

Pay claim goes in...

Amicus negotiators met with AXA management on 27th January and formally submitted the 2006 pay claim. The claim is based on feedback from members across all operating companies in the AXA UK Group and takes into account many of the concerns voiced to union reps, as well as the AXA Group's ability to pay.

"We know the pay talks are going to prove difficult", stated Amicus official Hugh Jones-Glass. "We're in a low inflation environment and there are major cost challenges faced by all the UK companies. However staff need to come first and be valued by AXA if the challenges the company faces are to be met".

As background to our claim we raised a number of our members major concerns with management.

No pay rise = PAY CUT!

As we mentioned in our previous newsletter, members are extremely concerned over the increasing problems staff who are regarded as being "overpaid" by AXA but are facing increasing problems when it comes to paying bills. Every year that they don't receive a pay rise ("because they are over the current market rate"), they receive in real terms a cost of living PAY CUT and that is not acceptable for someone who has performed well and helped the company increase its revenues.

Whilst inflation may be low at present, forecasts of some common bills we have to pay in 2006 make chilling reading:

- COUNCIL TAX: up by 5 to 15%
- PETROL: up by 12%
- PUBLIC TRANSPORT: over 10%
- HEATING: up by 15%

With Henri de Castries issuing management a challenge on staff motivation to meet *Ambition 2012*, how can AXA UK motivate staff who work hard and are faced with increasing bills and no money to pay them?

Low pay? NO WAY!

It would be funny if it wasn't so shocking that people outside the financial services industry think we're all rolling in money, when in reality there are so many who fall below recognised poverty levels and do not receive a basic 'living wage'.

Low pay is an area we have requested immediate action, for the following reasons:

- 21 AXA job roles start below the minimum adult wage of £5.05 per hour.
- Over 88 roles start on or below the Church of England national "poverty wage" level of £10,556.
- Increasing numbers of staff are becoming reliant on tax credits and income support to get by.
- Percentage pay rises are not enough bearing in mind the pressures of increasing household bills on low paid staff.

Everyone wants to be proud of working for a successful company like AXA, so surely a company justifiably trumpeting increased Group revenues in 2005 of €72,164 million can look after its own staff at the bottom end of the salary scale and not heap more worries on them as to how they are going to pay basic bills such as heating, council tax and public transport.

3.5% pay pot requested

Amicus have requested that AXA agree to a 3.5% pay pot for 2006. Whilst this is slightly higher than inflation, it is comparable to other increases agreed in the sector and will enable major issues such as 'zero pay' and 'poverty pay' to be addressed, as well as a reasonable distribution matrix for everyone else. We have also requested action on issues such as pension clawback and bonus inequality.