

Did the Firefighters Strike of 2002 Benefit the Fire and Rescue Service

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Abstract

This report focuses on the question of ‘Did the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 Benefit the Fire and Rescue Service?’ and provides a basic introduction to the Firefighters Strike as well as providing information on the causes of the strike and the view of the Fire Brigade Union and also of Government. The report covers Modernisation within the Fire and Rescue Service along with the problems that arose with the modernisation plans.

Information for this report was gathered completely from secondary research and was taken from various sources, my main source of information however was a book called ‘*United They Stood*’ by Seifert and Sibley which was a book based solely on the events before, during and after the Strike. Reports that were produced at the time of the strike such as the Fire Services Bill (2003), the Bain Report (2002) and the Burchill Proposal (2004) were also read. Throughout the research information was gathered from other sources such as Newspaper websites using their archives and also from the Fire Brigade Union Magazine and Fire Brigade Union Official Strike Bulletins.

The research for this report led to the conclusion that the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 neither benefited the Service nor harmed them. The amount of positive and negative results that came out of the strike were so close that it was hard to draw a clear line as to who won the Strike with both the Fire Brigade Union and the Government achieving certain goals they wished to accomplish, while also losing out on others. Reading further will help you develop your own ideas into whether you feel the Strike did or did not benefit the Fire and Rescue Service overall.

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Chapter One: Introduction

This report will look at the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004, it will contain information about the Strike and will hopefully enable you to gain a developed understanding of what occurred during the whole of the Strike both before it happened and once it had concluded.

This report will contain information on whether the Fire and Rescue Service (F&RS) benefited from the fire strike of 2002-2004. The main aim of this report is to look at how the fire strike affected the Fire and Rescue Service both during and after the strike. The report will contain information about the causes of the Firefighters Strike as well as looking at the final results of the Firefighters Strike. The report shall look at if the outcome was what the Fire Brigade Union (FBU) and Firefighters wanted or if they were in fact forced into a settlement that did not satisfy them. This report will aim to cover information on the intended modernisation of the Fire and Rescue Service by looking at the Government, The Bain Report (2002) and the introduction of the Fire Services Bill (2003), which subsequently became the new act of parliament for the Fire and Rescue Service (Fire Service Act 2003).

The main areas this report will focus on will be: the background of the fire strike, along with the reasons behind the Firefighters Strike beginning. It will discuss if the Fire Brigade Union were actually after the pay rise that they were claiming to be after or if they were in fact hiding behind this pretence and if they were in fact hiding behind this façade why and what motives caused it. The report shall also look at the various claims that the Fire Brigade Union put forward to Government. Once these topics have been

discussed the report will move onto what happened during the strike, such as the claims that the Fire Brigade Union declined and reasons behind these rejections, along with looking at how Government dealt with the situation.

The report will then move onto the final outcome of the strike, looking at the final result and why the Fire Brigade Union and Fire and Rescue Service workers agreed to the settlement they ended up with. The report will look into if the Fire Brigade Union and Firefighters across England and Wales in fact wanted to end the strike and take the offer provided to them, or if they felt they were cornered into accepting the offer.

This should then take us to the final chapter which will look at the modernisation aspect of the Firefighters Strike, such as how the Fire Brigade Union used the strike to protest about modernisation and how they worked around it so they could gain members support quickly. It will also look at the ‘Smash and Grab’ Campaign which was based upon the ‘*Grey Book*’ and how this was also about modernisation, showing how modernisation was a problem for the Fire and Rescue Service long before this specific strike this report is focusing on. The report will look at reports that were created such as the Bain Report (2002) and also the Burchill Proposals (2004) and compare how the Fire Brigade Union and Government both reacted to these two documents, as well as how Burchill’s actions assisted the Fire Brigade Union. The report will then move onto looking quickly at the Audit Commission and their role once the strike had been concluded.

The final part to this report is focused on the reasons behind the Fire Brigade Union and their resistance towards the Modernisation of their Service. It will look at ‘*Masculinity*’

within the service and how this may have affected their reasons for not wanting to modernise the Fire and Rescue Service.

Chapter Two: Background of the Firefighters Strike

This is the first of three chapters of this report and this chapter should help to give you a more developed understanding of the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004. This first chapter shall focus on the reasons behind the Firefighters Strike and the multiple events that led up to the strike occurring. The report will also look at what happened during the strike, how much the Fire Brigade Union asked for and where this claim developed from. It will also look at some reports provided by the media at the time of the strike. Finally this chapter will look at how Government was responding to the strike itself, such as legislation they wished to bring into power that could affect the outcome of the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 and the whole of the Fire and Rescue Service after the strike.

2.1 Behind the Strike

The Firefighters Strike was not an event that occurred overnight but was a long process that appeared to start with a pay claim. However this pay claim was not the main reason behind the Firefighters Strike but more of an actual cover behind the core reason for the strike. The Fire Brigade Union challenged government over pay when their main objective was actually to challenge government over Modernisation which had been increasingly challenging the structure of the Fire and Rescue Service (Seifert and Sibley, 2005, p. 68).

The Fire Brigade Union and Fire Fighters across the country carried out a campaign which lasted from May until November (Seifert and Sibley, 2005) long before the Fire Brigade Union actually came to the decision that a strike was needed for their claims to be seriously considered by government. The Fire Brigade Unions claim for pay justice on the 12th May 2002 was denied by the National Joint Council (NJC) where the Fire Brigade Union put forward three specific requests in their claim:

- i.Improvement on pay for Firefighters to £30,000 by November 2002.
- ii.Retained and Volunteer workers should receive the same pay rise, receive more training and carry out the same job as full time Firefighters.
- iii.Appropriate pay formula for Fire Service to match skilled and motivated workforce.

(Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 75)

On September 2nd 2002 the National Joint Council gave the Fire Brigade Union an offer of a 4% pay increase along with the agreement of a pay rise for Full time, Retained and Fire Staff. However this offer was declined by the Fire Brigade Union's executive committee a few days later and the government decided to carry out an inquiry to evaluate the management of the Fire and Rescue Service including their pay and conditions (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 69). This independent enquiry was written by Sir George Bain and is known as the Bain Report (2002).

One reason they provided, behind their request for a pay rise was that living and housing costs were rising faster than earnings across England and Wales, causing Firefighters and

other Fire Staff to struggle with affording living costs close to their stations (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 75). Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers Association (CACFOA) President Richard Bull in the 2002 Fire Magazine stated that Full Time Firefighters were receiving only £263.23 a month which when compared with other skilled workers such as Police Officers was considerably less.

Another reason behind the Firefighters Strike other than the pay claim were changes in the management of labour and also the skill level of Firefighters and Retained Firefighters. Fire Brigade Union workers also stated how their job had changed considerably with workers having to use more computer based skills and how focus changed to emphasise Fire Safety and Prevention rather than Fire and Rescue (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 72). This part of modernisation was largely resisted against by Firefighters, who may have believed that Fire Safety and Prevention although important was deskilling their role which in return reduces the '*masculinity*' of their job. Dr Dave Baigent explains this stating that "*Firefighters' resistance is probably more to do with the action of a group of workers acting conservatively to defend the way they prove their masculinity against officers who may wish to prevent this.*"(Baigent, 2001. p 10).

The Fire Brigade Union developed modernisation proposals that while asking for equal pay for all workers be it Full Time Firefighters, Retained Firefighters or Fire Brigade Union employees it also proposed the removal of the 'second job culture'. Andy Gilman stated that the second job culture "*Has always been opposed by the Fire Brigade Union*" (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 75) however if this statement was agreed by that of Full Time Fire fighters and Retained Fire fighters it is less clear as Firefighters use their 2:2:3

shift system to their benefit. The 2:2:3 shift system allowed Firefighters to work an extra job which meant they had more funds coming in for them to live off. This is an obvious benefit for Firefighters as it was stated by Seifert and Sibley that Firefighters struggled to earn enough on their Firefighters wages to support themselves. The Fire Brigade Union's Official Strike Bulletin No. 48 states "*Contra-Bain both the Women's and Black and Ethnic Minorities Committees of the Fire Brigade Union have come out in favour of the current system. 'Used properly the 2:2:3 system is more likely to encourage rather than dissuade women applicants'*". (Fire Brigade Union 2002)

The essential part of any claim and negotiations is support, the Fire Brigade Union knowing this used the weight between their pay claims to rally Firefighters across the country. The few weeks between their claim and the response allowed the Fire Brigade Union to rally their members through various public events such as rallies, campaigns and marches across the United Kingdom Two such marches occurred in Belfast and London, using these public events to gain the support of local communities and the general public (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. pp.71). The launch of the campaign was started by the Fire Brigade Union General Secretary Andy Gilchrist who gave speeches across the country informing the general public and government of the aims in their campaign. Gilchrist spoke of skill levels in the service, understaffing problems, how training was restricted and how workers in the Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Bridged Union were underpaid for the service they provide. Gilchrist called for unity from all service members and stated that they were ready to strike should the need arise (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. pp.75-76).

The Fire Brigade Union requested that basic pay of Firefighters be raised to that of £30,000 a year; this was a pay rise of 40% and led central government to question where they had created this figure from. Andy Gilchrist defended this claim stating that *“It wasn’t something people dreamt up... We actually engaged people to do some work for us, professional academic work, because it’s very difficult to say what you are worth”* (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 77). As Gilchrist stated, the claim that the Fire Brigade Union brought forward to government was not ‘dreamt up’ but was developed from the suggestions of four professional academics that were hired by the Fire Brigade Union to look at the figures of the Fire and Rescue Service and come up with what they felt was a suitable claim. They did this by looking at various aspects such as economic figures of the Fire and Rescue Service and also by looking at the job itself, such as the risk factor involved in the job, since the likelihood of serious bodily harm is high.

The figures suggested by the four sources can be seen below:

- i. The LRD Report 2002 who did not provide a figure.
- ii. Sue Hastings Report 2002 who stated the raise should be 16%.
- iii. The IDS Report 2002 who stated a raise of 21%.
- iv. Government data based on call-outs per employee, stated a raise of 50%.

(Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 77).

The claim that was originally put forward by the Fire Brigade Union was negotiated with the government at a series of meetings; the result of these negotiations altered the original 40% claim which was denied by government to an offer of 16% over two years providing certain conditions were met by the Fire Brigade Union and their employees, these

conditions were based upon the Bain Report (2002) and were set on an extensive programme of modernisation for the Fire and Rescue Service. This modernisation programme included a new pay formula, provisions for more flexible working and changes to the pay/grading structure (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 92).

2.2 What Happened During the Strike?

Now that information behind the Firefighters Strike has been discussed such as their claim and specific reasons behind their claim e.g. 'Modernisation' we can look at events that occurred during the actual strike. By looking at the Pay Claim we are able to see that it developed into a political struggle that imposed on Trade Union freedoms such as the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 09).

The failed negotiations ended on November 22nd 2002 with the government preventing a settlement causing the first act in the Firefighters Strike with the Fire Brigade Union leading their employees out on an 8 day strike.

The strike caused a lot of media coverage with certain papers supporting the strike such as The Mirror and other papers such as The Sun attacking the Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Brigade Union for their actions. After the failed negotiations The Mirror attacked the government in an article that mocked their lack of organisation over who was supposedly in charge of the arrangements for this dispute, stating "*No wonder there is confusion – among the employers, the union and the public. The whole thing is a shambles. Of course there is only one person who should be in charge – Tony Blair*" (Parsons, 2002. p. 6.).

The eight day fire strike that followed the failed negotiations harmed the Fire Brigade Union and their claim. Firefighters protested to the Fire Brigade Union that eight days was too long to strike for and that it could cause problems with public and media support. Indeed by the time that the eight day strike was finished the Government was very much back in control of the dispute stating that the 16% rise the Fire Brigade Union wanted would only occur providing certain modernisation agreements followed and that from this they could generate that 16% back in savings (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 165).

The New Year brought new problems for the Fire Brigade Union and their dispute with the government developing new legislation that would provide powers for the Secretary of State against the Fire and Rescue Service. These powers would enable the Secretary of State to set terms and conditions of employment and to redeploy equipment of the Fire and Rescue Service, meaning that the Fire Brigade Union would be forced to 'agree' with terms government set over the strike. To further disrupt the dispute government stated that Bain's Modernisation proposals were now non-negotiable so the Fire Brigade Union were forced into a corner with any future proposals (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 174).

The Times reported on the new legislation stating "*Prescott uses emergency powers in historic breach with Labour allies. Draconian powers to force unions to bow to the Government's will on pay were announced*" (The Times, 29/01/2003. p. 1) The news of this legislation angered many including the general public and Trades Union Congress (TUC) leaders, many other newspapers reported the news of this legislation suggesting how it was in bad taste. The Fire Brigade Union however did not let news of this

legislation deter their actions, carrying on with negotiation plans with government and Fire Strikes still occurring across the country.

This chapter has discussed some of the main reasons behind the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 and what had occurred during the strike. Now that there is a clearer understanding of what happened in the development of the strike and also briefly what happened during the strike, it has led us towards the end of the Firefighters Strike and into the next chapter which shall take a look at what occurred after the strike and the outcomes that were achieved by their actions.

Chapter Three: Final Outcome of the Strike

This chapter focuses on the final outcome of strike which were affected greatly by a variety of issues; for example the Fire Services Bill (2003) was one, negotiation problems between both Government and the Fire Brigade Union another, resistance against modernisation and the Audit Commission were also other issues affecting the final outcome. The introduction of the Fire Services Bill (2003) caused a lot of resentment between the Fire Brigade Union and Government, with the Act itself being rushed through Parliament over a few weeks, allowing Government powers to impose a pay settlement over the Fire Brigade Union (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 175).

3.1 Fire Services Bill

The Fire Services Bill (2003) became a problem for the Fire Brigade Union and their Claim, by the 8th of May the Fire Services Bill (2003) had undergone a second reading

within the House of Commons and the possibility of the Act becoming an active piece of legislation grew all the more likely. The Act itself could cause problems within the Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigade Union if it was to become an active piece of legislation not only for the reasons that it would allow Government to control the Firefighters Strike to an extent but also because it could mean that over 10,000 jobs could be removed across England and Wales (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 188).

There was much debate about the Fire Services Bill (2003) with a lot of the media opposing the idea since the Act would provide the government with a lot of power over the Fire and Rescue Service. Patrick Hennessy a journalist for the London Evening Standard reported *“The Bill will give Government powers to impose a pay settlement on the Fire Brigade Union and to set the conditions under which firefighters work”* (Hennessy, 2003. pp. 1-2).

Prescott defended this claim by stating that the legislation was in fact being put into place for the public's interest and that this Act was merely drawing from the provisions of the Fire Services Bill (2003) 1947, he stated that *“Those provisions allowed a Secretary of State to specify the pay, terms and conditions of the Fire Service”* (Prescott, 2005. p. 175). Prescott went on to explain that the Government's use of the Fire Services Bill (2003) was so that with the gained power he would be able to change the crewing of each station by allowing the Fire Authorities to match staffing with the ‘real risk’ of fire for each location, removing the constant crewing of each station (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 189).

On the fourth of June the Fire Services Bill (2003) was passed through the House of Commons along with a two year sunset clause meaning that Government had gained specific powers over the Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigade Union. The Fire Service Bill itself states that it is there to “*Confer power to set or modify the conditions of service of members of fire brigades and to give directions to fire authorities*” (Fire Services Act 2003).

3.2 Forced to Settle?

With the Fire Services Bill (2003) being passed the Fire Brigade Union felt added pressure to settle their claim and stations across the country went ahead to vote on a pay settlement offer, however there were still mixed responses to the 16% pay offer with most stations declining the offer provided because of too many uncertainties that went along with it. Whereas the stations that did accept the 16% pay offer stated that the rest of the countries stations should follow and accept the offer before Government used their new powers gained from the Fire Services Bill (2003) to intervene more leaving them without (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 197).

However by the time that the 12th June Recall Conference came along the majority (3 to 1) had decided to accept the settlement that they were offered, but if this was because they had felt no other alternative with the Fire Services Bill (2003) in place could be left to discussion, Neil MacPherson a Firefighter from Swansea stated in the Evening Post that “*there was no great enthusiasm for the offer but it’s gone on for such a long time*

and members wanted to bring it to a close... it's not a bad deal but we are concerned about conditions linked to the offer” (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 197).

There was a mixed reaction to the result of the Recall Conference across stations with many worried about the results from the settlement. Fire Brigade Union chairman Jeff Owen stated he was worried over job losses that may occur over this settlement but that the Fire Brigade Union were still negotiating the final terms of the settlement with Government. These negotiations focused on the topics that had been issues throughout the whole of the Claim and Firefighters Strike which included equal pay rises for Retained Firefighters along with Full Time Firefighters, changes to the 2:2:3 shift systems, modernisation issues, and bank holiday pay. Negotiation results caused a shift in controlling powers within the Fire and Rescue Service, with Central Government and Senior Managers being given powers over the Fire Brigade Union over the running and operations of the service (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 200).

3.3 The Final Outcome: Win, Loose or Draw?

The Firefighters Strike officially ended on the 26th of August with all negotiations finally coming to conclusion and with the pay rise settled and accepted by both Government and the Fire Brigade Union, although the final settlement for the claim was far from the original target of £30,000 per year, with the final agreement settling on £25,000 which was a 16% pay rise overall. However it was negotiated that the pay rise would occur over a period of time starting with a 4% rise from November 2002, a 7% rise in November 2003 and finally another 4.2% rise by July 2004 (Balance Sheet: Appendix 1).

The pay increase included that of the Retained Firefighters as well as Fire Staff and Fire Brigade Union workers, however the increase of wage varied for each, and certain negotiations were discussed specifically for each group. For example by looking at the Retained Firefighters and the reward structure which was provided for them, they gained: a retaining fee, a turnout fee and an attendance fee as well as payments for the two hours required training that is expected of a Retained Firefighter along with a pay increase (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 265).

By looking at this information we are able to come to a conclusion that the final outcome of the fire strike was positive for Retained Firefighters, this may have been because Government had been trying to keep them on their side throughout the strike since 30% of Retained Firefighters were not active in any union and the majority of the rest were only active in the Retained Firefighters Union (RFU) rather than the Fire Brigade Union.

Other negotiations were carried out to remove stand-down time from the '*Grey Book*' (2003) so that local Fire Authorities had total power over the shift patterns and working arrangements, these negotiations also covered Bank Holidays and payment for working these days. (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 209). These issues were brought forward by both the Fire Brigade Union and the Trades Union Congress and it was agreed upon that public holidays were not ordinary working days and that arrangements would be carried out to decide how these days should be dealt with and the pay Firefighters should receive for working these days (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 223).

Along with Bank Holidays the Fire Brigade Union negotiated the shift patterns as this was something Government wanted to alter significantly since the Fire and Rescue

Service had constant crewing on in the evenings which meant a lot of Firefighters ended up working evening shifts, Government felt that this was an unnecessary waste of resources. However The Fire Brigade Union managed to show that *“The most life-threatening incidents and most rescues occurred during the night shift, and that any cuts to crewing levels would be dangerous for public safety and put members’ lives at risk when carrying out rescue and fire-fighting duties”* (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 271).

The Fire Brigade Union managed to support this statement with official reports and stated that they were not prepared to negotiate reduced staffing.

Modernisation issues such as changes to working practices were also settled to an extent, with the Fire Brigade Union and Government coming to an agreement that was not necessarily too favourable for either side. However the Fire Brigade Union had managed a compromise in the negotiations and come to the agreement that any modernisation plans that were put forward based on working practices must be related to improving fire safety and could not be based on financial gain (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 261). Along with the Fire Brigade Union being able to negotiate around modernisation issues they also discussed the possible loss of staff as a result of the raise, with an agreements coming around saying that Job Cuts and Redeployment could not be made on cost grounds alone. However to allow for the 16% pay rise Government suggested that a 2% per annum reduction of Firefighters for four years should occur, this caused much debate but again the Fire Brigade Union negotiators managed to get Government to drop the link of job losses to accommodate for the raise in pay (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 261).

So far by looking at all this information it does look like the Fire Brigade Union did come out the better in the strike as they were able to negotiate their way into gaining Bank Holiday pay, keeping their shifts in the control of the Fire Authorities and also gain pay rises for not only Firefighters but Retained Firefighters and Fire Staff as well.

The modernisation issues such as changes to work practices were settled to an extent with an agreement about certain changes to these practices, but overall the changes were not too drastic and the Fire Brigade Union negotiators had even managed to get Government to drop the idea of cutting jobs within the service to accommodate for the raise.

Chapter Four: Behind the Modernisation

Modernisation of the Fire and Rescue Service was one of the most influential aspects of the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004. By now there should be an understanding that the strike was not based solely on a pay claim but was in fact mainly focused on the resistance of modernisation within the Fire and Rescue Service. This chapter will look at Government and their attempts at Modernising the Fire and Rescue Service, it will look at what specific modernisation ideas Government were trying to incorporate and which of these ideas they actually succeeded in bringing into affect. This chapter will also look at the Bain Report (2002), the Burchill Report (2000) as well as the Audit Commission and finally the reasons behind why the Fire and Rescue Service employees and the Fire Brigade Union were so against the idea of modernisation within their service.

4.1 Modernisation

Modernisation is an ongoing development that has effected each of the Public Services, specifically the Fire and Rescue Service. As this report has explained there were many changes that Government tried to implement with their modernisation ideas, such as the attempted changes to working practices that have been in place in the Fire and Rescue Service for a long time. The report has also shown that Government tried to use modernisation and legislation such as the Bain Report (2002) and the Fire Services Bill (2003) to attempt changes in reward and pay systems. Miller and Rose explain why this can cause problems for the public services by stating that *“In labour intensive and highly unionised services, such as the Fire Service, modernisation means changes to the traditional pattern of industrial relations”*(Miller and Rose, 2008. p. 226).

Since the Fire Brigade Union could not protest against this modernisation they used the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 as an appropriate opportunity to challenge government over modernisation while hiding behind the guise of a pay claim, since to have been able to challenge modernisation they would have had to be a regional if not an individual Fire and Rescue Service approach. By carrying out their actions in such a way the Fire Brigade Union were able to get the majority of their members involved as well, providing themselves with a stronger foundation for their claims. This helped the Fire Brigade Union throughout the strike since there was such a large proportion of Firefighters, Fire Staff and other such employees within the Fire and Rescue Service supporting the whole claim. They also gained the support of the General Public and other unions early on in their claim (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 70). This support made the Fire Brigade Unions protests all the more powerful as government then had to not only deal with a Public

Service striking but also a Public Service striking with the back up of the General Public and Unions such as UNISON and GMB behind them.

Governments attempts at changing the working conditions of the Fire and Rescue Service was not something that started just before the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004, it had in fact been developing for a long period of time with Government and employers trying to alter the conditions of the service for years. The strike had been long coming with the ongoing resistance of the Fire Brigade Union against Government modernisation agendas that the Fire Brigade Union had labelled as ‘Smash and Grab’ and were increasingly challenging the structure of the fire service. This Smash and Grab campaign developed in 1999 because Government were attempting to bring in changes to the Fire and Rescue Service’s ‘Grey Book’. Andy Gilchrist at the time of the campaign discussed it stating “*Over the past twenty months we have run the Smash and Grab campaign to stop our Employers smashing our national agreement and grabbing our hard won conditions of service*” (Gilchrist, 2000. p. 2). This Smash and Grab campaign lasted over two years and much like the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 a report was developed by government.

4.2 Burchill (2000) and Bain (2002)

The Burchill Report (2000) discussed various issues such as recommended improvements to Fire Equipment, modernisation, development of decision-making at local levels and also the use of dispute procedures (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 262). The results of the Burchill Report (2000) came out with the following three main points in its conclusion:

- i. No unilateral changes to conditions of service.

- ii. The union retains its right to strike over any trade dispute.
- iii. The status quo applies to pay, annual leave, duty systems.

(McDonald, 2000. p. 4)

Government who were trying to bring in these changes made the Fire Brigade Union feel threatened which is why at the time of this dispute they stated they would ballot for a strike should Government attempt to make any independent changes to the '*Grey Book*'. By the end of this debate the Fire Brigade Union backed the Burchill Report (2000) along with the National Joint Council and so Government had not gained the win they expected for the development of the Fire and Rescue Service. However modernisation was still on their minds and as discussed earlier in the report was still attempting to modernise the Public Services.

Now we are aware that modernisation was affecting the Fire and Rescue Service long before this strike occurred and that other reports had been created to try and gain power over the Service, we can look at the reports that came out for the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004. Since the Fire Services Bill 2003 has already been discussed earlier in the report the main focus is now to be on the Bain Report (2002) as well as the Burchill Proposals (2004). It can be concluded that the Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Brigade Union were not happy with the suggestions within the Bain Report (2002) about changes he wished to bring about.

The Bain Report (2002) carried out two studies to help come up with a suitable pay claim offer and to see if what the Fire brigade Union was asking for was considerate, these two studies were to look at the service roles of Firefighters and their Staff. The final conclusions that were developed from these two studies were shown within the Bain Report (2002) which stated that *“Our findings indicate that there is no case for significant increases in pay based on the existing pay system. We believe, however, there is a strong case for a radical overhaul of the whole pay system and the other features of the reward package”* (Bain, 2002. p. 92). However Bain later went on to state that it did not rule out pay increases in the future, but for now it just was not required. This result was exactly what government had planned for and John Prescott made a statement based upon the results of the Bain Report (2002) stating how *“The report describes a service where legislation is out of date, management practice is out of date, and regulations that govern the overall framework and the day-to-day work of the fire service are old-fashioned and restrictive”* (Prescott, 2005. p. 162).

Frank Burchill had been following the proceedings of this Strike and once he had seen the Bain Report (2002) he decided on intervening with new proposals, and much like his previous report in 2000 they were met with hostility from Government and accepted by the Fire Brigade Union (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 183) these proposals insisted that any modernisation plans should be negotiated and not imposed upon the Fire and Rescue Service. Burchill was not actually in a position to create an official report such like Bain’s at the time of his proposals, however he was a chair on the National Joint Council at the time and this did allow for him to have a certain influences over the Fire Brigade Union. Burchill’s proposals did end up assisting the Fire Brigade Union as they came at

such a time that it allowed the Fire Brigade Union to regroup following the setbacks that occurred in March, and along with Government being pressured over the strike and the War in Iraq at the time it meant that the Fire Brigade Union came out in an improved bargaining position (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 279).

The Bain Report (2002) was published on the 16th December with much speculation from the media about how and if it will change the outcome of the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004. Bain stated that many alterations suggested were taken from requests by Fire Chiefs and Fire Authorities. The report itself suggested that changes should be made to the working practices of staff, a re-organisation of the service similar to others in the Public Sector and changes to the relationship between the Service and Central Government. Other main areas of change that the Bain Report stated were:

- i. Financial Structures
- ii. Lines of Accountability
- iii. Involvement of Private Sector

(Bain, 2002. p. 76)

After the final agreement came into effect and the Bain Report (2002) was implemented the Audit Commission were recruited so that they were able to monitor the progress of the modernisation plans that had been agreed to. The Audit Commission aimed to encourage this process within the Service to allow for the instalment of the pay claim at each stage. So the Fire Brigade Union went forward and started to implement the changes to their services that they needed to, such as the re-organisation of control rooms and cutting of special appliances and associated jobs. By the time the third instalment of their pay claim was due the Audit Commission stated that 48 of the 50 Fire Stations within the

United Kingdom had in fact made progress towards modernisation and so should receive their final raise (Seifert and Sibley, 2005. p. 210).

4.3 Why Resistant to Modernisation?

This report has shown that Fire Brigade Union and the Firefighters put up a lot of resistance against modernisation in their Service, some reasons behind this will be discussed briefly now. As discussed earlier in the report, Modernisation has been resisted and the main reasons for this resistance that the Fire Brigade Union stated was that it would de-skill their workers and reduce employment within their service. In the West Midlands alone over thirty Firefighters positions were being planned to be removed along with the redeployment of a quarter Fire Engines for community use. While the strike was occurring, Norrie Henderson the Fire Brigade Union Brigade Secretary for Warwickshire stated that *“It was nothing more than a cost-cutting exercise”* (Henderson, 2005. p. 207).

These combined reasons all went towards the grounds of why the Fire and Rescue Service put up so much resistance against Modernisation but another reason that could also be looked at and suggested for their resistance could be the effect it would have on their image as Firefighters. The Fire and Rescue Service is an overtly ‘masculine’ body and they have a specific image to uphold, this image being that of strong able-bodied ‘heroes’ who run into fires and save whoever may be trapped inside. This statement doesn’t mean that all Firefighters believe this of themselves but the whole of the Fire and Rescue Service have a hierarchy which is highly male dominant. Dr Dave Baigent states that *“Firefighters being mostly men, the organisation in which they work is also predominantly white, working class, heterosexual, able-bodied and pseudo/para-military”* (Baigent, 2001. p 9). This shows us that within the Fire and Rescue Service is a

group of '*masculine*' men who want to uphold an image of themselves and this could also be used as an example as to why Modernisation was resisted, since it would cause changed in their roles as Firefighters, roles which define them in a sense as 'men'.

This report has now covered the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 in detail, it is evident that this strike was actually created to prevent modernisation overtaking the day to day running of the Fire and Rescue Service. This chapter has looked at the Modernisation plans that the Bain Report (2002) attempted to bring in and shown some of these which were put into practice after the strike finished and a settlement was agreed upon. It also showed how the Audit Commission was brought in to make sure that the Fire and Rescue Service were actually applying these agreed modernisation plans and that also the Government were actually implementing the pay rises for the times agreed, and finally it looked briefly at reasons for resistance against modernisation in the Service. This report can now be finalised by analysing what has been discussed in this and previous chapters, followed by a more in-depth conclusion which should answer the original report question of: 'Did the Firefighters Strike Benefit the Fire and Rescue Service?'

Chapter Five: Conclusion

'Did the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 Benefit the Fire and Rescue Service?'

When trying to answer the question above there are many points that need to be taken into account, even though we could easily suggest that because the Fire and Rescue Service and Fire Brigade Union did receive a pay rise and the pay claim was settled comparatively on their terms with a fair amount of their proposals being agreed to throughout the negotiations. But we need to look deeper into the matters that have been discussed throughout this report and look at the occurrences after the strike had ended, specifically the changes which did occur along with the pay rises, such as changes to the shift systems, changes to their regulations and other important issues that link along with Modernisation, which as stated within the report is the actual reason behind the Firefighters Strike and which was what they were in fact trying to avoid.

Another side to this debate we could look at is if the Fire and Rescue Service gained the 16% pay rise but lost specific powers because of modernisation. And if that meant that they have lost rather than gained? Research helped to discover that the Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigade Union did 'win' the strike as the Government did end up settling and allowing for the 16% pay rise by July 2004. However if this was actually a win for the Fire Brigade Union and the Fire and Rescue Service is debatable since along with the 16% pay rise other issues were raised such as Modernisation and problems with solidarity between The Fire Brigade Union, Chief Fire Officers and other Employees within the Fire and Rescue Service.

Solidarity between The Fire Brigade Union and Chief Fire Officers and other Employees within the Fire and Rescue Service was damaged by the time the Strike had been concluded. This is a large negative for the final outcome as it will have caused resentment between members, for example the Fire Brigade Union retaining their position with national bargaining bodies except CACFOA who did not.

Looking at what the Fire and Rescue Service won we know that they gained a raise to £25,000 a year which was a decent rise but not the amount that the Fire Brigade Union was looking to gain. We also need to consider the fact that their rise was not given to them straight away but over a two year eight month period and also that one of these payments was held back by Government for a period of time as well so they had to wait even longer for their members and Firefighters to gain the whole 16% raise. This could easily be seen as a loss for the Fire and Rescue Service because they did not gain the amount that they totally wanted to receive, but it could also be seen as a win since they did receive a raise and they were not dismissed from their claim when Government gained powers from the Fire Services Bill (2003), in fact if we look at it this way we know that their pay was considerably improved and that equality both in pay conditions and procedures had been advanced and no jobs were lost because of the strike and changed implemented from the settlement.

Looking at some of the issues that were negotiated such as Bank Holiday pay we can see that the Fire and Rescue Service did come out with the upper hand as they managed to negotiate that public holidays were not normal working days so they were provided with

extra pay for when Firefighters worked these days. They also managed to win the argument over reducing staffing for the night shifts, by proving how fires were more serious in these times and that removal of workers for these shifts would mean more damage to public property as well as endangering the lives of the general public and the Firefighters themselves if there was reduced staffing.

So to answer the report question of if the Strike benefited the Fire and Rescue Service?, I personally feel that overall the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 both did and did not benefit the Fire and Rescue Service and by looking back on the report and over the above comments it is easy to see why. It is difficult to come up with a conclusion to this question where the final result of the Strike had just as many positives as there were negatives. The Firefighters did indeed gain a raise from this strike but at the same time they also lost solidarity between the Fire Brigade Union and the Employees working within the Service. Then there was also Modernisation, which swung both ways again with the Fire Brigade Union managing to prevent a lot of drastic changes that Bain and the Government wanted to implement such as reduction of staff and changes in staffing for night shifts. But they also couldn't stop some of these modernisation changes such as the re-organisation of control rooms and cutting of special appliances.

So to conclude this report I have to suggest that overall the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 can be seen as a draw, however depending on who reads this report depends on how they feel the outcome actually came out as. The report body states a lot of positives for the Fire Brigade Union, with negotiations they won and other factors, so some may

believe that the overall outcome may be positive rather than negative and that the Fire Brigade Union actually won the Strike. But another person with more in depth knowledge of the Strike itself may be aware of other factors that occurred at the time of the Strike that may not have been raised in this report leaving them to feel that Government in fact won this Strike.

Chapter Six: Methodology

My report focused on the Firefighters Strike 2002-2004, I decided on this topic and decided to try and conclude whether this Strike benefited the Fire and Rescue Service. I chose this because I had experienced documenting the strike from another assignment I completed while doing my HND. From this previous experience I realised I had an interest in learning more about the strike and since I had found this topic interesting I chose to use this for my dissertation. Other reasons for choosing this particular topic and questions were that I have family within the Fire and Rescue Service and I felt that they could be an asset to me should I need primary research from employees within the Fire and Rescue Service, as it turned out I did not but I still feel that it was a good choice for me.

Researching information for this topic varied as the topic has not been discussed in many books however I was quite lucky in learning about the '*United They Stood*' by Seifert and Sibley book as it was dedicated solely on the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004 and I gained the majority of my information on what occurred before, during and after the strike from this book. I learnt about this book from my tutor Dr Dave Baigent, who also provided me with other sources of information such as the Fire Brigade Union's official strike bulletins. For my literature search I looked at various Newspaper websites and used their Archives to find various articles that I used within this report, I found that some websites however such as local Newspapers did not Archive back many years so that became a problem and reduced my source options. For the various Reports and Legislation that I mention within my report I found these by looking on parliament and Fire Brigade Union official websites and carrying out a search to look through their

database. I also tried to use the Anglia Ruskin library to search for books on my topic but unfortunately they did not own any books or e-books on the topic.

The material I chose to include in my report was chosen because of the information I could gather on them. For example I was able to obtain information on the Fire Brigade Union and their views over the Strike from my Seifert and Sibley book. The information about reports and legislation I discussed I gathered from reading the full reports. Information I used on Modernisation within the Fire and Rescue Service were taken from the Seifert and Sibley book again but also from another book by Massey and Pyper. These topics of discussion were also chosen because it allowed an easier conclusion as by looking at these topics it would help to answer my dissertation question.

However there was some information that was closed to me such as the Burchill Report (2000) and Proposal (2004), my attempts to access these two reports failed as the sources of the two reports had passwords on them for access and as I was not an employee within the Services I could not obtain access. The information I did use on both the Burchill Report and Proposals was taken from the 'United They Stood' book. Another issue that needs to be considered about information for my report is the lack of sources for information, as stated earlier I had trouble finding written sources of information for my topic and in the end only used two books to gather information from as I could not obtain any other books that contained information on the Firefighters Strike of 2002-2004. However the books I did use contained a means of information which meant my dissertation did not suffer because of the lack of written sources.

For my dissertation I decided against primary research, mainly because the strike occurred quite a long time ago and people's recollections of this time may have been altered over the time the Strike occurred and now. I also felt that primary research would not really benefit me in answering my report question as the views of Firefighters I may have interviewed would have been bias towards their Service and this would have caused any data I gathered to be not completely 100% accurate. My dissertation ended up being totally written from secondary research, this included:

i.Books

ii.Newspapers

iii.Official Reports

iv.Official Legislation

v.PHD Reports

vi.Official Websites

The strength of these sources varied depending on the chapter and topic I was writing at the time. The books I used proved to be very strong sources of information as they both contained a lot of information on the topics I took them out for, such as the Strike itself and Modernisation within the Public Services. Newspaper websites proved to be a rather weak source of information as a lot of local newspapers did not archive their newspapers that far back so finding articles that were published at the time of the Strike proved to be a bit of a problem. Official Reports and Legislation was a mix of strong and weak as I was able to find the Bain Report (2002), the Fire Services Bill (2003) and Dr Dave Baigent's PHD easily and I was also allowed access to them. However the Burchill

Report and Proposals both proved to be difficult to obtain as I was not allowed access to view them.

The foundation of knowledge from the creators of my secondary research by Seifert and Sibley seems quite diverse and in-depth. They seemed to have gained their information from documents provided to both the Government and the Fire Brigade Union at the time of the strike. They also gathered information from Official Reports, Newspaper reports at the time of the strike, interviews with Employees within the Fire and Rescue Service and the Fire Brigade Union and also Employees of the Government such as MP's. This gave them what I feel was a strong foundation of knowledge for their work.

Chapter Seven: Personal Development Plan

As a student at Anglia Ruskin (ARU) I felt my progress has been steady, I do not feel I have progressed to much while at ARU since I only did the Top Up course so it is hard to judge any progress made here. The parts of my degree that has interested me the most has been our Young People and Youth Offending module as I find this subject area quite interesting as it is less Public Service focused unlike other modules we participate in. My career aspirations are to join in the Fire and Rescue Service in the canine department as I enjoy working with dogs and I have interest in the Fire and Rescue Service.

My choice of dissertation topic relates to my chosen career because it is focused on the Fire and Rescue Service which is the Public Service I wish to join in. It helped me to develop my understanding of the service and I learnt more about the attitudes of Firefighters by carrying out this research which I found beneficial overall.

The process of writing my dissertation was quite a long one, I started doing research for my dissertation within the first month of joining ARU. With the assistance of Dr Dave Baigent who helped me find multiple sources I used for my dissertation. I ended up buying a notebook so I could write down notes as I read the various sources of information, I felt this made the process easier when it came to start writing my dissertation as I could find useful quotes and links within my notebook. Overall I felt that the dissertation was easy to write but very hard to concentrate on, it took me a long time to get into writing the dissertation and I ended up changing chapter titles and sub-chapters halfway through writing it so that I could get more important information into the report.

The most difficult part of the dissertation process for me was finding sources as my topic has not been widely discussed so there were limited resources I could use. I also found it hard to write out the Abstract and Methodology as I was unsure as to what needed to go into these two parts of my dissertation.

Completing my dissertation helped me achieve the outcomes of the Public Service BA (Hons) pathway by providing me with a skills base that will allow me to develop a career within the Fire and Rescue Service, it has done this because by completing this dissertation I have learnt a lot on the Fire and Rescue Service which I can use if I join. I have also developed a better understanding of cultural awareness within the Fire and Rescue Service which is a very complex issue within the Service; I gained this knowledge by reading from Dr Dave Baigent's PHD for my own dissertation.

I feel that doing this dissertation and by participating in the Public Service degree I have also gained the potential to contribute to the Fire and Rescue Service should I manage to gain entry. I think this because the dissertation and information I have gained from doing this course has developed my understanding of the culture within the Service and how best to deal with it and it has allowed me to understand where improvement is needed as well as issues which the Firefighters feel strongly about such as modernisation.

These skills would benefit me in my chosen career as they help me to achieve some of their 'skills of the job' for example "*Would you be able to take the responsibility for representing a professional service?*" (London Fire Brigade, 2009).

I feel that from doing my dissertation and this degree I have learnt a lot about taking responsibilities of my actions and that how I act will affect any institute I am working in or for.

Other work related skills that the Fire and Rescue Service ask for are:

- i. Are you committed to always maintaining and developing your skills?
- ii. Are you dependable and can be relied on to do something?
- iii. Are you prepared to follow instructions from others?

(London Fire Brigade, 2009)

These job skills that the Fire and Rescue Service ask of potential employees are all skills I feel I have gained from both participating in this degree and by working on my dissertation. From participating in this degree I was continuously developing my own skills. I also feel that because of my attendance at ARU I have shown that I can be relied to turn up which makes me dependable, I also feel that I can be relied on to carry out a task, this has been displayed in my time here at ARU by handing in assignments in time. I am also willing to follow instructions which is an important part of being a student as we need to listen to our lecturers and follow briefs they give us so we can achieve our degrees.

My experience doing this degree and writing my dissertation has helped me develop academically because I have learnt how to produce different types of documents such as

reports and essays. Doing my dissertation has also allowed me to develop my time skills as before ARU I never had set hand in dates, so I was made to manage my time more appropriately here, I feel this will be useful for professional work as I will be working on deadlines should I need to write paperwork. Personally I feel I have become more confident in my writing skills as I have managed to pass my assignments first time while at ARU. Writing my dissertation has given me confidence in myself that I was able to write a 10,000 word report with limited assistance and finish it in time for the set hand in date. Finally I feel that by doing my dissertation it has also helped me understand my own ability to find and analyse information without a lecturer guiding me.

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