



Flagship

Issue 5 • Summer 2006



Fear, dislike or hatred of homosexuals. Hate or dislike of all persons with homosexual orientation perhaps even those who choose to remain celibate. A belief that persons with a homosexual orientation are sub human and can be physically attacked with impunity

Homophobia as defined by the Kinsey Institute



Missed opportunities



It is now over a year since *Flagship* last went to press. In that time much has happened. There have been many advances on our issues – and you will read plenty about them in this edition. Despite the advances, there has also been some missed opportunities. Language

used when discussing equality often omits to be inclusive of all who traditionally have been disadvantaged in some way while working within the fire service.

The Thematic Review in 1999 identified issues relating to women, ethnic minorities and gay employees of the Service. Unfortunately it seems to this day that for some in the organisation using the term gay still remains a taboo. In the nineteenth century it was referred to in the case against

Oscar Wilde as the love that dare not speak its name. Now in the twenty first century for some little has changed.

Individuals have achieved much in promoting issues with good intent through projects such as “Fireworks”. However, the success of Fireworks is overshadowed by the total omission of sexuality in the work carried out. The affect this has on people who are gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender in the Service is to further isolate and



Fire Brigades Union

Gay & Lesbian Support Group

The trade union movement represents ALL working people, regardless of their sex, race, religious belief, sexuality or disability

The group was set up by gay and lesbian firefighters who are 'out' in the workplace and felt they were in a position to help others within the UK fire service. Within the group's ten year existence, we have achieved official recognition with the FBU, as well as representing the FBU in forums which were once untouched. We also have an extensive network to support and advise (LGBT) lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual members (firefighters, officers and control staff) who may feel isolated or harassed.

The group is run on a strictly confidential basis and accepts the rules, constitution and democracy of the Fire Brigades Union.

Any lesbian, gay, bisexual or transsexual FBU member contacting the group will only be dealt with by a group member. All information will be protected and NOT made available to any official unless the member gives his/her permission

Our Aims:

- Ensuring lgbt members have a voice within the FBU, and making sure we are not left out in equality issues at Brigade, Regional and National level.
- Providing support to lgbt members in ALL regions of the FBU.
- Identifying and dealing with any issues/problems faced by our members.
- Providing members with the opportunity to talk/meet with other members.
- Distribute information concerning lgbt issues to members.

0800 783 4778

NGLC (National Gay and Lesbian Committee)
PO Box 10555
London N1 8XT
E-mail: gal01@fbu.org.uk
www.fbu.org.uk



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YOU CAN'T COME IN IF YOUR NAME'S NOT ON THE LIST!

Haven't made yourself known to us yet? Want to participate in elections to the Section? Contact Yannick Dubois, membership secretary, G&L committee: yannick.dubois@fbu.org.uk. Include your name, address, telephone/email and membership number, tell us how you would like to be contacted – by mail at your home/ workplace; phone; or email – and whether you are “out” or not.

Disclaimer: Not all the people who appear in pictures in this publication are gay or lesbian.

Ring our free confidential stress and support hotline:

0800 783 4778

disenfranchise them. The way that LGBT employees have traditionally been disadvantaged in the service is linked to the way that women and ethnic minority employees have also been disadvantaged. So why were we left off the list?

We should celebrate the success Fireworks have had in promoting women's and black and ethnic issues. But I fear it is with some degree of envy as well as disappointment at being ignored. The lack of inclusiveness has now been recognised by the major stakeholders in the service and steps are being taken to ensure your needs are not overlooked in the future. Late last year we were invited to participate in an equality presentation at the Fire Exhibition. From this the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) approached us with a view to opening up a dialogue. In December Peter Gallagher, the Section secretary, and I, went to Edinburgh to give a presentation on our issues and to look at ways we can work together to deal with those issues in the future. The outcome of that meeting was extremely positive. It was recognised that the previous commitment to addressing sexuality issues in the Service had been inadequate. It was also recognised that if we are to move forward on these issues and be effective in our aims then a partnership approach will be essential. Initial indications suggest a genuine commitment from CFOA and we look forward to continuing to build and develop this partnership approach.

As we go to press it is with some concern that we hear of the recent government cabinet reshuffle and the appointment of Ruth Kelly as the new Minister for Women and Equality. In selecting a person to take responsibility for this department you may have thought part of the criteria would have been a demonstrated commitment to advancing issues relating to equality. It is disturbing to note that during voting on all fifteen of the parliamentary bills relating to sexuality Ruth Kelly either abstained on the voting or was absent when the votes took place. The Minister who is a devote Roman Catholic and a member of the secretive Opus Dei sect refuses to confirm if she believes homosexuality is a sin. The Minister declared: "I think everyone should be protected from discrimination. I don't think it's right for politicians to start making moral judgements, that's the last thing I would want to do or go into. The question is what are my political views. As a politician, these are the ones I'm accountable for to the public." If that's the case, where were you when it came to the fifteen voting occasions?

Pat Carberry

The broken rainbow

At least one in four LGBT people will experience domestic violence and abuse in their life. Yannick Dubois reports on how the problem is being tackled



Until recently, most people thought that domestic violence had nothing to do with the LGBT community. And although we know different, we never actually talk about it. Yet to see it in black and white is very frightening. At least one in four LGBT people will experience domestic violence and abuse in their life. And if our community itself will not acknowledge the issue, professionals too are surprised that it happens in our community.

Broken Rainbow, a small organisation with eight trustees and two full-time staff who run the helpline service, has worked extremely hard to highlight and tackle the issue, working with a range of agencies and Government, while providing invaluable practical support for LGBT people suffering from domestic violence.

I was very keen to support this organisation from the moment I saw their leaflet at the LGBT TUC conference in 2002. We invited them to our school that year to give a presentation on what they were trying to do and how it came about. The presentation was very well received by the students and the FBU donated £500 to help the organisation. In December 2003, the Home Office granted them £120,000 to set up the helpline and six months later the helpline was fully operational. They became a registered charity in 2004.

Broken Rainbow work closely with the Home Office to ensure that domestic violence affecting the LGBT community is on the government's agenda. In 2003, the Home Office asked them to carry out formal consultation with our community on the proposed legislation. It is due to Broken Rainbow and their recommendations that the Domestic Violence, Crime and Victims Act 2004 recognises domestic violence within same sex relationships.

Broken Rainbow provides its callers not only with a listening service, but also with information, signposted services and advocacy support. They also work closely with the Criminal Justice System to improve reporting and recording of domestic violence experienced by LGBT people, prosecution of perpetrators and support for victims when

going through the justice system.

In February, region 9 G&L rep Richard Moore and I attended a conference organised by Broken Rainbow that aimed to discuss how mainstream domestic violence services can deliver appropriate and equitable services to LGBT people. The conference was mainly attended by local services such as housing services, health services, criminal justice services, crime and disorder partnerships, community safety teams etc.

We appeared to be the only union there and unfortunately the only representation for the Fire Service. I strongly believe the Fire Service should be in partnership with other agencies on

We should be trained to be aware of the possibility of domestic violence within a home

the subject of domestic violence in the mainstream and in the LGBT community. We have access to thousands of homes every year when attending 999 calls, and

we should be trained to be aware of the possibility of domestic violence within a home.

The conference explored a range of key issues for service providers through practical sessions. The focus was on the following:

- The reality of domestic violence in the LGBT community
- Improving domestic violence services
- Identifying perpetrators in same sex domestic violence cases
- Young people facing homophobic and transphobic domestic violence
- Increasing reports
- Monitoring domestic violence.

The speakers included James Rowlands (Project Worker for the DYN project for men in Cardiff), Maria Sookias (Domestic Abuse Housing Advisor for Stonewall Housing), Sue Paterson (Chair of GALOP), and Michael Verrier and Caroline Jones, (co-chairs of Broken Rainbow). Barbara Roche, who is the patron for this charity, also made a contribution on the importance of its work.

The conference was extremely interesting and very well attended. It certainly reminded me why we as a Union should continue to support Broken Rainbow.

→ Broken Rainbow: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk
Helpline: 08452 60 44 60. Mondays to Fridays
9am-1pm and 2pm-5pm Staffed by LGBT people.



Elections of officials for Gay and Lesbian Section

Elections for the positions of Executive Council member, Secretary and Chair for the Gay and Lesbian Section have been carried out by the union over the last 12 months in accordance with the rulebook.

The first was for the Executive Council (EC) position and the successful candidate was Stewart Brown. This election marked an historic moment for the union: it was the first time an election for this position took place and it finally gave us direct representation at the highest level of our union.

The next election was for the position of Chair of the National Gay and Lesbian

Committee. Pat Carberry who was already the Chair was elected unopposed.

The final election was for the position of Secretary to the National Gay and Lesbian Committee. Peter Gallagher had been acting Secretary for almost a year since Stewart Brown's election to EC and Peter was elected unopposed.

We wish them the very best of luck and success in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities over the next term of office. All three can be seen pictured on the front cover in the Gay and Lesbian Section's new office in Clapham.

One year on!

It is now 16 months that we have had Executive Council (EC) status and this has really made a huge difference to the ongoing day-to-day business of the Gay and Lesbian section of the FBU. We are fully integrated into the mainstream of the union now, having representation at all levels within the union, enabling us to discuss 'our' issues with all levels of officials and members.

This, as you will be aware, was our goal many years back when the section was starting to flourish. It is essential that the union and its members continue to fully support the structure as it stands, as we see many Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) around

the country utilising network groups, with a possible agenda of undermining the union's equality sections.

We have many members and officials within our sections who are best equipped to deal with FRS senior managers and the new breed of human resources managers when it comes to equality issues, and they must be identified and supported throughout this union or the modernisation of the FRS will happen without our involvement, and our members issues will remain off the table.

The status of EC brings with it a seamless link between the sections/regions and their respective Executive Council member, and this has allowed us to bring more work

forward into the mainstream of the union and highlight many campaigns, getting the message back to the branches about the work we are involved in.

It is vital that members are kept informed of all the issues, either within the union, the FRS, and also the wider trade union movement, including international trade union issues.

We always try to get that message back to you the member, but it is important that you look up current news items either on our own website at www.fbu.org.uk, or of course the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk which gives a full run down of UK-wide trade union and international issues.

COUNTDOWN TO EXECUTIVE COUNCIL STATUS

1993/4: Support group formed in London by firefighters who felt they needed to network/talk about workplace issues from a LGBT perspective

1994-1999: Work ongoing within union and fire and rescue service to gather support for idea of full integration/acceptance into the main structure of FBU

1999: Equality sections and national retained committee fall in line with officers and control in getting an annual general meeting, with motions debated and then passed to Executive Council (EC) for consideration

2001: Annual conference votes to accept National Women's Committee and B&EMM EC members. G&L is accepted into rule book with view to coming back to annual conference when time is right for EC member

2004: Annual conference G&L rule change proposed by EC to give G&L EC member

2005: December Meeting of EC agrees to temporary G&L EC member. Election to run ASAP after Christmas

2005: January 19 Stewart Brown elected unopposed to position of first G&L EC member

Regional TUC LGBT groups

What do regional TUC groups do for us and do we really need to support the concept and the idea of regional support for our work?

What comes between the annual TUC LGBT conference and the next annual TUC LGBT conference is important. The Regional TUC LGBT structure can and should be the link between these annual events. The euphoria we feel after our annual get together need not be lost. Work needs to be continued and the structure we can turn to for support is the Regional TUC LGBT groups.

Regional TUC LGBT groups have all struggled to get off the ground. But a number have been successful and are now reaping the benefits of greater participation from affiliated trade unions. The concept of a regional structure other than a national committee is very sound and something we must support.

The work that these groups can do on a local basis is important in pursuing trade unionism and LGBT issues.

None more so than local Pride events. With almost every city now holding a pride event it is impossible for us as a committee to get to each and every one of the events and to get our message across. But with the help of regional TUC, we can and do have a voice at every pride event.

Membership of the group is open to all LGBT trade union members and I would ask you to think about supporting your regional group.

REGIONAL TUC LGBT GROUPS

MIDLANDS

Tel: 0121 236 4454

NORTHEAST

Tel: 0191 227 5550

NORTH WEST

Liverpool L3 9UD

Tel: 0151 236 5432

SOUTHERN AND EASTERN

Tel: 020 7467 1220

SOUTH WEST

Tel: 0117 947 0521

YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER TUC

Tel: 0113 242 9696

SCOTTISH TRADES UNION CONGRESS

Tel: 0141 337 8100

WALES

Tel: 029 2034 7010

Scottish schools to give pupils gay sex advice

OFFICIAL guidance on how to teach Scottish schoolchildren about gay sex is being issued for the first time since the abolition of laws which banned "promoting" homosexuality in schools.

Teachers will be told they can discuss issues including safe gay sex and where to get advice on homosexual relationships, in a move which has already set religious groups and health professionals at loggerheads.

Senior health officials have told Scotland on Sunday the current sex education guidelines need to be expanded because they are "heterosexist". But the move has been condemned by the Catholic Church in Scotland as "appalling, outrageous and utterly unnecessary".

The guidelines come six years after the massive row over 'Section 2A', which – after months of bitter argument – saw the abolition of laws that effectively prevented teachers discussing gay sex education.

Health officials have now admitted that sex education guidelines written after the

2000 repeal of Section 2A – the Scottish version of the law known as Section 28 south of the Border – did not include homosexuality, because of the political sensitivity over the issue at the time.

The Sexual Health and Relationships Education (SHARE) sex education programme is being amended to include gay sex.

From the new academic year this August, teachers will be told it is appropriate to discuss:

- Protection from sexually transmitted diseases for lesbians and gay men, including information on female condoms for lesbians, and ensuring condoms used by men and women have quality kitemarks;
- How to access sexual health services for homosexuals;
- Same-sex crushes and the emotional side of homosexual relationships;
- The law on consent for homosexuals;
- Contacts for support groups and websites.



Scottish school students will get advice on homosexual relationships

Call for end to AIDS vaccine 'delay'

The National AIDS Trust used World AIDS Vaccine Day, which took place May 18, to call for a global AIDS vaccine spending to be doubled.

The organisation claims more money is needed to provide a chance of halting the HIV pandemic in the future.

Despite large-scale prevention efforts throughout the world, last year there were 5 million new HIV infections and 3 million deaths from AIDS, according to the NAT.

New prevention technologies such as an AIDS vaccine are clearly needed if we want to succeed in ending the pandemic. However, current global spending and commitment to develop a safe, effective and widely-available AIDS vaccine is insufficient.

There are currently 30 vaccine products

in human trials throughout the world, including on every continent, and between 2000 and 2005 public sector investment in AIDS vaccine research more than doubled. In 2005 the G8 committed to increase direct investment in AIDS vaccine research and to establish market incentives to encourage greater engagement by private industry.

However, much more needs to be done by public and private sectors to create a unified global response to the HIV epidemic. Currently only a handful of private companies are engaged in vaccine research and global spending is half what is needed.

An early day motion to mark World AIDS Vaccine Day has been tabled in the House of Commons.

JOHN HARRIS/REPORTAGE.CO.UK

Solidarity should not stop at national borders

The FBU garnered unanimous support for the J-Flag campaign against homophobia in Jamaica at what was the best annual meeting of UK LGBT trade unionists ever, says Stewart Brown, G&L Executive Council Member

Delegates for the annual TUC/ LGBT (Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Trans) Conference gathered in Congress House, London, 30 June 2005 to play their part in what is the 8th annual conference held on behalf of LGBT workers within the trade union movement.

The FBU has a proud record of internationalism and within the G&L section we are very honoured to play a pivotal part in this. Our motion this year was centred on the disgusting issue of homophobia in Jamaica, which has been highlighted by Amnesty International and which was brought to our attention in October 2005.

The J-Flag campaign itself was drawing to a close at that time, but the FBU G&L section felt that it had not been widely publicised and actioned within the trade union movement and we wanted to do something about this.

At a meeting held in December we started to put together what would turn out to be a very successful motion,

EMERGENCY MOTION – TUC

“This Conference notes with Concern, that the General Council are currently exploring the possibility of having the four equality conferences bi-annually. This Conference wishes to express to the General Council our firm belief that such a move would be detrimental to our Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender members and that these conferences must be held annually as a minimum.”

campaign and hopefully end result, which will help to bring about the required change to the disgraceful homophobia in Jamaica.

The FBU motion was seconded by the university lecturers’ union, NATFHE, which also has a proud record on international issues, and at least six other unions which got up in support. The most debated motion at the conference, it was unanimously passed.

We will now press on with the agenda of communicating with J-Flag, to see what further help we can get from the UK and international trade union movement. The future for representatives of J-Flag is not good because their annual government-backed funding is drying up. We hope that the work we are doing over here can influence the Jamaican government to reverse their decision on funding for this crucial support group.

Future of LGBT Conference

The FBU also submitted an emergency motion to this year’s conference based on a recent TUC consultation paper sent to all affiliates on a major restructuring of its annual conferences, including the LGBT Conference. This paper was issued in response to financial problems within the TUC. The FBU has now submitted a written response. The motion was debated for a full hour and unanimous agreement was reached that we should back the motion and oppose any detrimental changes to the way we organise and meet at conference.

Two other emergency motions were submitted – ‘Executions and Flogging of Gay Men in Saudi Arabia’ from the National Association of Probation Officers (NAPO)



RAMON ESPINOSA/AP/EMPICS

Jamaican Prime Minister Portia Simpson Miller: the conference called on her to publicly state that violence and abuse against LGBT people will not be tolerated

FBU MOTION TO TUC LGBT CONFERENCE

International Homophobia – Jamaican Violence

Conference is disgusted and appalled at the increasingly violent atmosphere against LGBT Jamaicans. Gay men and women have been beaten, burned, raped and shot on account of their sexuality. Public vilification is common and once a person’s sexuality becomes known they are more at risk

Jamaica’s laws continue to criminalise sex between males, offences against ‘the Person Act’, punishes the crime of buggery by up to 10 years imprisonment with hard labour. Attacks against lesbians including physical violence and rape are increasing.

Conference calls on the TUC and affiliates to:

- i) join the J-Flag campaign, the only recognised support/campaign group within Jamaica, to show solidarity for the LGBT community and offer support either morally or financially;
- ii) call on the UK and Jamaican Governments to seek the removal of the legislation criminalising those who engage in same-sex conduct;
- iii) demand that during its term at the head of the G8, and Presidency of the EU, the Government seeks to ensure support from other countries who would seek to guarantee human rights atrocities are eliminated in Jamaica; and
- iv) urge the Jamaican Prime Minister to publicly state that violence and abuse against LGBT people will not be tolerated.



FBU delegates to the TUC LGBT conference (l to r) Terry Coe, Peter Gallagher, Yannick Dubois, Peter Wilcox, Paul Canning, Patsy Griffiths and Pat Carberry

and 'Amendment to Equality Bill' from Unison were both moved and carried.

Full Agenda

There were a total of 23 motions, including the emergency ones, and seven amendments to original motions. All motions were fully debated and all were carried.

- 1 Discrimination in goods and services
- 2 Goods and services
- 3 Gender Recognition Act
- 4 Provision of services for trans people by the NHS
- 5 Single Equality Commission
- 6 Intentionally promoting LGBT equality
- 7 Equal opportunities monitoring forms
- 8 International LGBT agenda for the TUC
- 9 International homophobia – Jamaican violence
- 10 Employers' obligations to ensure equality in the workplace
- 11 Support for LGBT members in unions
- 12 Workplace culture
- 13 Organising LGBT workers
- 14 Civil partnership and equal rights
- 15 Civil Partnership Act
- 16 LGBT adopters
- 17 Broken Rainbow
- 18 Developing work in schools to tackle homophobia
- 19 Working together
- 20 Equalities seats on the General Council

Speakers

Speakers and guests included: TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber, who has been an inspirational leader in terms of equal rights; MP Meg Munn, who is the deputy minister

for women and equality at the Department for trade and industry; Trevor Phillips who is the chair of the commission for racial equality; and Ms Jeannie Drake who is the president of the TUC for 2004/2005. There were also three informal sessions with guests from Broken Rainbow, an organisation dealing with domestic violence within the LGBT Community, the J-Flag representative from Jamaica, who cannot be named for confidentiality reasons and Dr Frank Boulton from the national blood donors association.

This was the best LGBT conference we've yet attended and the FBU will continue to play a full role in organising and participating in it in the future.

COMPOSITION OF THE FBU DELEGATION

The FBU sent eight delegates as they are entitled to under the 'All different all equal policy', and this was made up from eight different regions within the union. We had our chair, Pat Carberry, our acting secretary Peter Gallagher, and the Executive Council member Stewart Brown, along with members of the national committee who made up the delegation from regions 5, 6, 9, and 12. One additional attendee who is not on the committee was Peter Wilcox representing region 3. He is now a regional official having left the G&L committee to concentrate on mainstream union issues but he still plays a big part in the equality work that the union is involved in and is a member of the North West Regional TUC set-up.

TAKE ACTION: JAMAICA – STOP HOMOPHOBIC VIOLENCE

The crowd stood around watching chanting 'battyman, battyman, battyman' ... The crowd beat, punched and kicked him.

They threw water from the gutter and garbage on him. Then they dragged him down the road ... They shouted 'battyman fi' dead'.

As I stood across the street I realised there was nothing I could do to help him.

Some mothers were actually in tears at what they were witnessing but there was nothing they could do either ... The crowd was saying 'Give him to us! Let us kill him! He's a battyman!'

Eyewitness statement of how six men blocked a road to beat a gay man

www.amnesty.org.uk/lgbt/action/jamaica/





Stonewall diversity champions

Joining the likes of the Royal Navy and the Police, there are now 15 fire services that have joined Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme

Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme is Britain's leading best-practice employers' forum for lesbian and gay workplace issues. With 200 employers representing almost 3.3 million employees across the UK, Diversity Champions is the fastest growing forum in the country. Employers are not compelled to engage with Stonewall, they actively choose to engage with Stonewall. The rationale for doing so is to better understand how they can engage with their lesbian and gay staff.

Stonewall understands that people perform better when they can be themselves – if an individual feels comfortable being “out” in the workplace, they tend to be happier, more productive and more dedicated to getting the job done.

This is a message that the uniformed services are starting to appreciate. In a highly publicised move, the Royal Navy joined the Diversity Champions programme in February 2005. In January 2006, Stonewall announced Staffordshire Police as the winner of the Workplace Equality Index, which ranks the top 100 employers in Britain for lesbian and gay staff.

Joining the likes of the Royal Navy and the Police, there are now 15 fire services that have joined Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme, and committed to improving the workplace environment for lesbian, gay and bisexual staff.

By engaging with Stonewall, and with each other, the fire services are able to share best practice when it comes to lesbian and gay workplace issues. They can attend seminars, gain best-practice guidance, have benchmarking meetings and access expert advice.

This is timely as there are significant challenges to be overcome – while 15 fire services have chosen to engage with Stonewall, 43 services have yet to get involved. This means the majority of fire services are still missing out on Stonewall's support and guidance. Moreover, many services have very few “out” members of staff. Government actuaries place the population of lesbian and gay people in Britain at 6%, but the ratio of out people in the fire service is significantly below

this, suggesting there are but a few people who can feel comfortable being themselves and being “out” at work. This means these issues are often far removed from management and it's very hard for firefighters who are still in the closet as they have few role models or sources of support.

Truly modern organisations understand that in order to attract the very best talent and skills for the job, they must attract and retain candidates from every pool in an increasingly diverse Britain. The fire service is no exception. We look to deepen our relationships with the fire service in order to help that sector be a true employer of choice.

Tremendous inroads have been made in working with the fire service and Stonewall is committed to showing that gay and lesbian people make important contributions to a variety of workplaces across the UK. As more and more fire services become involved, the good that the Diversity Champions programme can do for organisations, their staff and the community in which they serve will undoubtedly grow.

Ben Sommerskill
Chief Executive of Stonewall

→ You can find out more about Stonewall's Diversity Champions programme at www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace or by calling 020 7881 9440

Pat Carberry, NGLC chair, takes issue with an academic who questions the conclusions of the Thematic Review

Are the dinosaurs extinct?

It was with great interest that I read an article in the magazine *Fire*, titled “Cultural audit disputes ‘dinosaur Service’ tag”. Following the publication of *Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service: A Thematic Review by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate for the Fire Service*, a brigade commissioned a cultural audit to discover attitudes and experiences in the workplace and it was the same author of this article, Professor Roger Penn of the Centre of Applied Statistics, Lancashire University who led the audit.

The means applied to examine attitudes was to send a questionnaire to employees of all the different departments of the brigade being audited and compare attitudes with the other departments and with National Statistics. At first I found it very encouraging that this had taken place and from the title of the article that we had seen some sort of improvement in equality and cultural understanding in the Service. Certainly I had noticed within my own working environment a much more liberal view and this study appeared to confirm this change. However after reading the article, I felt things had got worse rather than better.

The audit, in my opinion, had a number of flaws. Chief among them was a failure to take into account the effect of the Thematic Review had when it was issued in 1999. In the section of the article detailing the results of the audit it stated that around half the workforce returned a completed questionnaire and that this was a much higher response than would generally be found in similar research settings. It also went on to state that brigade employees held less traditional values on gender. The article acknowledged that the Thematic Review in essence had portrayed the fire service as sexist, racist and homophobic. One has to ask then what kind of responses to the audit were expected from an organisation in spotlight for such a reputation.

The title of the article disputes the dinosaur service tag. However, it goes on to state: “Brigade respondents in general were no more homophobic than the population in general. However men were three times more likely than women to see homosexuality as morally wrong.” Is someone missing the link between an almost totally male workforce and the problems faced by gay or lesbian employees? “Firefighters were more likely to express moral condemnation of homosexuality whilst fire control operators – most of whom are female – were the least likely,” it went on, as if oblivious to the obvious consequences of a workplace made up almost exclusively of a single gender. “Almost all respondents agreed that homosexuals should receive equal opportunities.” I’m reaching for my champagne bottle to celebrate. “However, despite such egalitarian views in general about half the respondents felt that attempts to give equal opportunities to homosexuals had gone ‘too far’. Well champagne back in the fridge.

So, summing up: although the majority of respondents felt that homosexuals deserved equal opportunities almost half felt that it should not be to the extent that it made certain groups of people as equal as them! The very concept of equal opportunities is to provide everyone with the same rights, entitlements and protection in the workplace. To dispute the dinosaur service tag and yet acknowledge that almost half the respondents to the audit had no understanding of the real meaning of equal opportunities just doesn’t make sense.

In terms of achieving equal opportunities for homosexuals everything that has been successful has been purely about extending rights previously solely enjoyed by the heterosexual community to include

A fire brigade should not be average in its attitudes to equality. It should be outstanding

the gay community. These include the equalisation of the age of consent and the lifting of the ban of gay, lesbian or bisexual people serving in the armed forces, legal protection in the workplace from discrimination based on our sexuality and our partnerships recognised in law. Some people clearly think it is going “too far” to extend the same rights to everyone.

Finally, the claim that the brigade has a better than national average attitude to equality is to be expected. A fire brigade should not be average in this area. It should be outstanding. We in the fire service are employed by the public, we serve all elements of society and much of society looks to us to set an example. Thus it is nonsense to compare attitudes in the fire service to the attitudes prevailing in society in general. Find another public organisation whose mission is to provide a service to all elements of society and it may reveal a different picture. The fire service has much to be proud of and the Thematic Review was a real blow, especially to the majority of members who respect their colleagues regardless of race, gender or sexuality. However, to claim the Thematic Review got it wrong on the basis of a seriously flawed piece of research is to bury your head in the sand.



→ *Equality and Fairness in the Fire Service: A Thematic Review by Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Fire Services* can be found at: www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ERO/records/ho415/1/fepd/qualopp.htm

PRIDE

With the annual European pride celebration coming to the UK, 2006 is without doubt a huge year in the Pride calendar

2006 IS THE SEASON



Over the years the national gay and lesbian group of the FBU has supported in many ways the different events around the country that celebrate lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans (LGBT) lifestyles.

These range from the small scale events in Reading or Oxford, to the large full scale, full-on events that usually take over an entire city for the day, like London or Brighton. Since we started attending these events in an official capacity the number of Pride events has increased so much now that it is impossible to try to get around even a small proportion of them, never mind attending them all.

The FBU's sections have been an integral part of Pride for many years now, and it's been a great advert for the trade union movement to

see the FBU marching with so many members and officials, both straight and LGBT.

Reality

The main purpose of the Union in attending these events is to get the message across to others that the Fire Service and the FBU are aware of its LGBT employees and members, and that they are being treated in the same way as others would be expected to be treated, with dignity and respect.

It takes great courage for members of the Union who are not 'out' in the workplace to stand in a rally with thousands of other like-minded individuals and express their sexuality. Because the stark reality is that these events are often televised in some way, even if it's just local news. Our members want to be

It takes great courage for FBU members who are not 'out' in the workplace to stand in a rally with thousands of other like-minded individuals and express their sexuality



FBU members at Pride 2005 in London

The FBU support group/committee will be attending the following events with support from both Strathclyde FRS, and East Sussex FRS:

♦ **Glasgow:** The annual Scottish pride event this year takes place in Glasgow on Saturday 24 June. Hopefully we will have the appliance and banner and we hope that you can come out to join us. The intended start of the parade through the streets will be Blywood Square. If you need more details please get in touch.

♦ **Brighton:** We then move on to London and then we will attend Brighton, which has been without doubt the best day of the year in the LGBT calendar for some years. For the last three years the sun has shone, with temperatures reaching 100 degrees fahrenheit every year, and the people have partied all day and all night. This really is the best day out and we will be there again in strength with hopefully the same numbers as last year: we topped 35 firefighters and control staff! The day starts down at Madeira Drive at the main pier around 10am and the parade twists its way through the city of Brighton, concluding up at Preston Park, which is at the north end of the city beside the A23. The union will have a stall in the park, with the control campaign likely to be high on the agenda once again, and we hope you can come down to join us on the day-look out for the community stalls.

www.gaytoz.com/united/prides.html

www.pride-scotia.org/

www.pridelondon.org/

www.brightonpride.org/

there to celebrate their way of life, but find it very frustrating when there is the chance that their 'little secret' will get out, causing incalculable damage to themselves, their families and friends.

But if we can get the Service to change its attitude towards LGBT staff then these individuals would have more confidence to stand there and say "yes I am Gay, and I am in the Fire Service and I am proud", knowing they wouldn't have to suffer the usual recriminations.

Celebration

With the annual European pride celebration coming to the UK, 2006 is without doubt a huge year in the Pride calendar. This will take place in London on the 1st July 2006, but will

have other events taking place for two weeks before the main march and rally. It will end on the Saturday with a huge parade down Oxford Street, a first in the history of marches in the capital. This is the opportunity for the group and the Service to shine as we parade through the streets of London with our big red shiny fire engine.

It will then move on to the rally in Trafalgar Square where the trade union movement will have the main stage as we are one of the main sponsors. The FBU will share a stall with other unions and this will be staffed all day, so hopefully you can pop in to see us.

Our day will actually start earlier than usual because we are in partnership talks with London Fire Brigade about the possibility of holding a champagne breakfast in Soho fire station, as

we have done over the last three years, which is always a great way to start the day.

I sincerely hope you can make it along to this event as we aim to show the Service that there are many more LGBT firefighters, control and support staff than they actually think. So make the effort and get down to London on Saturday 1 July.

I hope that this year we will see support from the rank and file members and officials, as this has been one aspect of these events that we feel is the biggest let-down. I hope you will be able to join us at least once along this long summer period and that dignity, respect for others and true unity will rule the day.

Stewart Brown
G&L Executive Council Member



REUTERS/JEAN ALAIN LAPROUTINE

Hundreds of gays and lesbians stage the first gay rights march in Mauritius

Mauritius sees its first gay rights march

Hundreds of gays and lesbians staged the first gay rights march on the largely conservative Indian Ocean island on May 20 this year. Mauritius, located off the southeast coast of Africa, has a population of 1.2 million made up of Hindus, Catholics and Muslims. The gay community, which activists say makes up about 10 percent of the population, is mostly underground as many face persecution and discrimination.

Wearing wigs and in full make-up, men dressed in sequined dresses, feather boas and high heels led a march down the busy high street of Rose Hill.

"The point of today is visibility," said Thierry De Ravel, president of the Collective Arc-en-Ciel (Rainbow Coalition), a gay rights group that organised the march. "We want to show Mauritius that there is a gay community, that we want to be out in the open. We want to be respected and we want

equal rights for all," he added.

Organizers said the event was a victory for gays because permission was granted by local authorities, who have previously stopped such marches from taking place.

Rama Vallyden, the attorney-general and minister for human rights and justice, is planning to introduce an equal opportunities act in parliament, which will make discrimination against sexual orientation a crime.



REUTERS/JASON REED PM

Mary Cheney – watching father Dick sworn in as Vice President – is gay and critical of the campaign

Bush renews call for gay marriage ban

President George W. Bush has again urged US Senators to pass a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriage in remarks ahead of a Senate debate on the issue early June.

Mr Bush said marriage between a man and a woman was the most fundamental institution of civilisation, and needed protection from "activist judges". The bill is widely expected to fail as it does not have the backing needed.

A two-thirds majority is required in both houses of Congress for an amendment process to begin. Mr Bush said an amendment would

ensure no court could undermine what he said were the views of the American people. "State legislatures are trying to address this issue, but across the country they are being thwarted by activist judges who are overturning the express will of their people," Mr Bush told reporters at the White House. Judges have recently rejected laws on traditional marriages in states such as Washington, California and New York.

A slight majority of Americans are against same-sex unions but most want their individual states to make the final decision about their legality, according to the BBC.

◆ In Russia's first-ever march against anti-gay intolerance, Russian gays and lesbians took to the streets of Moscow on May 27 in defiance of a local authority ban. Moscow's powerful mayor, Yuri Luzhkov, said he would not allow the march because city residents are "opposed to such public expressions of sexual orientation." Homosexuality was decriminalised in Russia in 1993, but it was only declassified as a form of mental illness in 1999. Violent homophobia may be on the rise in a country where the deputy speaker of parliament, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, has called for the death penalty against homosexuals.



Russian riot police detain lesbian rights activist Evgeniya Debryanskaya during the May 27 protest. Russian police, militant Orthodox Christians and neo-fascists broke up the march, but organisers said it was a "great victory"

◆ A new TV soap opera centered on the problems a bisexual man faces in today's Cuba is generating controversy on the streets of the island and attracting a record number of viewers. Until now homosexuality has been a taboo for Cuban TV. *Strawberries and Chocolate*, a classic Cuban film about the marginalisation of gay people, was never screened. The *Dark Side of the Moon* shows the revulsion of the characters' friends and rejection by his parents.

◆ Human rights groups have condemned the "barbaric" murder in early May of a 14-year-old Iraqi boy, who, according to witnesses, was shot on his doorstep by police for the apparent crime of being gay. Ahmed Khalil was shot at point-blank range after being accosted by men in police uniforms, according to his neighbours in the al-Dura area of Baghdad.

◆ The Czech Republic has become the first former communist country in Europe to grant legal recognition to same-sex partnerships. The vote was passed in parliament by the absolute minimum needed to overturn a veto by President Vaclav Klaus. He had argued the legislation amounted to excessive regulation by the state of people's private lives. The law will give gay couples rights to inherit a partner's property and raise children, but does not allow adoption

Sources: BBC, AFP, Independent, Reuters, Inquirer

Defeat these homophobic racists

The British National Party (BNP) is a fascist party which believes in an all-white Britain and targets the lesbian and gay community. In the local elections on May 4 2006 the number of BNP councillors more than doubled from 20 to 48. This confirmed a dramatically accelerating trend of the last 6 years. Thirty-three BNP councillors were elected and four BNP councillors lost their seats. When they held one council seat in Barking, racist attacks soared. They now have 12. The BNP's aim is to win seats on the London Assembly in 2008 and the European Parliament in 2009. Their website states: "The local elections are important as they reveal that the percentage support we now garner in constituencies is capable of easily translating into MEP seats."

The local elections also show that where the BNP gain council seats, their fascist policies are legitimised, making it easier for them to gain more councillors, and taking longer to defeat them. The BNP's breakthrough in Burnley, Epping Forest, Sandwell, Stoke-on-Trent, Bradford, Kirklees and Calderdale, are clear examples of this. Their policies of hatred give further currency to homophobia and racism; in Burnley they ran a gay pub landlord out of business with a homophobic campaign. They akin gay men and Asian men to paedophiles. The role of some of the media coverage during the election period legitimised their politics of hatred allowing them unprecedented platform and air-time. The xenophobic media coverage of the release of prisoners described as 'foreign nationals', was a gift to them, equating the black communities with criminals, serving to legitimise their racist propaganda, such as the "Africans for Essex" myth, that new African migrants were being given grants for housing in Barking

and Dagenham. The BNP website now states "The real story of this election ... is how the BNP have become normalised with the electorate. We have now transcended the cordon sanitaire that the media have placed upon us for decades."

The role of the media is critical and its responsibility is to expose the BNP for their fascist policies, their admiration of Hitler and their criminal convictions.

Preventing the BNP from gaining councillors in the first place is crucial; Oldham remains the model anti-fascist campaign, where a broad coalition of Asian, Jewish, Lesbian and Gay communities allied with the trade unions to tackle the racist myths instigated by the local media and exploited by the BNP. To date the BNP haven't won a single council seat in Oldham and the BNP's vote halved between 2001 and 2005. Challenging racism, homophobia and the hatred that the BNP stand for is critical to defeating them. Lesbian and Gay Communities Against Racism (LAGCAR) supports Unite Against Fascism – an alliance of the Trade unions, Black, Muslim, Jewish and other faith communities with all those who oppose the BNP. By getting out the anti-fascist vote, the BNP can be prevented from getting the breakthrough that they crave. LAGCAR worked with UAF and trade unions including the FBU to turn out the LGBT vote in this election. The event was covered in the pink paper, Gay.com and on the regional news. LAGCAR exists to ensure the lesbian and gay community is active in the fight against racism and works for unity between the Lesbian and Gay and Black communities.

→ For more information please contact LAGCAR on 020 7247 3146 lagcar@hotmail.co.uk or Unite Against Fascism on unite@natfhe.org.uk or visit www.uaf.org.uk



Manchester Pride last summer

Full equality or a missed opportunity?

When the Equality Bill and new regulations come into force in October lesbian, gay and bisexual people will have achieved close to full legal equality for the first time. But there is a sting in the tail, says Peter Purton, TUC Officer for Disability and LGBT rights



PAUL BROWN/REX FEATURES

Lord Waheed Alli – seen here at Pride 2005 – tabled amendments to the bill in the House of Lords get protection against discrimination in goods and services for gays, lesbians and bisexuals

The summer and autumn of 2005 were full of the sound of a massive campaign to change the mind of the Government on a crucial issue for lesbian, gay and bisexual equality. It had been announced that the Equality Bill then in parliament would be amended to extend legal protection against discrimination in goods and services to include the grounds of religion or belief. Until then, religion had shared with sexual orientation the fact that we had protection in employment, but not elsewhere. Now, it seemed as if we would be left behind once again.

The campaign was vigorous, well-organised and in the end, successful. Trade unions worked closely with Stonewall and other LGBT organisations. Labour Party conference passed a motion on it. Lord Waheed Alli tabled amendments to the bill in the House of Lords. Eventually the government caved in. It agreed to introduce protection against discrimination in goods and services through secondary legislation (that is, by regulation) and that this would come into effect at the same time as the other parts of the bill in October 2006.

Consultation on what should be in the regulation began in March and was due to end on 5 June 2006.

Once this comes into force, lesbian, gay and bisexual people will have achieved (nearly) full legal equality for the first time.

Along with employment equality, civil partnerships, repeal of Section 28, equal criminal laws and so on, this Government will have, at last, responded to our long struggle for justice. But there is a sting in the tail.

The regulation will make it illegal for anyone providing services to discriminate on grounds of sexual orientation. That

Along with employment equality, civil partnerships, repeal of Section 28, equal criminal laws and so on, this Government will have, at last, responded to our long struggle for justice

will include everyone who offers services to the public including accommodation, leisure facilities, finances, travel – the same protection as people already have against discrimination on grounds of gender, race and disability. Rightly, though, the regulation will also recognise that our community has created its own facilities in the face of discrimination everywhere. It will make it possible for LGB social and support organisations to continue to target LGB people. For example, it will continue to be legal to have exclusively gay or lesbian support groups.

The regulation will also cover education. It will strengthen existing rules against discrimination in schools and colleges, in particular bullying. But there is also a big problem here. The Government intends to allow religious organisations to be exempt from the ban on discrimination in some of their functions – including what is taught in faith schools – if their doctrines are hostile to homosexuality. With the number of faith schools increasing, this is a worrying suggestion. The TUC position is that no such exemption should be allowed. Why should people with bigoted views about LGB people be exempt from the law when no such exemption exists, for example, on race issues? Equality must mean what it says. If the exemption is allowed into law, we will still not have secured it.

■ Links: www.tuc.org.uk/equality/



EDUCATION APPLICATION FORM GAY & LESBIAN NATIONAL SCHOOL WORTLEY HALL, 20 – 22 OCTOBER 2006

SURNAME: FIRST NAME:

ADDRESS:

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EMAIL ADDRESS: TEL NO:

BRIGADE:

UNION NO: BRANCH.....

STATE WHAT POSITIONS YOU HOLD IN UNION:

.....

.....

PLEASE GIVE DETAILS OF PREVIOUS UNION EDUCATION

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.....

.....

WHAT SHIFT SYSTEM DO YOU WORK?

MALE / FEMALE

ARE YOU A MEMBER OF?

BEMM – G&L

DO YOU REQUIRE CRÈCHE FACILITIES? YES / NO

NUMBER OF CHILDREN: AGE(S): SEX:

FOR BEDROOM ALLOCATION: ARE YOU A SMOKER / NON- SMOKER?

APPLICANTS SIGNATURE..... DATE.....

PRINT NAME:

DO YOU HAVE ANY SPECIAL NEEDS?.....

.....

Return your application by email to: Gal01@fbu.org.uk or by post to:
G&L EC Member, Head office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE



GAY AND LESBIAN SCHOOL

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APPLICATIONS CAN BE OBTAINED FROM :

RICH reg10gl@fsmail.net

YANNICK yanndubois785@hotmail.com

or from the website at

<http://www.fbulgbt.org.uk/workplace/education>

Any Questions?

Contact Rich