

National Bargaining News

February 2019

News from the national negotiators

Who fiddled the figures?

**NJNC lasts just three minutes—management refuse to #NegotiateNow
Action escalates to ballot on resulting boycott—vote #yes to escalation**

EIS FELA negotiators met management on 7 February for an NJNC meeting that set a record—the meeting lasted just three minutes.

Management sent seven representatives to read out a prepared statement repeating their earlier statements and refusing to negotiate.

This is incredibly disappointing, and shows the utter disregard that Principals have for their own staff and students.

Management claim that a cost of living rise for lecturers—in line with the government's own public sector pay policy—is unaffordable.

College support staff have already accepted a settlement that Colleges Scotland claimed cost £14m. We asked for a similar deal—and management maximised the costs so that they appeared to be more than double and then claimed they were 'unaffordable'!

But wait—the deals were virtually identical... so who is the phantom figure fiddler? Deputy First Minister John Swinney hailed the support staff deal at the time,

praising the collaborative approach taken by the support staff unions to settle without strike action. We are merely asking for parity for teaching staff and a fair deal on pay.

We met management last week and attempted time and again to engage them in serious negotiation.

Management has stuck to its claim that the current offer is all the sector can afford for teaching staff. Their original offer would mean a pay freeze for many staff in years 1 and 2, followed by a consolidated rise of 2.5% in Year 3.

Astonishingly, the 'revised' offer they presented in January is actually WORSE, with unconsolidated payments of £425 and £200 in years 1 and 2 and a consolidated rise of just 2% for the vast majority of teaching staff in year 3.

We have explored further proposals with them and believe that for a mere £4m more than what they are currently offering, we could reach an acceptable settlement. Management has refused to negotiate—despite the fact that £3.4m was

salted away into Arms Length Foundations in 2016/17 (the last year for which figures are available). This was money intended for Further Education, which could have been used to avoid strike action, and which instead has been squirreled away into college slush funds.

We are hugely disappointed by management's inaction and failure to negotiate.

We were clear from the start that industrial action was a last resort. We tried to negotiate for two years before balloting for action. But we can be pushed no further.

We have had two solid days of industrial action and have a further two days planned in March.

We are now moving to escalation with a ballot for action short of a strike **as well as** the ongoing strike action. The proposed action will involve withholding assessment results —not from the students—but from management systems.

The ballot is a paper ballot which you will receive in early March—we need to hit the 50% threshold again, so please use your vote and vote YES to escalation.