



Section

Fairness at Work

1 Introduction

2007 started with the distribution of literature to Brigade Secretaries on the subject of Age Discrimination at Work. This was provided following the introduction of legislation in October 2006. Officials were given information to support their work in representation of all members. The Union continues to take a strong position on issues of equality and fairness at work.

The hard work of our three equality sections continued in 2007 and representatives from our Women's National Committee, Black & Ethnic Minority Members National Committee, and our Gay and Lesbian National Committee, attended many conferences presenting the views of the Union. One such event was that held by Avon Fire & Rescue Service on the issues affecting Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Trans people in the workplace. This was a well-attended event and the FBU took a prominent role throughout.

The work of all three sections continued to provide strength to the whole Union and together with the National Fairness at Work Committee sought to bring improvements for all members.

The National Fairness at Work Committee met on a quarterly basis during 2007 addressing many issues. In March the Committee finalised the draft of the rewritten 'All different All Equal' (ADAE) policy.

The Union published the new ADAE in May 2007. It was laid out in a manner that gave clear guidance to members and officials who may be involved in cases of discrimination, bullying and harassment.

The Executive Council agreed that the ADAE Policy should be distributed to all members' home addresses.

Within regions Fairness at Work Reps were involved in many issues of 'dignified facilities vehicles', challenging and fighting the BNP in elections, flexible working claims, reasonable adjustments under DDA, cultural audits (Scotland), campaigning against shift changes, Pride events etc.

2 TUC Equality Audit

In 2001 the TUC agreed to rule changes committing affiliates to promoting equality. The rule changes imposed an obligation for Union's to report every two years on what they were doing to advance equality.

The first audit was carried out in 2003 then again in 2005. The Fire Brigades Union submitted a detailed response to the 2007 audit in January. The TUC reported the results of the audit to Congress in September 2007.

3 Promoting Equality for disabled workers

From December 2006 the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) was significantly extended with major changes affecting public sector employees. Despite advances in disability legislation, many disabled people are still disadvantaged in their

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workplace. To this end, guidance was issued to Regional Fairness at Work Reps and Regional Secretaries in the form of a Labour Research Department (LRD) booklet, which explained the new legislation.

14 Equality Training Seminar

20 – 21 MARCH 2007

In line with the Unions education and 'All different All Equal' policies, and the expanding need to provide good, relevant education for officials, a training seminar was held at the Unions, Training Centre, Pencoed, Wales.

This dealt with changes in legislation, which directly affects negotiations at local level. Topics covered included;

- The Goods and Services (SORB – Sexual Orientation and Religious Beliefs) which were due to take effect from April 2007
- The DDA – Dec 2006
- Age Discrimination Legislation
- Changes to Family Law
- The Race Relations Amendment Act (2000)

The seminar was aimed at Brigade Officials and Brigade Fairness at Work Reps. Thompsons Solicitors provided valuable input to the seminar and the Union thanked Vaughan Gething for his assistance.

15 Equality & Diversity Project Board

The Department for Communities and Local Government established an Equality & Diversity Project Board, which met for its inaugural meeting on the 25th October 2006.

The Board had initially excluded the FBU, however, following lobbying of the Minister by Head Office Officials and Sectional Officials, the Union were invited to make a nomination and participate in the Project Board.

John McGhee, National Officer for Fairness at Work, was nominated by the Executive Council, and played an active role within the Board throughout the year. The terms of reference for the Board were set out in a paper EDPB-1/1 and stated that the Board will "provide strategic direction and leadership to the development of a National Strategy to promote diversity". It was proposed that the strategy would be published in 2008. The Board worked throughout the year on developing a strategy.

Stakeholders, including the FBU Equality sections, were invited to attend a number of workshops.

These workshops discussed many aspects of a strategy, including;

- Vision
- Core Values and Business Case
- Aims
- Employment targets
- Levers and tools to create effective change
- Evidence of effectiveness of levers and tools – what works and who takes responsibility

The draft strategy document was published for consultation in 2007 and will be finalised for publication in 2008. The FBU have been involved in its development since the beginning of 2007.

16 Equality & Diversity Stakeholders Group (EDSG)

The EDSG was set up by the Practitioners Forum to provide a Forum for a wide range of internal and external Fire & Rescue Service Stakeholders to consider and advise on issues affecting equality and organisational diversity in the service. The Union has continued to be represented on this group by John McGhee, National Officer, Fairness at Work and representatives from the National Women's Committee, Gay and Lesbian National Committee and the Black & Ethnic Minority Members National Committee. During 2007, the stakeholders elected Stewart Brown, Executive Council Member of the Gay & Lesbian National Committee to take the position of Vice Chair. The Union has continued to take the opportunity to raise issues of equality & diversity through the EDSG and continues to play a major role in its work.

17 Maternity, Adoption and Paternity Rights Policy

During 2007, the National Women's Committee drafted a policy to assist officials with negotiating Maternity, Adoption and Paternity provisions for all FBU members. The document was to be presented to the December Executive Council meeting for approval. However, due to the timing of this meeting coinciding with the funerals of our members who lost their lives on duty in Warwickshire, the meeting of the Executive Council was rescheduled to take place in January 2008. It is anticipated that the policy will be agreed at that meeting and distributed soon afterwards. Once agreed the document will be available on the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk

The policy is designed to show officials the types of arrangements, which may be required, and a number of options, which the FBU believe, will improve conditions for all FBU members and their families.