

and adequately under the present system of "meeting and conferring" on wages and working conditions prior to budget submission and through legislative initiatives to increase benefits. During 1982 alone, the fire fighters received a 17% pay raise, a 7% work-week reduction (without a pay reduction), and shift differential pay.

Moreover, there exists no significant difference between the salary levels, hours of work, and benefits of fire fighters at BWI and the fire fighters located in the neighboring areas of Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County where collective bargaining is practiced. For example, BWI fire fighter salaries are equivalent to salaries of comparably trained fire fighters in Baltimore City; the weekly hours of work are equivalent to those required in Anne Arundel County, and the shift differential pay arrangement is similar to the procedure followed in Baltimore County and Baltimore City.

Clearly the working conditions and benefits provided BWI fire fighters conform closely to those afforded to fire fighters in comparable employment. This situation has been the result of careful and progressive benefit adjustment procedures without the potentially protracted, adversarial, and expensive negotiations which frequently characterize the public employee collective bargaining process. I might add, there is no guarantee under the bill that the BWI fire fighters would not be back before the Legislature seeking benefits that had been denied in the collective bargaining negotiations.

In the absence of demonstrated need for this particular mechanism for the setting of wages, hours of employment, and employee benefits, the retention of the current "meet and confer" system is appropriate and in the best interests of the State.

For these reasons, I have decided to veto Senate Bill 378.

Sincerely,
Harry Hughes
Governor

Senate Bill No. 378

AN ACT concerning

Collective Bargaining - State Fire Fighters

FOR the purpose of providing for collective bargaining for certain fire fighters; providing for advisory arbitration; prohibiting a strike; establishing a penalty for striking; ~~providing---that---this---Act---does---not---apply---to---political subdivisions---that---have---enacted---collective---bargaining provisions---for---their---fire---fighters;~~ and generally relating to collective bargaining for certain fire fighters.

BY adding to