

ADVISOR



B&EMM School 2004 report

Union leads fight against
BNP in the service



SPRING 2005

VIVA B&EMM VIVA!

A greeting I pass on from our brothers and sisters in South Africa. After centuries of struggle, democracy celebrated its tenth anniversary in that beautiful country last year just as we celebrated our tenth B&EMM School at Wortley Hall.

This is an apt time to mention democracy, as we have a General Election and the FBU General Secretary's election, of which the results will be known by time you receive this edition of Advisor.

It is important that we all take part in elections, as the people we elect will claim to have a mandate to make decisions on our behalf. Millions of people have paid the ultimate price to have a vote and it is almost a dereliction of duty not to exercise that hard won right.

All I ask is that our members make their decisions based on who will best represent our interests in the FBU and society also.

At the B&EMM School 2004, students gave your National Committee a pretty clear idea how/where they hoped we would continue to progress as we enter our second decade as a section.

Recruitment, promotion, information and accountability were amongst the priorities for the people who attended. Your committee acted upon those recommendations as soon as we could, culminating in a three-day workshop in January.

The intention is to present a B&EMM Action Plan for members to be consulted on, hopefully before this year's school which is the 7-9 Oct 2005.

Sharing of information in today's society is important. How we do that quickly is always being raised and questioned. As another string to our bow, National Chair Samantha Samuels has circulated a newsletter – Catch Up – as a means of staying in touch/sharing info in between Advisors.

We are also going to send out an electronic newsletter to B&EMM members, but we need as many e-mail addresses as possible to make this means of communication worthwhile. So please send your email address, name and membership number to b&emmailinglist@fbu.org.uk.

By now you should all have received the B&EMM-commissioned film 'Rise to the Challenge'. If you have not, please contact me or Samantha at the addresses



below. You may not be on the mailing list.

If you have seen the film we would appreciate any feedback you may have – it is vitally important that you give us your input. We will be showing the film to FBU reps and officials at this year's FBU Annual Conference – on 10 May in Southport.

Other black sections in the trade union movement have seen the film and wider distribution is anticipated. We will keep you informed.

Please find enclosed an application form for the

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B&EMM School 2005 at Wortley Hall. This is a wonderful educational opportunity and a chance to network and spend some time as a majority member of the FBU – a rare occurrence for all of us!

The workshop sessions that take place are thought-provoking, and give you an opportunity to express your opinion and influence what we represent on your behalf. All your expenses are reimbursed. You will not be disappointed.

Well, thanks for reading this column. I genuinely hope you get involved no matter how small a contribution you can make. We are an established section in the FBU and we are here to stay.

MICHAEL Nicholas – B&EMM EC member (michaeln@fbu.org.uk)

SAMANTHA Samuels – B&EMM National Chair (b&emm2@fbu.org.uk or samantha.samuels@wmfs.net)

BNP: Zero tolerance

THE Union made a significant impact on attitudes on racism in the fire and rescue service after deciding to expel any member of the FBU who is a member of racist and/or fascist political party or organisation and to call on every organisation in the fire and rescue service, including fire authorities, to make similar public commitments and follow through with the necessary action.

The move, agreed by the Executive Council at its December 2004 meeting, saw the union commit itself to writing to all fire and rescue service bodies, fire authorities and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, to establish their respective positions on this matter.

The matter was raised – and a detailed paper on the issue – at the practitioners forum in December and it was agreed at the forum that BNP membership was not compatible with membership of the fire and rescue service.

Since then Gloucestershire and Avon fire and rescue has adopted policies welcomed by the union.

The union has said that there is no room for racists in the fire service because it must be seen to be serving all members of the community equally and without discrimination.

The reputation of the police and prison services have both been damaged by allegations of racism and that must not be allowed to happen to the fire service.

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist said: “We serve every member of our community equally and without prejudice. No member of the communities we serve must ever be in the position where they ever doubt that.”

“The police and the prison service have both been badly damaged by allegations of racism. We don’t want the name of the fire service being dragged through the mud in the same way.”

“The BNP and other racists are banned in the prison service and are not wanted in the police service. We will not give them safe haven in the fire service.”

In a joint statement, EC B&EMM member Michael Nicholas and B&EMM Chair Samantha Samuels said:

“Our black minority ethnic officials have worked tirelessly to make sure that equality issues remain high on the agenda within the service, and the Gloucestershire statement is the right outcome for all their hard work.

“It is high time the rest of the fire service takes the same steps to ensure a workplace that is safe from extremism of all kinds and in doing so, avoid the type of racist behaviour that has sullied the reputation of the police service.”

JOINT STATEMENT FROM CFO AND AVON FIRE AUTHORITY – BNP MEMBERSHIP

YOU may have become aware through various sources, of issues about membership of the British National Party (BNP). Some press articles may have been inaccurate or misleading. This authority is happy to state its position on record.

Current legal advice indicates that it isn’t yet possible to dismiss an employee for being a member of the BNP. At present, fire authorities are in a different position to the police and/or prison service so we’re covered by different and specific regulations. However, our position is clear. Anyone holding and expressing the views and opinions of the BNP would not be capable of meeting the range of personal qualities and attributes that we require of our staff. We work to ensure that all those working for Avon Fire and Rescue Service have the personal qualities and attributes that allow us to work effectively with all sections of our communities. These personal qualities and attributes are now assessed during new entry tests.

We recognise however that the employment practices of the past may occasionally have allowed those holding such views to have passed the historic recruitment standards. Our position is again clear. We will not hesitate to act against unlawful, unfairly discriminatory or other unacceptable behaviour by employees, whether they are BNP members or not. Such action will include disciplinary action.

We abhor the BNP’s policies and we’ll be supporting current moves to encourage government to legislate to have members of the fire and rescue service treated in the same way as police officers in this respect. We reiterate that there’s no place for racists or bigots within AF&RS.

STATEMENT BY GLOUCESTERSHIRE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE DUTY TO PROMOTE RACE EQUALITY

THE Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 placed a specific duty on public authorities such as fire and rescue services, not only to eliminate unlawful discrimination on racial grounds but to actively promote race equality.

Therefore the actions of our staff need to demonstrate that commitment to the promotion of racial equality.

Not only are discriminatory acts illegal, they go against the core values we as a fire and rescue service hold dear. Racial harassment and incitement to such acts goes beyond the acceptable parameters of behaviour within Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and will not be tolerated.

Any member of staff who displays such behaviour or through membership of any organisation whose constitution, aims, objectives, pronouncements or ideology contradict this Duty to promote racial equality will be subject to formal disciplinary investigation, which may result in dismissal.

This specifically includes membership of the British National Party (BNP)

Nationally and locally, the principal staff organisations of the fire and rescue services namely the Fire Brigades’ Union, Chief Fire Officers Association, Unison and Transport and General Workers Union, steadfastly support this view and will not condone any behaviour, which contradicts the values of promoting racial equality within the workplace of our fire and rescue services.

Democracy?

Sections and the FBU

PICTURE this: the marginalisation of minority ethnic, women and gay people within the political process following a period of industrial depression. Scapegoats, whispering campaigns, websites and mainly ignorant comment to mobilise an angry, hurt and ill-advised mass that have failed to engage in the political process and are now easily manipulated. The challenge for power based on a skewing of class, status and social values.

Germany pre-World War II? No, this description is far closer to home. This is the current state of the FBU. I can't say that? Yes I can!

We need to closely examine the cornerstone of the so-called 'grass roots' philosophy. Objections to the 'sections' most fundamentally revolve around issues of 'democracy'. We often hear: "If I were a black, gay, woman, officer in fire control then I would have five votes. How can that be fair? White males only have one vote."

I cringe every time I hear this ignorant nonsense used to cover up xenophobic tendencies. To date, I have been so sure that our membership is not drawn in by this. I had considered this futile and childish debate long gone. My mistake!

Some people within our union have had considerable success expounding these very sentiments in any arena they can. So what will be the legacy for our union post Pay Dispute?

The term 'democracy' has many interpretations but fundamentally it is about representing everyone. This involves the balancing of individual and collective concerns within a complex process of negotiation and the applications of rules owned by those affected. I was originally against sectional representation, but through a process of education and personal growth, I came to see their necessity within our union. I, indeed we, must challenge any attack on their legitimacy.

There are six sections in this union and they therefore have six of the 19 votes on the Executive Council. The rest of the EC is a representation of, dare I say, white, heterosexual males of firefighter to junior officer rank. If for some obscure reason the trade and equality sections were to challenge the majority en bloc, then any person can see that it is not possible given that a simple majority is all that is required. Do the maths!



What is to be the legacy of some officials in this union? Is it to spout or allow racist, sexist, homophobic comment or behaviour of which we have seen on certain websites and heard in some discussion within the FBU?

History has seen the vote and the right to be represented extended from the rich to the poor, to include men and women of all creeds. Do some within the FBU intend to undo the work and the struggle of our forefathers in the trade union movement? Those people who have made the ultimate sacrifice so we can enjoy the luxury of in-fighting and bigoted self-denial – or so it would appear. If 'unity is strength' then the opposite must surely be true!

Most interestingly, the sections that seem to be acknowledged even by some of the more ignorant commentators are the officers, retained and fire control members.

Officers make up a sizeable percentage of the membership, a fact I had to recently point out to some union officials seeking higher status in our union. Retained now make up the 'bloc' majority vote in the union. No wonder some who have never mentioned or had any experience of retained issues now seek their support. And some willingly try to utilise the Control members as a tool to divide women in the workplace.

This attempt to 'massage' the trade sections is borne out of political necessity, not empathy, compassion, experience or desire to truly represent the membership of the FBU. Indeed, at a recent union political school it

was the equality sections reps and members who put their weight behind the campaign on regionalisation while some of the so-called 'grassroots' looked on.

When I became involved in our trade union, I sought to use the legacy of our founders to improve and educate myself in issues of awareness and the dynamic political structures within which trade unions operate. The FBU has given me access to considerable life experience and knowledge normally outside my grasp or financial means. The majority of our members and officials have not sought such enlightenment.

Why am I not surprised that those who criticise our modern, democratic processes did not seem to have the same concerns about the recent election result for assistant general secretary that garnered an involvement of less than 30% of our membership?

Unfortunately the modern FBU membership does not read politics but seeks the steamier pages of tabloids that sought to undermine them and their legitimate pay claim.

Perhaps as a union, an over paternalistic attitude with our members has led to apathy and an unwillingness to engage with the REAL battles and opposition we have to fight.

I cannot accept the politics/bigoted rhetoric of some in our union – and neither should you. I will continue to oppose it where and when it rears its ugly head. We must 'lift as we climb' in this union and there is much work to be done within the membership. I do not believe that certain people are truly interested or even capable of doing that.

Where are our 'grassroots'? In the community of course. The fact that education is compulsory is as a result of the trade union movement. But do our children know that? What history is taught?

Do the landowners and capitalists suddenly feel benevolent and pass an Act of Parliament? It is this failure of understanding that has led to the continued fall in trade union membership. Our future must be with our internal and community roots if we are to survive into the latter half of this century. I want future leaders of the FBU to know that and work towards strengthening our hand, not diminishing it.

WARREN Simpson
B&EMM Rep Region 7

FBU ANNUAL CONFERENCE – B&EMM RESOLUTIONS

BNP MEMBERSHIP WITHIN THE FIRE SERVICE

THE Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 places a general statutory duty on public authorities, including fire authorities and their chief officers, to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination to promote equality of opportunity and promote good relations between persons of different racial groups.

This conference therefore calls on the executive council and its good offices to lobby the ODPM, CFA and the employers to implement policy that would not allow any member of a fire service to be a member of any organisation whose constitution, aims, objectives, policies or pronouncements, contradict the general statutory duty to promote race equality. Any such organisations specifically include the BNP.

The executive council should give progress reports to each B&EMM national committee meeting.

B&EMM CONSULTATION

IN line with the modernisation agenda in relation to integrated risk management and integrated personal development, it has been deemed a necessity that fire services perform impact assessment before they implement any changes to current conditions of service, including brigade policies and procedures.

With this in mind, this conference demands that the Fire Brigades Union ensure that black and ethnic minorities are not overlooked during the consultation in the aforementioned areas.

To assist this process, this conference calls on the Fire Brigades Union to facilitate brigades in bringing together black and ethnic minorities to ensure their views are considered and taken on board.

B&EMM DISCIPLINE

THIS Conference calls on the Fire Brigades Union to inform B&EMM representatives or officials as soon as they become aware that a B&EMM member has entered into the process of formal discipline.

B&EMM DIARY

JUNE – AUGUST 2005.

JUNE

07 June: EC Meeting – 2 days (Kingston)

22 June: B&EMM National Committee Meeting (Kingston)

JULY

16 July: GLA Rise (formerly Respect) Festival (Burgess Park, Stockwell, London)

31 July: Closing date for B&EMM School application form!!

AUGUST

24 Aug: EC Meeting (Kingston)

OBITUARIES

OUR deepest sympathies and condolences go out to the family and friends of:

Hertfordshire members Jeff Wornham and Michael Millar who lost their lives at the tragic incident at in Stevenage on the morning of the 2nd February.

T/ff Rose, a B&EMM who lost his life in a motorcycle accident while off duty.

Rest in Peace.

THE GAP BETWEEN THE WORLD'S RICH AND POOR HAS NEVER BEEN WIDER...

MAKE Poverty History, a campaigning coalition of over 350 trade unions, NGOs and faith groups, demands that in 2005 the world's leaders commit to trade justice, debt cancellation and more and better aid for the millions for whom poverty, hunger, AIDS, exploitation and illiteracy are a daily reality. Trade unionists around the world are wearing white bands to show their solidarity. Order your white bands from Steve Mills at TUC Publications, Congress House, Great Russell Street, WC1B 3LS, T: 020 7467 1294 (make cheques payable to the TUC; credit card payments by phone) or Buy Online.

Minimum order : Five for £5 and all orders must be in multiples of five. White bands are sold individually at Bookmarks Bookshop, 1 Bloomsbury Street, London WC1B 3QE.

To find out more about the campaign visit www.makepovertyhistory.org, contact your union or call the TUC on 020 7467 1357

A lesson in empowerment

The 2004 B&EMM school flew past and a great deal was achieved, says Stella James from Hertfordshire.

THE 2004 B&EMM school flew past incredibly fast, and a great deal was achieved. It was an empowering experience and it left me in particular with a sense of commonality in my role as a black female firefighter and the forging of many new friendships.

Some of the highlights were:

ICEBREAKING

FOLLOWING introductions by chair Samantha Samuels, secretary Carl St Paul and EC member Michael Nicholas, an

Sisters together



informal session was held, where different groups broke off into around ten people, dependent on issues which brought them together, such as women, newcomers and so on. This was a great opportunity to meet the other women attending and also to highlight issues particular to B&EMM female firefighters, sharing an understanding of how and why they had dealt with things in a specific way.

Former FBU General Secretary Kenny Cameron talked about of his anger when he first became aware of the discrimination that members had been suffering and recalling the journey he, B&EMM and others had embarked upon to change the "hearts and minds" and stop discrimination in the fire service.

General Secretary Andy Gilchrist congratulated B&EMM for its work and growth as a section, and after briefing students on the pay campaign/settlement and the broad challenges ahead for the FBU, answered questions about around the Hampshire events and explained FBU policy on the BNP (see page 3).

The first black firefighter in London, Frank Bailey, said that the main reason why he joined in 1954 was because he had heard that the reason no black or ethnic minority was in the fire service because a black man couldn't possibly do the job of their white counterpart, due to lack of strength and intelligence!

South African Nzuza Ntokorzo spoke on how his trade union identified the fight against discrimination with capitalism, because it is degrading, excludes and shows no mercy for the poor, perpetuates inequality of wealth and privatises resources globally. Nzuza also talked about the history of apartheid and its legacy today.

Rise to the challenge, a film produced by B&EMM was filled with 'real' stories from very 'real' people, who have changed the history of the Fire Service. It was completely inspiring and uplifting!

Pamela Oparaocha, a sub-officer from London Fire



TUC BLACK WORKERS

AS on previous occasions, the FBU contingent was prominent at the 2005 TUC Black Workers Conference, with special guest, Frank Bailey, a retired black firefighter who served in the London Fire Brigade in the 1950s and 1960s, helping to raise the profile of black worker issues in the fire and rescue service.

A key moment during the conference was our reception and screening of the B&EMM film 'Rise To The Challenge', which was produced as part of our FBU B&EMM tenth anniversary celebrations. The film was warmly received by the 'full house' audience.

Twenty-three resolutions and one emergency motion were debated by conference and all

Sami Chaudhry from Dumfries and Galloway, speaking at the Black Workers' Conference 2005

Brigade, spoke about her involvement with B&EMM.

A number of workshops were held during the school:

BULLYING AND HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

FACILITATORS Pamela, Sami and Mark helped to progress the work, through discussions encouraging debate and aiding the development of solutions. The workshop was about enabling self-representation in the work place. It looked at how things should be dealt with in theory and also the practicalities of dealing with issues that did not fit text book scenarios.

B&EMM STRUCTURE AND FUTURE

- Networking, sharing personal strategies and problems
 - Information about other brigades' practices and day-to-day experiences
 - Equality training
 - B&EMM to get out to the 'shires' and introduce self to new recruits
 - Courses run through B&EMM for positive action and so on. Workshops on specific themes – BNP, homophobia among B&EMM, male dominance, female issues.
 - Possible counselling, surgery for problems
 - Web page on the schools' events on the website
 - Starter pack for new members
 - More than one B&EMM school per year?

INTEGRATED PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM (IPDS)

THE facilitators Jaqtar Singh, Deputy Chief Fire Officer Luton & Bedfordshire, Michael Ogwu, ACO, and Stephen Johnny, Station Commander from London Fire Brigade, examined the structure and fundamental differences from the previous system: to recruit someone with the 'potential' to be a firefighter, not necessarily someone who can already do the job. B&EMM could support/guide members through networking, and helping them to learn about fair representation/ promotion, by providing B&EMM role models. Future B&EMM schools will include workshops giving IPDS advice.



Brothers together



South African trade unionist Nzuza Ntokorzo (centre) with Andy Gilchrist (right) and former National Officer Dave Patton

RS CONFERENCE 2005

were passed. The FBU resolution called for the cancellation of the developing world debt. This was moved by our first B&EMM rep in Region 1 – Sami Chaudhry (Dumfries and Galloway), and he delivered a great speech at his first-ever conference.

The FBU delegation spoke on many issues including: pensions; the far right; racism; migrant workers; racist behaviour in European football; and equality seats on the TUC General Council.

The FBU nominee to the Race Relations Committee, Michael Nicholas, was elected for the third consecutive year.

Thank you to all those who represented the FBU at the 2005 TUC Black Workers Conference.

WHEN, WHERE, WHO?

Date: 15-17 April 2005

Venue: Floral Hall, Southport

FBU delegation:

- Samantha Samuels (B&EMM Nat Chair)
- Michael Nicholas (EC member)
- Sami Chaudhry (Reg 1 rep)
- Warren Simpson (Reg 7 rep)
- Garrett Brooks (Reg 10 rep)
- Steve Johnny (Reg 10 rep)
- Lud Ramsey (Reg 12 rep)
- Leroy Phillpotts (Reg 13 rep)
- Pardeep Raw (Reg 7 – observer)
- Colin Jarrett (Reg 7 – observer)

