



The Fire Brigades Union

Region 2, Northern Ireland

PRESS RELEASE! PRESS RELEASE! PRESS RELEASE!

09.00 Thursday, 17th February 2005.

FIREFIGHTERS CHALLENGE ATTACKS FIGURES

Firefighters' leaders today reacted angrily to statistics from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, in relation to attacks on firefighters and ambulance workers.

Senior Fire Brigades Union spokesperson Jim Barbour said;

"We absolutely reject the statistic stating 1500 attacks on Ambulance workers and firefighters in the last three years. The true figure for the last three years far exceeds the 1500 quoted, which itself is a horrifying statistic.

We in the Fire Brigades Union believe there is an ongoing, orchestrated campaign aimed at massaging the figures in relation to attacks on firefighters downwards. Direct rule Minister Angela Smith and her minions in the DHSSPS are wholly culpable for this scandalous deceit."

In describing the resentment and angry reaction by Northern Ireland's firefighters, Mr. Barbour went on to say

"Angela Smith's reasons are twofold. Firstly, there is an attempt to cover up the utter failure of the Minister's high profile media campaign to address the very real issue of such attacks. This hopeless campaign has already cost in excess of £500,000! Secondly, it is clear to the FBU that the Minister is paving the way to cease payment of the Northern Ireland Allowance to the Firefighters who face these attacks on a daily basis.

We believe it is no coincidence that this allowance is scheduled for review next week. Any attempt by Angela Smith to pick the pockets of Northern Ireland's firefighters will be met by angry resistance!"

<p>Footnote; The Northern Ireland Allowance is a special duty allowance of £24.99 gross per week, paid to firefighters in respect of their attendance at Civil Disturbance incidents.</p>
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