

Think carefully -

before you vote on this year's BBC pay offer.

BECTU's ballot on the 2002 pay offer has begun. The union is not advising members to vote one way or the other, but is asking them to study the pros and cons carefully before returning their ballot papers.

BASIC PAY

Taken together, the increase in pay for 2002 and the 1% fully-consolidated bonus add up to an increase worth 2.8%, with larger rises for low-paid staff, especially in London. The offer is well above inflation - part of the union's original claim - and is described by negotiators as: "Not stunning, but respectable for this year".

THE CONDITIONS ATTACHED TO THE OFFER

There is only one part of the offer where the union has been asked to agree to anything in advance - that's the guarantee of a pay increase equal to the RPI next year, with a possible ½% on top if agreement can be reached on a new pay structure and new arrangements for Unpredictability Allowances.

No commitments have been made by BECTU about these two sets of discussions, except that the union will participate. We have, though, been asked that members should suspend the current boycott on appraisals so that talks on a new pay structure can kick off without either side being under duress. The boycott can be reinstated if the talks fail.

UNPREDICTABILITY ALLOWANCES

By linking talks on UPAs to a two-year pay deal, the BBC has had to accept that there can be no change in the allowances, without union agreement, for the duration of the pay settlement. In other words we are being offered a promise that UPAs will stay in place until August 2004, unless members agree to change them. If the BBC wants changes, it will have to win the support of more than 9,000 staff who receive UPAs - the union is not going to abandon its belief that unpredictable and anti-social hours deserve a reward, and members are probably in a better position facing any challenge to UPAs en masse, instead of being picked off area by area.

PAY STRUCTURE

Talks on a new pay system offer us, for the first time since performance pay was introduced, a chance to win back the "rate for the job" - a key part of the union's pay claim. Although there are no pre-conditions to those talks, the BBC has already conceded that a new system will ensure all staff know the going rate for their category. This could be the year that we put an end to the unfairness and confusion of the current pay system.

BECTU's negotiating team believes that the offer is the best we're likely to see this side of an industrial action ballot, or even a strike.

The ballot closes on June 10th. To find out more call Luke Crawley on 020 7437 8506.

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