

Advisor

Why the
FBU's
B&EMM
section
matters
See p15



The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union Black and Ethnic Minority Members ♦♦♦ www.fbu.org.uk

Spring 2010



Is racism dead in the Fire Service?

Results of the FBU's B&EMM survey

See p6





Foreword

Welcome to the new Advisor

Hi members,

Hope you and all that you treasure are in fine health. Welcome to the first, larger *Advisor* of 2010. Once again it promises to be a busy year with B&EMM reps and activists doing their very best in an ever-changing fire and rescue service to ensure that our issues stay on the agenda AND are progressed.

Disputes

We still have ongoing industrial relations disputes in several areas including

London, Essex, Merseyside and South Yorkshire. I hope that B&EMM are getting involved and supporting our union in reaching acceptable resolutions in difficult circumstances.

This issue will report back to you on yet another successful B&EMM School last October and provide details about this year's educational event. It would be great to see members who have never been before – especially from our women and non-African Caribbean membership.

As you may be aware, two longstanding B&EMM retired from the service last year. This edition carries their thoughts on fine careers and some advice on how and where we need to progress.

Revamped magazine

This new, larger magazine will also have an international focus where we look at stories, events and issues from the

BME world. The tragedy in Haiti has rightly been at the forefront of worldwide humanitarian efforts and there are other reports we should be knowledgeable about. I've tried to put into words my own thoughts on Haiti's political history and what the future may hold for that impoverished country now.

It's been one year since Barack Obama became the most powerful/influential world leader – how has his presidency changed international politics, if at all? We discuss.

We also publish the results of the FBU cultural survey which examined the B&EMM experience of the UK fire and

rescue service in the 21st century.

Have we finally eradicated racism in the fire and rescue service?

A lot of time and resources have been invested in correcting behaviour – has it been successful? See the report in this edition and let us know your thoughts.



MARTIN JENKINSON

Delegates speak out at the FBU's B&EMM school

Elections

This year also sees some major elections – in our communities, nationally and within our union. It is vitally important that we exercise our right to vote – a right that millions have died for. We need to keep the far right out of our town halls and parliament – there can be no place for discrimination and hatred in our political process and only by voting can we ensure that it will be kept out – please VOTE.

We also have some important FBU elections and your vote needs to be counted. Your local and national B&EMM reps are more than happy to advise you of our recommendations.

And finally, sadly our current B&EMM national chair Leroy Phillpotts is to retire from the fire service on ill health grounds. His thoughts on the service he joined and is soon to leave will be in our next edition. I'm sure many of you will join me in wishing him every success in the future.

Michael Nicholas,
Executive Council Member
for B&EMM

“We need to keep the far right out of parliament”

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Still much to be done since Lawrence inquiry

Anti-racism

Ten years after the Stephen Lawrence inquiry there is still much to be done, according to speakers at a union conference.

Last year was the tenth anniversary of the Macpherson inquiry, which investigated the circumstances surrounding the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993. In November last year the TUC hosted a conference on "Stephen Lawrence – 10 years after", which was attended by FBU delegates.

Andre Fernandes, FBU B&EMM rep in Region 12, attended the event. He said: "The conference dealt with many issues facing black and minority ethnic communities. 'This governments' cohesion strategy is designed to save money. It encourages ethnic communities to organise around religion which undermines anti-racism initiatives and divides communities.

"It is the government that decides which religion is funded and what that religion stands for, even if that religion produces discrimination," he added. "This community division known as 'cohesion' often has religious leaders who are conservative, sexist and homophobic."

The economic situation was also raised in the discussion. Fernandes said that black and

Asian workers who were invited here to work in the 1950s and 60s were the first to be made redundant when the factories and shops closed in earlier recessions. "These redundant workers set about earning a living with the only means at their disposal and opened up shops of their own," he said. "Now these community shopkeepers are blamed for being separatist and unwilling to integrate."

Other points made by the speakers provide food for thought. An investigation of the UK Borders Agency found it was disproportionately targeting ethnic catering services. And the old style policing 'sus laws' are back, with BME youth disproportionately targeted, despite figures showing that knife crime is predominantly a 'white on white' offence.



Delegates reflect on the lessons

IN BRIEF

Women's liberation, the struggle continues

Women's oppression is a **central issue** for all trade unionists and the struggle against it should form part of the wider strategy to bring equality for all.

Andre Fernandes, FBU B&EMM rep in Region 12 said: "In today's society, **women are still paid less than men**, yet make up 50% of the work force, are still blamed for rape and domestic violence, and **only 19% of MP's are women**. Political paragons of virtue constantly attack abortion rights, attempting to deny a woman's right to choose. Women are paraded in the media as sex objects maintaining sexism in our popular culture."

Did you know?

? The **biggest immigrant community** in Britain is white Americans, the biggest immigrant child population in Britain is also white American.

? A report on **equality in the workplace** found that if someone's name did not sound English they were less likely to get work or even interviews, and that managers were becoming de facto immigration officers.

? **Harriet Harman's** Equality Bill does not include LGBT protection. It seems that in the rush to get the bill streamlined, good legislation has been jettisoned.

? **Times reporter Dominic Kennedy** was forcibly ejected from a BNP meeting about non-white members by a thug trying to yank his nose off whilst slamming him into a parked car.

Take equality seriously, says FBU

Equality

An "equality and diversity framework" is simply not enough to tackle the issues, the FBU has told the fire and rescue service.

At the launch of the new equality and diversity framework, FBU officials criticised the service for failing to come out against fascist organisations such as the BNP.

John McGhee, FBU national

officer with responsibility for equality said: "We have chief officers and fire authorities, in my view, hiding behind a perceived lack of legislation.

"They say that as the BNP is not specifically banned, as in the police service, as long as 'they don't bring it to work' it's OK.

"How ridiculous is this approach? We have agreed PQAs for employees which cannot be complied with by a

member of the BNP.

"I asked the audience at that conference if the FRS would tolerate paedophiles in the work force as long as they didn't 'bring it to work'. How ridiculous. We know they would not and could not."

The FBU is not aware of any BNP members in the fire and rescue service, but the union is working with all brigades to produce joint statements against far right organisations.



JUSTIN TALLIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Trade unionists stand up to the BNP

Never again

Andre Fernandes, B&EMM rep for Region 12 warns about the BNP

Anti-fascism

The BNP is a fascist organisation with two MEPs, 56 councillors and a Greater London Assembly member. Nick 'the Nazi' Griffin has a chance of winning a parliamentary seat for the fascist BNP.

The BNP polled in 934,000 votes for their European candidates, giving Griffin and long-time seasoned Nazi Andrew Brons a seat each in the European parliament.

These were the strongest results for a fascist party in the history of British politics.

'Well directed boots and fists'

The BNP are a racist, sexist, homophobic and Islamophobic organisation of thugs. Their members and supporters – such as Robert Cottage, Tony Lecomber and David Copeland – have convictions for making and planting explosives in populated multi-cultural areas.

BNP leader and notorious holocaust

denier Nick Griffin, wrote after the BNP won its first council seat in 1993 in Millwall: "Defend rights for whites with well directed boots and fists." At an anti-IRA rally he advised the listeners to use "the traditional British methods of the brick, the boot and the fist".

No platform for Nazis

Many people believe that the way to defeat fascism is to debate with it, appease it, or to simply ignore it in the hope that it will simply fade away. It won't! These are the tragic mistakes of history that should not be repeated.

The BBC argued that the BNP was a

legitimate party with significant electoral support as an excuse to invite Griffin onto its flagship debating programme Question Time on 22 October 2009. Far from exposing Griffin and his vile politics, the panel made him appear a beleaguered victim. Griffin was pilloried in the press the following day by the same people who actively encourage racism, sexism and homophobia.

How to stop the BNP

The biggest, broadest possible movement against the Nazis is what's required. Making sure that everyone uses their vote raises the bar and makes it harder for the BNP to gain a favourable vote.

We should challenge the English Defence League by turning out in greater numbers when they have their racist protests in our communities, leafleting and talking to people to expose the BNP for the Nazis they are. If we miss the chance to organise and fight; fascism will be our punishment!

"The BNP are racist and Islamophobic thugs"



Is racism dead in the fire service?

FBU B&EMM were asked to assess the state of play on racism in the fire and rescue service. Michael Nicholas, B&EMM executive council member assessed the results

For many years black and minority ethnic (BME) members have been discussing whether our experience in the fire and rescue service has become more positive. The FBU commissioned the Labour Research Department to carry out the research. All B&EMM were sent the survey, which provided a profile of our diverse membership (see box).

Cultural issues in the workplace

The survey asked about members' workplaces. More than a quarter were the only BME person at work and around two thirds were the only BME on their watch/shift. More than half said that the ethnicity of their workplace was not reflective of the community they served, yet a quarter felt that it was.

Sadly many said they had personally experienced or witnessed racist behaviour at work. Just over half had received this behaviour from colleagues or managers at work. Again, more than half (54%) had seen this behaviour towards others.

Despite this, only half had personally

challenged another colleague about the use of racist language or action and only 14% had even reported this to management. This may not be a surprise when you consider that almost half of complaints had seen no further action taken. No complaint resulted in a dismissal. Nearly three-quarters of complainants were dissatisfied with the outcome of their complaints.

We therefore asked members if "the service has a welcoming culture for people of different ethnicity". Less than half answered that in a positive way, a quarter were not sure, but 28% did not feel that the service had a welcoming culture at all.

Career aspirations

We wanted to find out if B&EMM had seen an improvement in promotion outcomes and if members aspired to climbing the "promotional ladder". Almost three-quarters said they were interested in promotion. The most cited reasons for this were "more responsibility", "more job satisfaction", "more BME in management roles" and "more money". When asked to give the

Profile of B&EM members

The majority of the respondents were male and almost two thirds (63%) were in the 36-50 age group. The largest group by ethnicity were the Caribbean/Caribbean British (38%) with the second largest being dual heritage – white/black Caribbean (20%). Our Asian heritage accounted for just over 13%. Other ethnicities included Arab, Greek, Somalian, Iranian, Filipino, Israeli and a respondent from the Seychelles.

The average length of service was 11 years, almost nine out of ten were operational staff and under 2% worked in control rooms. The remainder worked in fire safety and other departments. Firefighter roles were in the majority at (61%) followed by WM (18%) and CM (10%).

single, most important reason, nearly a third said more BME were needed in management roles.

Nearly half of respondents said they had been encouraged to seek career advancement, although a large minority said they had not (40%). One in six (16%) actually said they had been discouraged! Over half were not sure if BME were treated fairly when going for promotion with a quarter believing they had been treated fairly and one in five disagreeing.

Finally, we asked about their future in the service. An overwhelming majority (87%) considered the fire service as “a job for life” although 40% had considered leaving at some point. The most stated reasons were unhappiness with colleagues/managers, general unhappiness and need for better pay. A quarter cited race/cultural issues.

Survey conclusions

Some of the wider negativity was more about the service as a whole than about individual workplaces. This suggests that there are still shortcomings at the corporate level in making sure that the service is capable of being an institution that embraces diversity among staff.

The way the service deals with

complaints of racism has always been criticised, quite rightly, and in this area we can only feel there is no progression at all.

Despite a high level of witnessing and challenging this behaviour, there is still clearly no confidence or expectation of the issue being dealt with satisfactorily by service managers.

Maybe, just maybe, racism is now being challenged in the fire and rescue service. Race and culture are maybe, just maybe, no longer taboo words or subjects. Ethnicity is slowly being acknowledged as a positive for the service, not something to be hidden or disguised.

Most principal managers and the Audit Commission agree that a public service that is reflective of the community it serves gives a higher quality of service. Is racism in the fire service dead?

Not just yet.

! It is important that you correspond with your opinions on this survey. Do you believe that racism is dead, merely embers of a fire that once burned brightly? Or is it still in our midst?

Email mickn@fbu.org.uk with responses and for copies of the report. It is available at www.fbu.org.uk/aboutus/sections/bemm/

Joining the service

By far the most common reason for wanting to join the fire and rescue service was “for a secure career”, second being “long term ambition” with. Just a few cited “influence of someone you knew in the service”.

Over half agreed that the selection process was “fair for all ethnic groups”, but almost one in five (18%) felt that there was a negative “race bias” in the selection process.

We requested information about members’ experiences during initial training. Two thirds felt they were treated fairly and a majority said that their experience was “free from racism”. However, one in five did not feel that they had received fair treatment and, most worryingly, nearly a third disagreed that their experience was free from racism.

“There are still shortcomings at the corporate level”



B&EMM SCHOOL REPORT



PICTURES: MARTIN JENKINSON

‘Lively discussion’

The FBU’s annual B&EMM school took place in October. Michael Nicholas reports on a successful event

Preparations for the school started at the national committee meeting in February 2009. The committee endorsed the proposal that the B&EMM executive committee begin work on the school and the committee subsequently proposed that the main theme of the school would concentrate on the ten years of equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service since the 1999 Thematic Review.

A number of guest speakers were invited including the leading black BBC journalist John Pienaar. Also invited to contribute at the school was the first BME chief officer – **Vij Randiniyah** of the West Midlands. This was somewhat controversial, however the B&EMM executive committee decided that students needed to hear his views on

issues pertaining to our members in the fire and rescue service.

B&EMM officials met with the national education officer and the FBU director of education **Trevor Cave** in July to finalise the school programme. Applications were sent to members with a deadline until the end of July and arrangements with Wortley Hall were finalised. We also agreed to enlist the assistance of FBU organiser **Daniel Giblin**, who agreed to facilitate a session on mapping and the benefits to B&EMM.

There were 90 applications to the school and it had been decided that we would have no more than 60 students. We therefore had a reserve list predominantly consisting of members who had been to many recent B&EMM schools. In September, the LFB cancelled all trade union facility time during the industrial dispute, which initially greatly reduced

our numbers – more than 50% of the school students were London B&EMM. The dispute was subsequently resolved and TUL reinstated. The final school figures were 58 students from 18 FRAs. We welcomed 17 first-time attendees.

The school started slightly later than advertised with the national chair’s introduction and the “walk and talk” session held in the Wortley Hall grounds.

It had been decreed that the discussions would centre around the history of B&EMM and Wortley Hall, the progression of equality and diversity policies, BNP members in the fire service and the election of Barack Obama. There was a lively discussion in the groups and the session served as the school “ice-breaker”.

National officer **John McGhee** then spoke about the history of equality and diversity in the fire and rescue service



Delegates made their views clear on a wide range of issues

at B&EMM school

and the historical role of the FBU and its sections. He also gave the school an update on national FBU issues and answered questions from the floor. Daniel Giblin then introduced his session and the school broke into workshops to discuss the results of the FBU B&EMM survey and how we can use "mapping" to become better organised as a section.

We ended the first day after dinner with the film "At the River I Stand".

The second day began with the "Question Time" panel session. The panel guests were former principal BME managers **Jagtar Singh** and **Wayne McCollin**, the most senior BME equalities manager **Patricia Oakley** from the LFB, John McGhee and West Midlands CFO Vij Randiniyah.

B&EMM EC member **Michael Nicholas** chaired the session as the original chair, the BBC's John Pienaar, had pulled out at the last minute. The discussion started on the recommendations of the 1999 Thematic Review and the progression of BME people in the fire service.

We also discussed the BNP and public sector employment, support networks

and the responsibility of being a BME role model. There were a range of questions from the floor and most were asked of the CFO, whose perspective was somewhat at odds with the rest of the panel and the school.

It became quite clear that his opinions on the FRS equality agenda and BME progression were a minority view and many students were surprised at what he had to say. He did not agree, for instance, that a fire service that is reflective of its community performed a better service.

It was an eye opener for many students and a salutary lesson that said: just because someone may "look like many of us doesn't mean he's one of us"!

After lunch we had a presentation from **Pragna Patel** from the Southall Black Sisters group in West London. The BME women's support group won a landmark high court ruling against their London

council who withdrew their funding using the Race Relations Act 2000 as a reason for doing so. Her presentation was inspirational and an example of how to use race equality legislation to benefit the community. This was followed by the B&EMM National Report, given by national secretary **Samantha Samuels**.

FBU director of education Trevor Cave and TUC tutor **Katherine Fry** finished the day's activity with a session comparing the Thematic Review with the current 10 year CLG equality strategy. On Saturday evening we acknowledged the contribution to B&EMM made by soon to be retired Bro **Michael Ogwo** and he received a fond farewell from the school students.

Bro **Sami Chaudhry** opened the final morning with a presentation on different cultures and faiths in our communities. We then broke up into regional groups to discuss any issues members wanted to raise. BME ROOT member **Frank Bailey** presented certificates to Bros McCollin and Ogwo on their retirements and after the school evaluation forms were completed, the B&EMM school 2009 was closed by EC member Nicholas.

"There were 90 applications for 60 places"



Port-au-Prince was devastated

UK firefighters responded to the earthquake in Haiti with solidarity. Michael Nicholas looks at the background and prospects for its people

The poorest country in the western hemisphere was devastated by an earthquake measuring 7.0 on the Richter scale on 12 January 2010.

Haiti's people are vulnerable to natural disasters as millions of them reside in hillside slums. The capital, Port-au-Prince was almost razed to the ground by the force of this natural disaster. As all of the country's infrastructure was based there it was not only buildings that collapsed.

Of course the most horrific

consequence was the appalling loss of life – 230,000 and sadly, still counting. Disease, homelessness and hunger are now rife despite a huge international aid effort. The aftermath for the survivors and their struggle to overcome the massive trauma will take maybe a generation to recover from. Thousands more children are now orphaned to add to the 300,000-plus that were already in orphanages before 12 January.

Initially the emergency services response was very sparse, which is no surprise in such an impoverished

country. The lack of emergency equipment and huge aftershocks caused more panic and collapse. Seriously injured people lay without any medical aid or treatment and perished. The dead stayed where they lay and the able did their best to assist those that could be saved. Media images sent around the world told their own story and the world responded with so much aid that the tiny, damaged airport could not facilitate its entry. There are still no consistent power supplies and all forms of communication are poor.



The Disaster Emergency Committee (DEC), which coordinates all the UK's humanitarian charities for disasters, launched an appeal for the survivors. So far over £25m has been received in donations. Many more nations have given and promised money and other support. Teams of emergency services personnel and equipment arrived to provide the all important aid and medical assistance.

The UK provided a team of USAR staff to carry out command, control and heavy rescue duties. No doubt there were many FBU members among them and their training and skills greatly assisted in the rescues efforts.

Current situation

There have been many political coups in Haiti's history, but some political calm prevailed under the presidency of



USAR firefighters assisted with the rescue effort

Rene Preval. However, the criticisms of his administration since the tragedy will probably result in another political change when the country finally gets back on its feet.

The UN decision to allow the United States to take temporary control of the country has been applauded and criticised in equal measure. There are seemingly no limits to this control and no timescale either. The people of Haiti have initially been grateful that there is some semblance of infrastructure in their moment of need, although this may change if the American presence comes to be seen as an occupying force as opposed to a humanitarian force for good. Latin America and the Caribbean will also be wary of the American influence as recent political activity in that part of the diaspora has seen a rejection of the neoconservative foreign policies of the Bush administration. That said, there are signs that there is more of a dialogue with Obama's team.

Restoring a nation's dignity and pride, assisting the sick and injured, housing the dispossessed and feeding malnourished stomachs are at the top of any list in resolving Haiti's current plight. The combined international effort has started to repair the damage and the cancelling of Haiti's debt was the right political move. The UN will have a continuing, important role to play in getting an impoverished and broken country back on its feet. The eyes of the world will be anticipating the outcome.

 **The FBU Executive Council endorsed a donation of £5,000 to the TUC Aid appeal for Haiti.**

The capital was razed to the ground

PICTURES
BY DEAN
HARRIS,
PART OF
THE USAR
TEAM THAT
WENT TO
HAITI

Haiti's history

There are many reasons why Haiti has, for some, failed to live up to its early promise. Emancipated by former slaves who overthrew their colonial masters in the early nineteenth century, the new country made modern history by becoming the first black independent post-colonial state. Toussaint L'Ouverture, a former slave, became its first leader.

Certainly for the last 100 years, poverty, corruption, political instability and external interference have all contributed to the failed state that is Haiti today. The Haitian people have seen a once-fledgling democracy duntrodden by despots. The Duvalier dictatorship ruled for 30 years (1956-86) supported intermittently by western interests and governments. The Duvalier father (Papa Doc) and then son ruled by terror, torture and murder, ruthlessly disposing of opponents through their 'security' vehicle, the tonton macoute. Finally in 1986 junior Duvalier who had ruled from his father's death (1971), was forced to flee to France in 1986.



World news round-up

Andre Fernandes comments on recent international stories

Greek workers fight back

European bosses and politicians are set to use Greece as a test bed for massive cuts in public services in an attempt to make workers pay for the economic crisis, but Greek workers have an answer to this: 'general strike'.

Already Europe's leaders are worried by the resistance as

Greek workers struck and marched in February with banners which read: "No to the capitalist parasites, the wealth belongs to the workers".

Greek workers referred to their demonstration as the "river of fury" and are showing no signs of giving in to police tear gas and threats from the government.

Afghanistan

The starved, beleaguered people of Helmand fled as the US-led NATO forces unleashed their weapons of mass destruction in Operation Moshtarak.

Those who stayed behind were either too weak or too poor to flee.

"We've caught the insurgents on the hoof," said Major General Nick Carter blowing his own trumpet as NATO missiles killed more Afghan civilians.

Moshtarak is just another episode in the bloody "war on terror" that was doomed from the onset and that nobody believes in.

Latin America – 'A windswept pile of rocks'

There is trouble brewing in the Falkland Islands and it's nothing to do with sheep farming. Exploration for oil has begun off the coast of the Falkland Islands and the Argentinean authorities are not happy. Argentina has accused the British government of ignoring international law by allowing this exploration to take place.

Christina Fernández de Kirchner, the Argentinean president, spoke at the

summit of Latin American countries in Mexico in February.

She said: "The Malvinas issue can be seen as a clear example of what happens with international law where those with a permanent seat on the UN security council can violate once and a thousand times systematically the resolutions of the UN, whereas the rest of the nations are forced to comply with them under the threat of being determined as an enemy country or even worse."

Let's hope this does not spark another bloody,

pointless conflict in the South Atlantic in which workers in uniform kill each other over a windswept pile of rocks to secure an unpopular prime minister's second term of office.

Haiti hijacked

Matt Frei, the BBC's correspondent in Washington, seemed on the point of hyperventilating as he warned of the need for more "security" in the rubble of the Haiti earthquake aftermath.

On 22 January the US got approval from UN to take over all sea and airports. Having not one signatory from Haiti, this has no basis in law.

The arrival of 13,000 marines, special forces, spooks and mercenaries – none of whom have humanitarian training or experience – came with the US blockade that saw aircraft carrying humanitarian aid redirected to the Dominican Republic.

All flights were stopped for three hours for the arrival of Hilary Clinton whilst the Haitian people suffered. After six days the US air force managed to get bottled water to the dehydrated people while 800 US residents in Haiti were fed, watered and airlifted out.

As the world's media ranted about widespread criminal looting and mayhem, the people of Haiti, with dignity, formed civilian groups to help those still trapped, to distribute what little food and water they had, while US forces turned away life-saving help they desperately needed.

PETROS GIANNAKOURIS/AP PHOTO/PA PHOTOS



Greek riot police face protesters in Athens

OPINION HAVE YOUR SAY



Barack Obama warns the bankers that he is ready to fight to regulate the financial sector

Barack Obama: dream over?

United States

The world breathed a sigh of relief in November 2008 when Barack Obama romped home in the US presidential election.

Obama's victory speech before an estimated 240,000 people, incarnated the hope of millions of Americans who had become political activists for the first time, people who wanted change in an unequal society, people who wanted an end to war, poverty and injustice, and, not least, an end to the rotten Bush administration.

In front of a jubilant audience, Obama proclaimed in words reminiscent of the Sam Cooke song: "It's been a long time coming, but change has come to America."

At home

A year on, the right-wing Republican party has re-grouped. Members call themselves "Tea Party" activists in the aftermath of the collapsed Democratic vote in Massachusetts.

Obama has turned his guns against the bankers in an attempt to regain lost

support. "If these folks want a fight, it's a fight I'm ready to have," the president has said in unyielding tones.

However he knows that with the Democrat loss of the Senate majority, he has little chance of his bill passing. The banking reforms will not generate a single job while Obama continues to push the banking debt crisis onto the poorest people in America.

There are other big issues to be tackled. Some 15 million are out of work and 3.5 million Americans are now homeless. Home foreclosures have, in Obama's words, "not topped out yet". The prison population has six times as many black males than white males. As yet there are no policies to correct those disproportionate statistics.

Hopes look dashed

The poorest people in America pulled out

Some 3.5m Americans are now homeless

all the stops to win victory for Obama. They campaigned, knocked on doors, organised rallies and gave out leaflets. They gave their spare time and their spare cents to put their man into office – a man of the people, for the people. But their hopes look increasingly dashed.

Is the dream over for the American people? Has the opportunity for change now become too deeply submerged in the corruption and terror of America's former administration?

For a handful of Americans who own massive amounts of shares in banks, energy companies etc. things have never been better with unprecedented financial dividends swelling their bank balances, paid for by America's ordinary working class people.

It is in Obama's hands to turn things around. Whether he chooses to do so or not remains to be seen.

What do you think?
Is it too soon to expect President Obama to change the mess he inherited? Could he have done more? Contact mickn@fbu.org.uk
We will publish the best responses.

Conferences 2010

Michael Nicholas
sets out the year's
big conferences

B&EMM
EVENTS
AHEAD

Besides the important role of looking after our members' interests, trade unions are also in the business of formulating policies.

This is done on an annual basis, mainly in the form of conferences. We often describe the Fire Brigades Union annual conference as the 'parliament' of our union and the B&EMM representation of our members there is fundamental to our role as a section within the union.

Being a delegate at either of these or any conference carries some responsibility as every attendee is expected to speak and contribute to the debates.

This role means that reps and activists are away from home for several days, often in their own time. Our union is indebted to that commitment. It's a great opportunity to represent and speak in front of an audience – especially for the first time.

TUC black workers conference

Liverpool

23-25 April 2010

Our section decides on the FBU resolution and asks the EC to endorse. The general secretary then submits the resolution to the TUC. All the TUC unions send delegations exclusively of black members and reps.

The FBU resolution for this conference is on membership and actions of the BNP. We strongly believe that the TUC

can do a lot more to counter the BNP and to inform trade union members and our communities of the threat they pose.

There are another 21 resolutions to be debated at the conference. The decisions guide the TUC race relations committee on its work for the forthcoming year.

The FBU delegation to this year's conference are Mark Brown (R4), Dalton Powell (R6), Colin Jarrett (R7), Andre Fernandes (R12), Lud Ramsey (R1), Dave Pazir (R7), Carole Brown (R12) and Michael Nicholas (EC member).

Michael Nicholas is also the FBU nomination for the race relations committee whose membership is decided by an election at the conference.

FBU annual conference

Southport

19-21 May 2010

Our section can submit three resolutions for the FBU annual conference. After endorsement by the standing orders committee, which decides on whether the resolutions are 'competent' and within the union's rules and policies, resolutions are placed on the agenda.

This year B&EMM have two resolutions on the agenda, as one of our resolutions was



FBU delegates at the TUC Black Workers Conference last year

ruled "out of order".

Our two resolutions are on FBU support for victimised reps and on BNP membership. Representing B&EMM will be Colin Jarrett, Dave Pazir, Andre Fernandes and Dalton Powell. The B&EMM national secretary and chair are also expected to attend to support the delegation.

There are nearly 80 resolutions on this year's conference agenda, plus EC statements and proposed rule changes.

This all makes for hard work and interesting debate and ultimately creates the union's policies and direction for the next 12 months.

This year the EC are

proposing a rule change that will give our union rules for disciplining members who are members of the BNP and it is hoped that conference will support this rule change for which B&EMM have lobbied for years.

STUC black workers' conference

Glasgow

2-3 October 2010

Every year the FBU in Scotland can submit two motions to the Scottish TUC black workers conference.

The FBU delegation of four is formed primarily of our Scottish black members who also draft the resolutions for the endorsement of the regional committee.

The resolutions are quite rightly based on issues for our members in Scotland and we normally have a candidate for the Scottish race committee.

**We strongly believe the
TUC can do a lot more
to counter the BNP**

Profile

Advisor celebrates two pioneers who retired last year

Michael Ogwo

“When I joined the service in March 1979 I was the only black member of a fresh faced and eager band. At the time there were but a handful of operational staff who were from an ethnic minority in the whole of the London Fire Brigade. By the time of my retirement in 2009 these numbers had increased significantly.

I got involved with B&EMM towards the end of this time. To its credit the FBU took B&EMM into its organisation and, though strains sometimes exist, continues to do so.

Through attendance at the B&EMM national school I gained valuable insight into how members in other brigades fared. This led to participation at B&EMM national committee meetings. The connections and friendships from involvement in B&EMM are the true

legacy of my fire service career and the sense of belonging that continues into my retirement.

Progress on BME issues

In the early days the London Fire Brigade's implementation of equality may have been well-intentioned but it was heavy handed and unsophisticated and tended to alienate people and harden attitudes.

I would say that I benefitted from moral and practical support from FBU representatives. However, as an officer, I had the confidence and experience to defend myself using existing procedures, but it did dominate my career for the best part of a decade.



MARTIN JENKINSON

The intervention of support groups such as B&EMM energised the process of change by inducing greater commitment on the part of fire service organisations.

There are those who express the view that the support groups are unnecessary. Such views either fail to understand the nature and importance of the issues or deny their existence.

B&EMM needs to continue its co-operation with fellow support groups and its links with organisations

outside the fire service.”



Wayne McCollin

“My first posting brought me into contact with two blatantly racist individuals on my watch, a firefighter and the sub-officer. It was a case of better knowing than not, because the rest of the crew knew too and showed their disdain for them openly and welcomed and supported me all the way.

As a trainer I first became aware of institutionalised racism and encountered the wiles of the covert racist.

I saw how the system worked against our first Asian recruit whose days were numbered before he set foot in the school, and how the decent people in the service were able to recognise wrong and act on it.

The opportunity to attend the first FBU gathering of BME members was an honour, a realisation in many ways of a



MARTIN JENKINSON

Wayne McCollin: First meeting a symbol of hope and rude awakening

dream, a symbol of hope but at the same time a rude awakening to the depth of suffering and injustice that individuals were being exposed to just because of their difference. Being part of the formative time of B&EMM brought both pleasure and pain, but was worth the

emotional investment.

The annual school at Wortley Hall became and remains a must for me and anyone who feels the empathy and unconditional support offered by colleagues and friends.

It revitalises and sets you up to face another year. B&EMM played its part improving the working lives of many but fell short in recognising the political leverage it had as an institution.

As an organisation B&EMM needs to remember its stated aims and objectives and focus on achieving them. There a shelf life and currency to the implicit political influence that B&EMM holds and the national committee have to recognise that and have a clear plan as to how to maximise both before they pass.”





**EXCLUSIVELY FOR
FBU B&EMM!**

Fire Brigades Union

B&EMM SCHOOL 2010

8-10 October 2010

Wortley Hall Nr Sheffield

A weekend of education on issues in the fire service, our communities and your trade union. Workshops, debates and guest speakers including the general secretary.

Application forms for the school will be sent to all B&EMM home addresses by the end of May 2010. Please make sure that we have your current mailing address. Contact your branch/B&EMM rep with any changes in the last 12 months.

Applications from first-time attendees and new members are given priority so please apply.

If you are on duty it may be possible to apply for trade union leave to attend the B&EMM School.

B&EMM Lifting as we climb



MARTIN JENKINSON

Personal

Promotions

Sabrina Cohen Hatton (South Wales)
Stn Manager (CFS)

Paul Smith (London) Watch manager B

Congratulations

Sabrina Cohen Hatton on the birth of a baby daughter (1 January)

Craig Abbott and partner **Samantha** on the birth of daughter **Olivia** (2 February)

Our dear friend **Patricia Robinson** on getting married to Sharne (January)

Patrick and **Vicki Goulbourne** on the birth of **Aaron** (10 March 2010)

Get well soon

Sheri Everett (London) recovering from back surgery

Darren Caine (Staffs) hospitalised after accident

New B&EMM Reps

Anthony Aberdeen (Avon)

Sab Nabi (South Yorks)

Mac Thomas (Humberside)

B&EMM regional reps

Region 01 **Lud Ramsey** 07890 630 920

Region 02 Contact **Michael Nicholas** (as below)

Region 03 **Lee Brown** 07827 300 079

Region 04 **Mark Brown** 07983 796 106

Region 05 Contact **Samantha Samuels** (as below)

Region 06 **Dalton Powell**
07967 661 469

Region 07 **Colin Jarrett** 07795 038 792

Region 08 **Brian Amos** 07773 289 694

Region 09 **Victor Liburd**
07801 350 873

Region 10 **Garrett Brooks**
07854 998 524

Region 11 **Carole Brown**
07872 053 986

Region 12 **Andre Fernandes**
07976 872 034

Region 13 Contact **Leroy Phillpotts**
07970 184 179

EC Member **Michael Nicholas**
07764 927 729

National Sec **Samantha Samuels**
07795 010 545

National Chair **Leroy Phillpotts**