than is currently on offer.

Therefore doesn't this mean that some staff would need to give up money in order to pay the higher increases elsewhere?

We believe that not only must any pay settlement be affordable but that it must also be as fair as possible to all staff. Giving an inflation level increase to all staff would only mean reducing some of the higher increases by 0.15% - and don't forget that maintaining the real value of the pay scales benefits everyone through protecting the value of all our pensions.

But what about management's argument that some of the scales are too high?

Having looked carefully at the scales in other departments, we believe that this is absolutely not the case. We have compared our scales against those of all the other bargaining areas in the Civil Service, and on average our scales are on a par with everyone else's. Even management's own evidence where they have cherry-picked certain departments for comparison, doesn't show that our scales are unreasonable.

But what about pay bands 3 & 4?

Firstly with pay bands 3&4 it must be remembered that it is only two years since we bought out the operational scales at management's request. We believe that it is now disingenuous of them to try and claw this money back through direct comparisons with other departments. Also the main reason that they have attacked these scales is because they have compared them to scales in DEFRA. However even leaving aside that the DEFRA scales have

no real validity outside England, critically the DEFRA scales that they have chosen do not cover the same range of jobs as in the FC. We know from management's own evidence that the majority of jobs in bands 3 and 4 are clustered in the top of the bands' JEGS range: in DEFRA the highest JEGS'd posts would fall in the higher grade. We believe that management's 'clear evidence' is simply not true.

So why can't you work together to find proper comparisons?

The simple answer is that we tried. Twice in the last year we offered to work together with HR to properly benchmark our pay bands and scales against other departments. This offer was refused on both occasions.

So bottom line: why should members vote against this?

In all our pay negotiations we have tried to balance what is affordable and possible for the Commission alongside what is fair and justified for all of us as union members. In previous years we have reluctantly accepted the freezing of band maxima because management couldn't afford to increase these as well as implement pay progression. We have also reluctantly accepted the discriminatory and de-motivating performance pay system because we know that management are locked into this by the Cabinet Office.

However the issues this year are nothing to do with affordability or external edicts. It is simply the case that the FC management team have used bogus evidence to justify reducing the value of our pay scales and pensions.

We believe that all members should stand firm and say NO to the reduction in the value of all our pay scales, NO to the reduction to the value of all our pensions. Vote NO to this pay offer.

Edward Shephard

Secretary

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Intranet links

If you don't have access to the FC's intranet and would like copies of any of the documents referred to in this update then please speak to your local rep or contact the FCTU office.