

EDITORIAL



Congratulations to Merseyside

I'VE been trying to reflect on some of the 'nice' things that have happened to us women who, most of the time, feel proud to be members of the Fire Service.

Just when we think we've achieved another little bit of 'equality', when at annual conference this year we achieved the right to have our own EC member with full voting rights, to highlight and support not only women's issues but all trade union issues both at home and abroad.

Along comes someone like Mr Saunders, who even after the Home Office have acknowledged in the Thematic Report that something was 'seriously wrong' within the fire service, Mr Saunders decides to use this 'small' fact to further his own agenda.

He then proceeded to belittle the hard work and effort that all of our firefighters and control staff put into their careers. To belittle the long hours of study, the stress of assessments and interviews etc., that we all have to go through to prove we are made of the 'right stuff' to survive, no matter what we are asked to do.

Mr Saunders has stated 'civilians' can do this 'job' as good if not better than we can (and with very little or no training at all!).

Now at this point I would just like to stress I have nothing against civilians, some of my best friends are civilians, but at the same time, I know who I would like to be there, to assist or rescue me, if I am ever unfortunate or unlucky enough to be involved in any kind of emergency, fire or otherwise. And, contrary to you Mr Saunders, the high level of training and instruction our firefighters and control staff receive is obvious to

anyone who has to call on us for help in the quick and efficient way we help and assist anyone who asks.

It will never be an easy decision, when you realise that strike action is the only answer.

I can empathise and sympathise with all of you because, a number of years ago I was faced with the same dilemma, when you cannot know how long it's going to last, or what the outcome will be, you only know it's the right thing to do.

I would just like to say 'a big thank you' and 'congratulations' to our brothers and sisters, our comrades in Merseyside for the sacrifice they have made to protect our National Conditions of Service, for make no mistake that's exactly what they have done.

Our message to Mr Saunders and his 'like' will always be:

OUR UNITY IS OUR STRENGTH

I would just like to finish with a few words for two dear friends *Phillipa* – where are you Phil, you've been away too long, we miss you, we need you!! and *Mick* – it's great to see you back fit and healthy and grafting hard for us as usual!!

Janette Ferguson

Editor

CONTENTS



Hiya all,

WELL, what a busy, fun packed and eventful few months for us as a committee it has been.

We have just seen our first AGM and motion based Conference take place at Wortley Hall in Sheffield. Resolutions were moved by a large number of women from different Regions, covering issues from Health & Safety, Maternity provisions, Radiation and many more besides!

An Emergency Resolution from Region 10 on the state of Industrial Relations in Merseyside, was also taken. On this issue, the Conference unanimously pledged full support for the actions of our members in that brigade.

At our AGM, the elections of our officials were taken, seeing few changes to the roles of people within the committee. The Vice Chair position was taken by Kerry Baigent, (R10) and I must say thanks to Janette Ferguson for all her hard work over the last 12 months. Congratulations to Kerry.

Another change was to the Editorial Team who will now be producing Siren, Lynda Rowan (R2) and Janette Ferguson (R1). Thanks to Kerry from all the committee for all her hard work and a great journal for the last 12 months! I'm sure that the new team will also do us proud.

One more thanks I must give, is to all the Regional Reps, Regional Women's Committee members and supportive people in Brigades and Regions who, along with the great speakers we had at our AGM, made it the success that it was.

With that, I'll sign off and let you get on with the rest of the mag.

But I couldn't finish without a quick mention for Ghada Razuki. Ghada, who was as active member of our Union in all respects, I am not sure if you know, has left the Fire Service for pastures new. We wish her the best of luck for the future and the utmost respect for all she has done in the past. See you all soon.

Vicky

National Women's Committee Secretary

Contents

AGAINST ALL THE ODDS: women convicts as firefighters in the US	4
GLOBAL WOMEN'S STRIKE: women's response to globalisation	6
COVER FEATURE: Alicia Gonzales – a unique Cuban ambassador	8
INTERVIEW: with Ken Cameron	10



WOMEN'S HEALTH SECTION

special section on health issues

13

LETTERS

your letters to the editor

16

