

LogBook

Issue 29 March 2006

Campaign News from the FCTU



The Campaign Goes On

Latest News

With the campaign now eight weeks old a lot has been happening to raise our concerns about the unfairness of the pay offer and its unjustified imposition on us all.

Centrally the campaign has been focusing on discussions with both the Commissions' Chairman and the EB through the Staff Council. Overall whilst both of these have been positive, neither has been decisive in getting acknowledgement of the unfairness of the last pay round. The discussions with the Chairman covered a wide range of topics both directly related to pay, but also about concerns at changes in the approach to staff management in recent months. Whilst the Chairman felt he was unable to intervene directly in the pay dispute he did express his support for trade unions and the role which union members play in the FC.

Following on from this the Staff Council met on 21/2 and had a robust discussion on the issues behind the campaign. The unions asked the EB to give assurances about the conduct of future negotiations, about addressing the specific deficiencies in the deal for members in paybands three and four, and about their apparent readiness to abandon negotiation in favour of imposition. A response to this is still awaited.

In the absence of any commitments from the EB the Unions' Council met on 28/2, and in endorsing the current campaign action gave a 'green light' to make preparations to begin lobbying MPs, MSPs and AMs in a few weeks time, if progress has not been made.

"I am a firm supporter of Trade Unions and recognise the important contribution that they make in supporting their members and the work of the Commission as a whole."

LORD CLARK

What's the Campaign about?

Just in case you missed it, here's a quick reminder what the campaign is about and what we are trying to achieve:

Fair Play

The EB's decision to abandon negotiation and impose the pay offer without seeking to understand the concerns of members, sent a very worrying signal about the level of respect and consideration given to our views.

- The campaign aims to provide an opportunity for us all to voice our anger at the EB's decision, and to seek an assurance that this action will not be repeated again.

Fair Pay

The assertion that our pay scales are too high was based on comparisons which were fundamentally flawed, and ignored the history of changes which have been made to our pay scales in recent years.

- The campaign aims to highlight these flaws, to seek redress for those unfairly affected and to seek an assurance that flawed comparisons will never be used to penalise members again.

5 Steps to Join the Campaign!

- 1 Make sure that you and your colleagues are **aware of the campaign.**
- 2 **Join a union** and support our campaign for Fair Pay.
- 3 **Recruit** a colleague.
- 4 Put up one of our campaign **posters or postcards.**
- 5 Wear one of the campaign **wristbands** to demonstrate your concern.



Other Ongoing Stuff

- **TSU Restructuring:** Swift progress is now being made on drawing this to a conclusion. After much discussion the closure of the Kielder station and the reduction in size of the Bush and Alice Holt stations will go ahead with the loss of several posts. Further discussions are set for 22/3.
- **FChoices:** In response to concerns from a number of members, the unions have asked for clarification over the costs and other aspects of this scheme; but for now watch out for a sales-pitch near you. The scheme will introduce the long awaited child-care voucher scheme as well as a range of other 'benefits'. At the recent staff council meeting one EB member opined that the scheme would be seen by staff as worth 'at least a three percent pay rise' - responses on a postcard please!!
- **Alice Holt:** A new working group is about to start looking at options for developing the Alice Holt site. Currently used by FR, FC & FE England the group hopes to use income from the development of part of the site to fund significantly improved facilities particularly for FR; however under government rules the group is also obliged to consider moving the facility out of the south east of England. Clearly this will be of significant concern to members and the unions look forward to working closely with the working group.

People News

The new year always brings a fresh round of union elections, and whilst all of the scores are not yet in, a number of changes in post-holders have been made.

At the Prospect ADC in February **Tony Cousins** was re-elected into the re-titled role of branch chairperson. Congratulations also go to **Marcus Sangster** from Silvan House and **Lorraine Adams** and **Sue Benhan** from Alice Holt who were elected as branch vice-chairperson, secretary and assistant secretary respectively. ADC also provided delegates with an opportunity to meet Glen Dobson, who has taken over from Chris Finnerty as Prospect's full time officer.

The AGM of the PCS Wales Branch also saw a number of changes. Kath McNulty has stood down from her roles on the PCS Group Executive Committee and the Unions' Council in order to concentrate on the Wales National Organising Committee. Kath is replaced on the GEC by Andy Best from Clwydd Newydd.

As ever most of the reps without whom the unions could not operate have remained in post and will continue to give of their energies and time for another year - many thanks to everyone.

Finally after much too short a time Fiona will be leaving the FCTU office and the FC later this month. Fi has just finished a degree in Environmental Decision Making and Risk Assessment and has decided to go on and complete her MSc. Fi will be greatly missed and we wish her all the best for the future.

Unions Diary

- 7/3 PCS Silvan House Branch AGM (1000 CBR)
- 8/3 Core Group
- 12/3 PCS Silvan House Drop-in meeting (lunchtime)
- 21/3 DEFRA family TUS meeting
- 23/3 FC(S) Staff Council
- 29/3 Wales Staff Council
- 29/3 England Staff Council
- 5/4 Core Group

PCS Annual Group Conference

9-10 MAY, YORK

Calling all PCS Members...

This year's PCS Group conference will be held in York on 9th and 10th May.

The conference will draw together all of the work being done by the union including the pay campaign and recruitment as well as debating and agreeing policy motions from local branch AGMs.

The list of guests is still being finalised but two key-note speakers already confirmed are **Mark Serwotka**, PCS General Secretary and Forestry Commission Chairman **Lord Clark**.

The conference is your chance to be part of the union's decision making and action planning process and really has the promise of being our best conference yet.

If you would like further details of the conference or an application form then please speak to your local work-place contact, contact the FCTU office, or download a form from here. The conference is strictly limited to 50 places on a first-come first served basis.

Contact Details

Enquiries should be directed to Sue Gillingwater or Fiona Hopkins via:

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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.