

RESPECT

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Dear Sisters and Brothers,

The decision by the Fire Brigades Union conference to disaffiliate from the Labour Party represents a historic break after some 85 years of loyal support. It comes as a result of this New Labour government's disgraceful treatment of the fire fighters in your pay dispute for fair pay. This has been compounded by the failure to pay up on the deal agreed to end the dispute. We in the Respect Coalition give fire fighters our wholehearted and continuing support both for decent pay and to stop the privatization and rundown of the fire service. If fire fighters believe that further industrial action is required in pursuit of these aims, we will do everything in our power to raise financial and other support for you, as our members have done before.

Our political programme includes no cuts to fire personnel, fire engines or fire stations, no reduction in night time fire cover and opposition to co-responder schemes and support for a London Weighting Allowance in line with the GLA report. There is the money to pay for all of this, but there is no political will on the part of New Labour. More generally, Respect stands for a complete change in the priorities of government policy in this the fourth richest industrialized country in the world. Instead of spending money on bloody and fruitless wars and kowtowing to the multinationals, we want the money to be spent on our essential public services and on our pensioners.

Our recent election results in which more than a quarter of a million people voted for us across England and Wales and more than 20 per cent of the vote in East London, topping the poll in Tower Hamlets, shows we have the potential to begin to seriously challenge New Labour from the left. We would very much like to meet with members and representatives of the FBU to discuss how we can together take forward the defence of the fire service and the alternative priorities it implies.

Yours in solidarity,



Linda Smith, Treasurer London Region Fire Brigades Union



John Rees, Respect National Secretary

Respect - The Unity Coalition

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