

Dear Mr McFadden

his handwritten letter
issued to all Committee
Members today.
Fiona Stanley

COMMITTEE FOR

22 DEC 2008

F & P



Northern Ireland Senior Officers' Section
Room 50, Craigtantlet Buildings, Stoney Road, Belfast, BT4 3SX

To All Members of the Committee for Finance and Personnel

18 December 2008

Dear Finance and Personnel Committee Member

I write to you as the Northern Ireland Officer of the FDA, the Union which represents managers and specialists in the public sector. We are the main Union representing Senior Civil Servants (SCS) and give evidence to the Senior Salaries Review Board (SSRB). The SSRB makes recommendations to the UK Government on SCS Pay. These recommendations inform the decisions made by Government on pay, both for the SCS employed by the UK Government and for those employed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service.

Our attention has been drawn to the Press Release issued by the Committee for Finance and Personnel following its investigation into the award of bonuses to members of the Northern Ireland Senior Civil Service. We are disappointed that such an investigation was undertaken by the Committee without, to our knowledge, a call for evidence, or an invitation to the main union representing Senior Civil Servants to discuss this important issue with it. In the absence of such it is not clear how the Committee anticipated reaching conclusions which fairly reflected the complexity of the issue and the views of those with a direct interest.

The FDA welcomes the Committee's acknowledgement of the need for a pay strategy. We are concerned however at other statements in its press release which appear directed more to undermining the integrity of the senior civil service and the value of its contribution to public service in Northern Ireland, than to promoting rational debate on the nature of an appropriate pay system. In addition we think the Committee has failed to explain or demonstrate why they do not believe that the present system is robust, transparent or 'fit for purpose'. We believe that these issues deserve full and careful consideration and a more appropriate and sensitive presentation than through the medium of a press release. We would therefore welcome, even at this late stage, the opportunity to give evidence to you.

FDA

The union of choice for senior managers and professionals in public service

Convenor: Philip Cummings – Secretary: Fiona Stanley – Treasurer: Harry Baird

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Finally, we note the Committee's call for an independent review of the existing pay system. The Committee will be aware that decisions on SCS pay, both by the UK Government and the NI administration are informed by the independent analysis and recommendations of the SSRB. In addition, a review of the current pay system is already underway in Great Britain and given the comparability with the system in Northern Ireland, we believe that, until that review is concluded, there would be little value in a separate review being undertaken in Northern Ireland. We would also point out that, as we've mentioned above, the SSRB gives the current system independence.

We will be writing to the Minister of Finance and Personnel separately and seeking a meeting with him to discuss the development of an appropriate and objective pay strategy for the SCS.

I look forward to an early response.

Yours sincerely

Jim Caldwell
Full Time Official for Northern Ireland

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