

EIS-ULA MEMBERS' BULLETIN

PAY NEGOTIATIONS – 8 MAY 2006

EMPLOYERS' BEST AND FINAL OFFER

Yesterday, Monday 8 May 2006, meetings of the two JNCNES negotiating sub-committees were held in the hope of reaching a satisfactory outcome to the academic pay claim for 2006 – 2008. AUT, EIS and NATFHE negotiators were optimistic that UCEA appreciated the need to ensure yesterday's negotiations remained focused and resulted in an offer that was significantly better than the 6% rejected by all trades unions in the JNCNES machinery and of a sufficient calibre that brought about a suspension to the industrial action which AUT and NATFHE members are currently undertaking.

The negotiations started badly with the employers' representatives merely tweaking the previously rejected 6%. All trades unions, academic and support, rejected this revised offer before the lunch break. The negotiations took an even worse turn when the employers' representatives ruled out any consideration of the non pay elements of the academic side claim.

In the afternoon the employers' representatives finally set out their "best and final offer" and made clear that this was at the limits of the mandate given to them by subscribing institutions. The employers asked the unions to put this offer to their members, and further asked that AUT and NATFHE would suspend their industrial action in the light of the offer.

This final offer comprised staged pay increases over the next three academic years as follows:

August 2006	greater of 3% or £515
February 2007	1%
August 2007	3%
February 2008	greater of 1% or £200
August 2008	3%
February 2009	1%

The employers' representatives insisted this offer, compared with pay rates in 2005-06, implied pay increases by the second half of each academic year totalling at least:

2006- 2007	4%
2007 - 2008	8.2%
2008 - 2009	12.6%

This would result in increases of up to 15% by the end of the period for the very lowest paid staff.

The employers' representatives also emphasised that this would be on top of the costs of implementing new pay structures under the Framework Agreement which they say will typically be between 3% and 5%.

EIS, AUT and NATFHE made clear that the offer was disappointing and unacceptable. All three unions considered that the proposed pay increases fell well short of adequately reflecting the increase in the sector's income from 2006-07. All three unions also indicated that they would not put the offer in its current form to members. EIS indicated that the EIS-ULA Executive Committee would very probably consider declaring a dispute when it convened the following day. AUT and NATFHE indicated that they would strongly encourage members continuation (and possible reinforcement) of the assessment boycott and other action.

EIS, AUT and NATFHE issued the following statement at the conclusion of the negotiations: *'The academic trade unions agree that today's offer falls far short of the pay claim submitted on behalf of members. AUT, NATFHE and EIS call on the UCEA, having consulted with their subscribers, to return to negotiations urgently with an improved and credible offer.'*

The EIS-ULA Executive Decision

The Executive Committee considered carefully the report of the previous day's negotiations and agreed that the "best and final" offer did not meet the aspirations of EIS members and by majority vote decided to reject the offer without putting it to members. The Executive then considered the best way forward for EIS-ULA members and decided that the declaration of a dispute was the best way forward. Therefore, the Executive decided to declare a dispute and to seek permission from the EIS Executive Committee for an immediate industrial ballot across all EIS-ULA members with the exception of RSAMD which is not a member of JNCNES. The EIS-ULA Executive agreed that the action it was most appropriate to request members to engage in at this stage of negotiations was action short of strike.

The Emergency Committee of EIS has been convened for Friday, 12 May 2006 and EIS-ULA members should expect to receive a ballot paper and supporting statement shortly thereafter. Individual institutions will be notified without delay that the EIS-ULA has declared a dispute and intends to conduct a formal ballot in compliance with legal requirements.