

Tolpuddle Green Camp

After the success of last year, this unique opportunity is being offered again. Champion the environment at home, work and college. Learn, discuss and share ideas; an accredited course from Wednesday 16 July through to the end of the Martyrs' Festival on 20 July.

Sunday 20 July Main Stage: 11.00 Graham Mooren singer songwriter plays host for the day. Seize the Day, protesting, campaigning and playing. 12.30 Speakers. 1pm Grupo Lokito Congolese, Latin fusion band. 2.00 Procession led by Musicians Union Great Western Jazz Band. 3.00 Speakers including Tony Benn.

For details contact the South West TUC on 0117 947 0521 southwest@tuc.org.uk



Love Music Hate Racism

Twenty years ago, a group of musicians and political activists came together to form Rock Against Racism, formed in reaction to rising xenophobia and racism fuelled by Nazi organisations like the National Front. This years carnival is on Sunday 27th April at Victoria park, London E3. Confirmed acts so far are Babyshambles, RAR Allstars, Jerry Dammers, Roll Deep, Tom Robinson and more. Speakers include Tony Benn, Derek Simpson, Mark Serwotka. Go to www.lmhrcarnival.com

Regional Equality Contacts

Equality & Diversity Committee:

Chair: Trevor Matty, (see Worcester & Hereford branch for contact details).

Secretary: Gary Williams (see Solent branch for contact details).

Regional Secretary: Kevin Beazer; 0117 935 0055, southwestregion@cwu.org

Branch Equality Officers:

Bournemouth & Dorset Amal: Luke Brown; luke.brown@unioncwu.org

Bristol & District Amal: Deputy Equality Rep Lincoln Dookie, lsdoogie@hotmail.com

Cornwall Amal

Devon and Somerset

Gloucestershire & North Wiltshire: Les Glover, 07793461434; l.glover@gnwb.com

Gloucestershire Amal: Katy Hartland, 01452333970; cahartland@hotmail.co.uk

Guernsey

Jersey

Madley C.C. & Maritime Northern

Plymouth & East Cornwall: awaiting election of new equality officer, to be advised

Solent: Gary Williams: 01202 511022; email cwusolent@btinternet.com

South Devon & Cornwall: Jennifer Forbes, 07770279607; sdc.jenn@tiscali.co.uk

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Equality Matters

Communication Workers Union - South West Region Equality & Diversity Newsletter

GETTING EQUAL

Edition 2 April 2008

The branch rep is juggling a heavy caseload, including two disciplines, a grievance and a dispute over start times. She is beginning to regret taking on the role of union learning rep to their ever expanding portfolio but took it on because she was keen to ensure members have opportunities to develop. Now she's approached by a gay member saying he's the subject of homophobic harassment by his manager. As well as not being 100% clear on how to handle the issues in this area, the rep just doesn't have enough time.

Enter the Equality Rep - a union rep with a specific brief for putting equality at the heart of the workplace and union agenda. Equality reps have received a boost in recent years with a recommendation by the Women & Work Commission (WWC) who proposed "a system of trade union equality reps" who would "provide a lens of equality across workplace practices, raise issues related to equality and diversity, tackle discrimination, resolve conflict and seek solutions..."

The proposal has received support from the government's union modernisation fund in providing £5 million for "a capacity building programme" for equality reps. The funding has helped the National Union of Journalists to provide training for their reps and the T&G section of UNITE to provide an equality toolkit.

However, unlike safety or learning reps, equality reps do not have statutory rights and no guarantees to time off for their role. There is also the potential for equality reps to get parked in a little corner somewhere away from all the action and often seen as a conduit for people with a

grievance rather than representing or negotiating for members.

It was the CWU that originally moved at the TUC's LGBT conference that Equality Reps are recognised and have statutory rights, and the TUC 2006 Congress passed a motion not only calling for equality reps to have guaranteed access to paid facility time but also for them to be an integral part of unions' negotiating terms on all workplace issues. Equality reps have a role to play:

- In recruitment, organising and representation;
- They should be aware of harassment, discrimination and equality issues inside and outside of work;
- They should check how representative the workforce and the membership is of the community and identify and work to remove any barriers;
- Raise members issues with other reps to help address them;
- Check policies and agreements to ensure they keep up to date with legal changes and good practice
- Build involvement of under-represented members so that all workers are involved and represented
- Take part in key campaigns such as equal pay and zero tolerance of harassment & bullying.

Equality reps are here to stay, not only to help members but also to enhance and complement the role of other reps.

Gary Williams
Extracts from Labour Research Department March 2008.

Welcome to the second edition of 'Equality Matters'. This edition includes reports from CWU Equality Conferences.



Any rep or member with a story, question or information should email or call me. Finally, below is a powerful poem on domestic abuse.

Gary Williams, Secretary, South West Regional Equality & Diversity Committee

I Got Flowers Today

We had our first argument last night, and he said a lot of cruel things that really hurt me. I know he is sorry and didn't mean the things he said, because he sent me flowers today.

*I got flowers today.
It wasn't our anniversary or any other special day.*

Last night he threw me into a wall and started to choke me. It seemed like a nightmare, I couldn't believe it was real.

I woke up this morning sore and bruised all over. I know he must be sorry cause he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today, and it wasn't mother's day or any other special day.

Last night, he beat me up again, it was much worse than all the other times. If I leave him, what will I do? How will I take care of my kids? What about money? I'm afraid of him and scared to leave. But I know he must be sorry because he sent me flowers today.

I got flowers today. Today was a very special day. It was the day of my funeral!

Last night, he finally killed me. He beat me to death. If only I had gathered enough courage to leave him, I would not have gotten flowers today.....

Stereotypes - Don't You Just Love Them?

A few years back at another office someone once said to me "All you queers should be hanged", halcyon days indeed with such charming work colleagues like that.

Strangely enough although you would think that behaviour like that was a thing of the past, it is indeed unfortunate to relate that it isn't. "She deserved it dressed like that" and a whole host of blanket stereotype language is still directed at groups or even worse specifically targeted against an individual.

People slowly chipping away at someone's dignity because they may believe in a different religious or cultural background and we are not talking major religions here but minor beliefs like Paganism as well, continuous comments designed to intimidate an individual over a period of time because they happen to be from abroad (Or worse still Irish, Welsh or Scottish – Because it's only a joke 'innit?) general aggressive attitudes towards people with a medical condition (It's beyond belief?) and provocation using language that is 'accidentally' overheard by an individual.

No single person I know or have spoken to has said anything other than that they come into

work and expect to do the job and go home. They certainly don't expect to be singled out, victimized or harassed in any shape or form. Again unfortunately certain individuals take a great delight in other people's discomfort and revel in other's misery.

Whether it is making blanket statements of a 'stereotypical' nature or involving other's in their behaviour by the constant undermining of other people's rights it needs to stop. It has to be dealt with sharply and seen to be dealt with. If individual's persist with a blatant disregard for other's whether it's the colour of one's skin, they happen to be a lesbian or any other of these tired petty concerns that some of these malicious individuals love to gossip and spread rumours about; then they need to be shown the error of their ways quite drastically.

I'm all for resolving things informally on a one-to-one basis but a lot of the time people just don't listen or aren't interested. That's fine – But on that basis depending on the circumstances I would push for the harshest penalties available. If you victimize people beware!

**Luke Brown, Equality Officer
Bournemouth & Dorset Amal.**

Plymouth Pride

7th June at the Guildhall, Plymouth. It will involve a programme of music and entertainment, with guest speakers, film shows and a wider input of local LGBT history.

www.plymouthprideevent.co.uk

Bournemouth Pride

This takes place on the 12th July, it was started largely by trade unions in the region so come along, support the event, remind people trade unions have a role to play and enjoy a great weekend, so why not come along and bring your banners! Details at www.bournefree.co.uk

Gloucester Pride

Parade through city centre followed by afternoon events August 9th at Llanthony Priory, Llanthony Road, behind new college; www.gloucesterpride.org.uk

Swindon Pride

Old Town gardens, 16th August
www.swindonpride.kk5.org

Cornwall Pride

Parade in Truro, 23rd August
www.cornwallpride.com



Obsessive Compulsive Disorder

The Equality Officers Seminar's guest speaker on Obsessive Compulsive Disorder was very interesting, as was the fact that we all exhibit some of the traits & that it affects 1.8 million people. Furthermore it's treatable.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is a **serious anxiety-related** condition. Sufferers often go undiagnosed for many years, partially because of a lack of understanding of the condition, and partially because of the intense feelings of embarrassment and even shame.

To some degree OCD-type symptoms are probably experienced at one time or another by most people, especially in times of stress. However, the illness can have a totally devastating effect on work, social life and personal relationships.

OCD can take many forms, but, in general, sufferers experience repetitive, intrusive and unwelcome thoughts, images, impulses and doubts which they find hard to ignore. These thoughts form the obsessional part of 'Obsessive-Compulsive' and they usually (but not always) cause the person to perform repetitive compulsions in a vain attempt to relieve themselves of the obsessions and fear. Some sufferers will have no physical outward compulsions – a form of OCD called 'Pure O'.

Sufferers try to fight these thoughts with mental or physical rituals which involve repeatedly performing actions such as washing, cleaning, checking or counting.

Most sufferers know that their thoughts and behaviour are irrational and senseless, but feel incapable of stopping them, affecting their confidence and self-esteem.

It would be fair to say that most individuals, at some stage in their lives, have come into contact with obsessional or intrusive thinking and/or succumbed to the seemingly nonsensical need to perform an odd, and often unrelated, behaviour pattern in order to avert a real or imagined danger (e.g. checking several times that the door and windows are locked before leaving the house when going on holiday). However, the key difference which segregates these little 'quirks' from the disorder is when the distressing / unwanted experience of obsessions or compulsions impacts, to a significant level, upon a person's everyday functioning.

OCD affects males as frequently as it does females, and on average begins to affect people in late adolescence for men and early twenties for women.

Compulsions or compulsive acts can be defined as repetitious, purposeful actions in which the individual feels compelled to engage according to their own rules or in a stereotyped manner. Overt compulsions typically include checking, washing, hoarding or a symmetry of certain motor actions or mental actions such as feeling compelled to silently repeat a string of words over and over on experiencing a negative or violent thought. This information was provided from www.ocduk.org
Trevor Matty, Worcester & Hereford Branch

2008 Black Workers' Conference was held on 2 February 2008 at CWU Head Office, Wimbledon and was attended by about one hundred delegates.

Colin Bell a member of RAC chaired the conference, in his opening address he welcomed delegates and wish everyone a good conference.

Billy Hayes, CWU General Secretary told delegates about the under representation of BEM members at high positions in the CWU. He also told delegates not to be complacent about the threat of BNP in British politics.

Guest Speaker – Trevor Phillips, Head of Equality & Human Rights Commission told delegates his main job is to prevent discrimination and inequality in our society. Trevor said he is not afraid to make controversial statements just because some group of our society don't like it. His speech was followed by questions and answers session.

Guest Speaker – Dr. Abdul Mohammed Bari, Secretary General Muslim Council of Britain told delegates, social aspirations of Muslims and other members of society are the same, and we all face equal socio-economic problems. Therefore we should all work for the common good of our society irrespective of our religion. His speech was followed by question and answers session.

Michele Emerson, National Equality Officer did a presentation of CWU first publication on black and ethnic minority issues within the structure of the CWU. Michele told delegates CWU has put in place many measures to help tackle discrimination and under-representation but the Union still need to ask whether there is anything that is contributing to this disparity.

Nine Section II motions were submitted to conference for debate and all was carried. Motions 1 & 8 were selected for national conference after delegates' ballot.

Michele Emerson summed up and thanked delegates for attending and wished everyone safe journey.

Pascal Mensah

South West Eng – Equal Opp. Officer

This year's conference was held in Southport and was attended by 107 delegates and visitors. Tony Sneddon, Chair of DSNAC welcomed delegates and asked delegates not to forget the barriers still facing disabled and special needs people.

Billy Hayes, General Secretary thanked DSNAC for organising this year's successful Disability Awareness Week. He told delegates about the CWU funding a DVD called 'Raising Awareness On Dyslexia' showing the unions commitment, which was launched later in the day by Michele Emerson, Equality Officer.

Guest speaker, Cathy Wheatley from 'Changing Faces' spoke about the work of her campaign group which supports people with a disfigurement (e.g. Birthmark, Accident, Skin Disease etc) to come to terms with it and lead a 'normal' life. Cathy said research shows that 60% of employers discriminate against people with a disfigurement.

Guest speaker, Amanda Stoneman from Epilepsy Action UK told delegates epilepsy is a condition, not a disease, there are over 38 types and 1 in 131 people in the UK have Epilepsy. Amanda informed the conference that Epilepsy is covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995) and explained what to do when someone is having a seizure.

15 motions were submitted to conference but motion 6 from 'Kent Invicta' was withdrawn and motion 11 from 'Scotland No.1' was moved to section 1. The remaining motions in section 1 and 2 were debated by delegates and carried except motion 15 'Tyne & Wear Clerical' which was lost.

Following a ballot to decide which two motions to submit to conference, motions 8 'Birmingham, Black Country & Worcester' and 14 'Oldham & Rochdale Amal' were selected.

Michele Emerson, Equality Officer summed up, thanking delegates for the high quality of debate and wished delegates a safe journey home. Tony Sneddon finally closed conference and hoped to see many more new faces at the next year's conference.

Pascal Mensah *South West Eng – Equal Opp. Officer*

Outside Great Northern Centre, Belfast stands 'The Monument to the Unknown Woman Worker'. The figures address the underlying issues of women's low-paid jobs and unpaid housework. This theme is articulated by the use of objects and utensils symbolic of women's work, such as household items, telephones, shopping baskets and cash registers, imbedded in the fabric of the figures and stands as a testament to all women workers both paid and unpaid.



The Chair of the Women's Advisory Committee, Katrina Quirke opened the 9th CWU Women's Conference, welcoming delegates and visitors. She spoke about the Women's Charter, the work the Women's Advisory Committee (WAC) was doing with regional women's committees and that despite 30 years of the Sex Discrimination Act women still only make up 10% of executives in the top FTSE 100 companies, the lack of women in power is mirrored in the CWU.

General Secretary Billy Hayes then spoke on it being a privilege to address the women's conference. He went on to say that monitoring showed some advances in representation but it was slow and painful, it was intended to add teeth to equality and diversity training at General Conference that any rep who fails to attend the one day course within 6 months of being elected, without good reason, won't be a rep and he ended by saying how fantastic it was that the CWU had a woman President this year.

Next to speak was CWU President Jane Loftus, who spoke of her first year as a baptism of fire with the postal dispute and how we needed to organise more and recruit more.

All the motions were carried.

Motion 1 moved by South West & Thames Valley branch instructed the executive to enter into discussions with BT to make them aware of our members concerns about the company's approach to women returning to work at the end of maternity leave and in particular with regard to attendance patterns.

Motion 2 was withdrawn.

Emergency Motion 1 from the WAC concerned nominations for the Labour Party Women's Conference 2008. Pat Clouder, moving, stated that no nominations for this conference had been sought by the NEC and called for a report on the process and criteria used for selection of delegates.

There was then a brief presentation from Grace Mitchell, National Officer, on 'Black Women History Exhibition'. Grace started with a quote from Maya Angelou's most famous poem, "Still I Rise":

"You may write me down in history
With your bitter, twisted lies,
You may trod me in the very dirt
But still, like dust, I'll rise.

Grace spoke of Black History month and the hope that this will include a women's section that would become an exhibition in its own right. The CWU are hoping to sponsor a profile.

Motion 3 from Croydon & South London branch was on forced marriages, the mover remarked that with a more diverse workforce and union this was becoming a union issue.

Motion 4, Midland Regional Women's Committee, was on work with "Stop Honour Killings" to highlight the issue of women being murdered in the UK and internationally.

Motion 5 by Scotland No. 5 and South Wales branches instructed the WAC to work with the executives and supported MP's to campaign for life long follow up treatment for all Breast Cancer patients.

Manchester Clerical moved Motion 6 calling on the WAC to run a campaign to highlight the issues that women are more likely to have interrupted employment histories and breaks in National Insurance contributions and for information to be provided on how to check the status of their pensions.

Motion 7 from Capital branch called for sex education in schools to be mandatory.

North West Regional Women's Committee's Motion 8 instructed the WAC to write to the other Equality Advisory Committees seeking support at Conference 2008 to bring a speaker on Equality issues into the General Conference each year.

Motion 9 from the WAC was to ensure regional 'Women in the CWU' courses is delivered.

Wales & Marches Women's Regional Committee's Motion 10 instructed the WAC to draw up a report to highlight the achievements of women activists. They should also give consideration to holding women's events in significant locations.

Gloria Mills, National Organiser Equalities UNISON gave a speech on her career in unions, the importance of equality in decision making, that self organisation is important, we are still fighting to close the gender pay gap.

Motion 11 in the name of Wolverhampton & District Amal called for a gathering of CWU women each year, in different geographical locations to commemorate International Women's Day.

Motion 12 from the WAC deplored the decision taken by the TUC General Council in 2007 not to support expansion of the current childcare provision to include out of hours provision and called on the NEC: to facilitate for the provision of childcare "out of session" hours as an integral part of the CWU's commitment to equality.

Emergency Motion 2 from the WAC called for a working party to look at how we can highlight to members the exploitation of women in the sex industry.

Motion 13 from Coventry branch instructed the WAC to campaign for the elimination of the conditions which force women into the sex industry.

London Regional Women's Committee moved Motion 14 instructing the WAC to call on the NEC to actively pursue policy passed at last year's General Conference calling for the NEC to work with the Labour Party and the TUC in pursuit of a policy of decriminalising prostitution to give women rights and protection they currently do not have under existing UK law.

Motion 15 in the name of Central London branch called for a campaign for more women workers in the communications industry.

Motion 16 from the WAC stated that the time is right in the CWU for a debate about running the Women's Conference over 2 days.

Motion 17 from Birmingham, Black Country &

Worcester branch acknowledged the work done by the Advisory Committee and called for a commitment to maintain a separate conference for its women members.

Motion 18 from Shropshire & Mid Wales concerned the actions of some CWU sponsored M.P.'s and called on the NEC to investigate the activities of sponsored MP's who've failed to uphold CWU policies.

North Wales & The Marches moved Motion 19 instructing the incoming NEC to organise a Know Your Rights Awareness Campaign in respect of Women's rights.

Motion 20 from West London stated their disappointment at the lack of progress in achieving proportionality and instructed the WAC to bring forward an action plan to 2009 Annual conference. This was opposed by South East No.5 the speaker stating she did not want to be on the NEC because she was a woman or black but because she was the best person for the job. Birmingham Black Country & Worcester supporting the motion said women were being stopped from going to conference, not allowed to stand for positions and expecting the NEC to do it is like expecting turkey's to vote for Christmas.

Motion 21 from South East Wales Amal said the WAC should be accountable to, and elected by the whole of the CWU. It called for the existing constituency based lay seats to be elected by the whole of General Conference using branch voting strengths. This was opposed by Manchester Clerical who said this would undermine constituencies and also opposed by South West & Thames Valley. Coventry branch supported the motion and said we should be able to vote for the people able to do the job, wherever they are from.

Conference closed with an emotional farewell to Michele Emerson, Assistant Secretary Equal Opportunities. Speeches were given thanking Michele for her hard work, calling her an inspiration encouraging and supportive. Michele thanked people but said she hadn't done this on her own and that our strength is that we are a collective. She ended by wishing conference well for the future. Motions 5 and 6 were voted to go forward to General Conference.

Gary Williams Solent Branch

Dave Daniel, Chair of the LGBT Advisory Committee welcomed delegates and visitors to the 5th LGBT Conference and announced one minute's silence for those LGBT people murdered in the last 12 months.

Lawrence Huston, Northern Ireland Regional Secretary extended a warm welcome and commented on the branch equality audit that had pointed out those branches that continually fail to send delegates.

The next speaker was Colin Flinn, member of the Coalition on Sexual Orientation established by LGBT groups in Northern Ireland as an umbrella organisation with which government and public authorities consult.

All Motions Except Motion 5 were carried.

Motion 1 on behalf of the LGBT Advisory Committee called for support for LGBT history month. Motion 2 moved by West Yorkshire, condemned the violent attacks on Pride marchers in Eastern Europe.

Motion 3 from Capital Branch concerned the oppression of LGBT people around the world and called for the government to work towards securing a resolution in the UN. Motion 4 on behalf of Manchester Clerical, instructed the committee to investigate how to support and promote International Day Against Homophobia.

Motion 5 moved by Tyne and Wear Clerical, called for a report from the committee on equality conferences and that this was not a motion calling for a single equality conference. The LGBT Committee asked the branch to remit and if not to oppose. Several branches spoke in opposition, Chic McGlynn Central Counties Combined spoke in support. In right of reply the mover said it was great to see the debate but that almost every speaker talked about a single equality conference and that wasn't what the motion called for. The motion fell.

Motion 6 from Birmingham Black Country and Worcester called for the commitment to maintain a separate LGBT conference. Motion 7 in the name of Grampian and Shetland branch called for a coordinated campaign against homophobia in sport.

Pauline Buchanan guest speaker from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, extended a warm

welcome and was delighted we had come to a city with such strong union links. She conveyed best wishes in the ongoing postal dispute.

The LGBTAC's Motion 8 reaffirmed support for a comprehensive single equality act. Motion 9 also in the name of the LGBTAC called for initiatives to tackle faith based homophobia at work and alliances with progressive LGBT groups.

London South East moved Motion 10 calling for the government's sexual orientation guidance to be amended and for state funding not to be provided to any school that teaches discrimination. Motion 11, North West London called for a campaign to eradicate homophobia/transphobia in educational establishments.

Motion 12, Solent branch called for awareness raising and education aimed at reducing the high levels of suicide among young LGBT people. West London's Motion 13 called for paid release for equality rep's in the same manner as safety rep's. Motion, 14 was moved by Central London, who called on employers to treat same-sex families in the same way as heterosexual couples in regard to leave for family reasons and that family friendly policies include reference to LGBT people and their families.

The final guest speaker was James Knox from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland who spoke on the changes in legislation over the years, the differences between Northern Ireland, the rest of Ireland and GB.

Conference ended with a panel question and answer session with James Knox, Michelle Emerson, Pauline Buchanan and Colin Flinn. Among the topics were personal experiences of coming out at work, possible hierarchy of rights in any single equality act or body, employers shallow approach to equality, the tick box approach to dealing with discrimination and the need to continue campaigning and lobbying.

The Chair thanked delegates, visitors and guests and announced the ballot result was the two motions selected for general conference were 12 & 14. Michelle Emerson summed up the conference, thanked all those who took part, the contributions were amazing, the debate informative and if anyone takes anything away from the weekend let it be 'don't mourn – organise.'
Gary Williams Solent Branch

It is my sad duty to report the resignation of Jennifer Marshall as Secretary of the Regional Women's Committee, our thanks to Jennifer for her sterling work on behalf of the committee, she will be sorely missed. An election will take place shortly, further details to be sent to branches. The next Regional Women's Committee will meet in Bristol regional office on Wednesday 23rd April, starting at 11.00am. **All branches are required to have a women's officer, please encourage them to attend, any issues in attending please contact the Regional Secretary.**

Dyslexia Presentation, Equality Officers Seminar

Derek Kennedy, BFAWU gave a presentation at the Equality Officers Seminar that was extremely comprehensive on the kinds of difficulties faced by people with dyslexia;

- Poor short-term memory
- Poor spatial awareness
- Difficulty telling left from right
- Visual problems caused by the contrast of text on white paper (Meares Irene syndrome)
- Clumsiness

He pointed out traditional jobs such as bakers and post-men and women would probably attract people who have difficulties such as dyslexia as they would not normally be required to work computers or write reports, however this situation was changing and many people's problems which were previously hidden, were coming to light.

Many dyslexic people will have developed coping strategies so you may not notice someone is having difficulties, but they may well be having to work twice as hard to achieve that.

Dyslexia is an umbrella term, within that you get;

- Real dyslexia; difficulty with words; can identify letters, but not words.
- Dyspraxia; difficulty with co-ordination; clumsy, speech difficulties.
- Dyscalculia; difficulty with numbers
- Dysgraphia; difficulty writing; getting letters and numbers back-to-front.
- Meares Irene; trouble with certain fonts and the contrast in text and paper colour.

Most dyslexics will have a combination of all or some of the above to differing degrees.

Dyslexics are likely to be more 'right brain' users; they need to learn things by doing it or seeing a diagram, rather than hearing or reading about it.

Katy Hartland, Equality Officer, Gloucester Amal

TUC Pensioner's Annual Conference - Thursday 17 April 2008

This conference is open to all trade union pensioners. To attend as a voting delegate and be entitled to propose a motion you will need to be endorsed by your own union or Trades Union Council.

The event is at the Winter Gardens in Weston-Super-Mare, on Thursday 17th April. The cost for this event will be £10 which includes tea, coffee and a buffet lunch. For further information please contact the South West TUC on 0117 947 0521

Gay and Grey in the UK

Going into residential care may mean going back into the closet for many lesbian, gay and bisexual people. Recent reports show many care homes deny they have any LGB residents and one home offered to pay for a cure when a resident 'came out' to staff.

Some people could have been 'out' for fifty years but when it comes to going into a care home or dealing with social services all that can be wiped away. In Berlin a nursing home opened recently for gay and lesbian people, possibly the first in Europe. Thanks to Sandy Best for providing the article, *taken from The Times, 26/02/08*

Regional Equality & Diversity Committee

The next regional Equality & Diversity Committee meeting will be at the regional office, Bristol on Wednesday 21st May, starting at 11.00 am Any dietary requirements please make the Regional Secretary aware.

All branches are required to have an equality officer, could branches ensure their equality officer/rep attends.

Could branches also provide contact details of their equality officers for our newsletter.

Women's National Commission Outreach event in the South West 30 April 2008 - Somerset County Cricket Club - Taunton

This is a joint regional event, arranged by the Women's National Commission (WNC) and Equality South West (ESW). Jackie Longworth of ESW and Fair Play South West will chair the event.

Speakers include Baronesss Joyce Gould, chair of the WNC and Heather Barclay from the Equality & Human Rights Commission. Equality South West is administrating this event, more details will follow.

Rural Women's Network Meeting - Thursday 8 May 2008

Creech St Michael Village Hall

The focus of this meeting is to provide lots of opportunities for Networking.

For further information please contact Debbie Frankland, Project Worker, Rural Women's Network - Somerset on 07870 577 925 or www.rwn-somerset.org.uk

Time: 9.30am to 12 noon.

NIACE Seminar, The Impact of Migration - Tuesday 13 May 2008 Learning South West - Bishops Hull, Taunton - FREE

The South West is currently in the process of formalising a Strategic Co-ordination Board for Migration.

This seminar will offer an overview of the dynamic and complex pattern of regional in and out-migration and will explore the impact on service provision for key statutory and voluntary agencies.

The event is free and will be held from 10 am - 1 pm. For further information or to receive a booking form please contact: Katie Kelsy on: K.L.Kelsey@exeter.ac.uk or telephone 01392 264836

"Setting the Pace" - Equality and

Human Rights in Health and Social Care Conference - 25 June 2008 - Taunton

This is the first annual Equality and Human Rights in Health and Social Care Conference for the South West Strategic Health Authority area.

A key component of this conference will be poster presentation, this is an opportunity to publicise your service/organisation, gain feedback on your ideas and share you experiences with other. To register please email:

louise.walsh@southwest.nhs.uk



Hosted by The Terrence Higgins Trust and Equality South West, 3rd National LGBT Health Summit 2008

The summit provides a platform for raising awareness of the existence of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in society in general. Moreover the summit will address general health issues specific to LGBT communities and where necessary recommend improvements to services that impact on the health & wellbeing of LGBT people in the UK.

Date: Thursday 4th & Friday 5th September 2008

Venue: BAWA, 589 Southmead Road, Filton, Bristol BS34 7RG; Tel: 0117 9768066

Administration:

The LGBT Health Summit is a free event and places will be allocated on a first come first served basis. There are limited places so we advise to book early to avoid disappointment.

Contact Details: For the expression of interest form contact Abbie Pepperell, Office Manager, Equality South West

email: Abbie.Pepperell@equalitysouthwest.org.uk; **tel:** 01823 250 833

address: Equality South West, East Reach House, East Reach, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 3EN

Nigel Costley, Secretary of the South West TUC gave a presentation on migrant workers in the region. He started by stating it was a depressing and distorted picture presented by the press but we need to recognise the myths that need answering.

The Southwest is overwhelmingly a white British region and some places are having to deal with diversity for the first time, this is reflected in the disproportionate claims for the influx of migrants. The reality is that the total proportion of migrant workers is 3.8%, the lowest in the UK. Eastern Europeans form the largest group, with the largest single number being Polish. The region has the smallest migration in the country yet it feels different, one Polish family in a village or town can seem more of an issue than it really is.

Nor do many of these workers stay, some 60% to 70% of the workers who came over in 2006/7 have left again but since the government don't measure people returning home the press are able to assume people have come to stay and estimate the figures. There are several reasons why so many don't stay. Some are seasonal workers, some come just to get enough money to set themselves up at home and others don't stay because they find the UK unwelcoming and a difficult place to live, whatever the reason the trend is fewer people coming and more leaving. The exchange rate between the zloty and the pound is also less favourable than it was.

Some people question why Poland? It's a relatively young country, undergoing restructuring as traditional areas of work change, there is a good education system and some 80% of students learn English as their second language. Some UK schools are actually keen to get children of Polish immigrants because they improve the schools league tables.

The regional TUC visited Gdansk recently, Polish workers have a different view of unions, they know Solidarnosc, the union that led the anti-government movement in the 1980's, but which then became the government and is now blamed for the country's problems. Whilst the UK press complain about migrant workers, Germany is preparing to welcome Polish workers to fill

their skills gaps. Many UK employers are recruiting in Poland, Tesco, First Buses, many care homes all look for Poles to work for them.

Despite the press claims about the costs to the UK, migrant workers tend to be young, healthy, no kids, they pay taxes but don't use our services, contributing more than they take out. There is also little evidence that migrant workers drive down wages, although the picture is complicated.

Nor is there any evidence they are taking 'our jobs'. In Cornwall there are less than 5,000 unemployed and 30,000 job vacancies per year. Unemployment continues to fall in the UK and many migrant workers have degrees whilst we continue to see youngsters in the UK leaving school with few if any qualifications.

There is a danger of a hierarchy of racism, whilst we are looking at migrant workers we mustn't forget the continuing racism suffered by Asian and black communities. It must also be recognised there is an equality issue with migrant workers. Many Poles are white, Catholic and conservative, they haven't seen much diversity at home, women place is still considered to be in the home, cooking dinner and having children, nor are gay rights accepted readily.

The UK is an ageing population, our birth rate is falling and only reason our population numbers aren't dropping is that we are living longer. There is an argument that we need young migrant workers to help pay our pensions.

Many migrant workers also find themselves abused, misled on recruitment, working long hours on low pay, facing excessive deductions from their pay and they are often charged for travel and accommodation. In one care home workers were charged for use of the furniture, daffodil pickers were charged for the elastic bands used to tie the daffodils up with. Some have no contract of employment, no pay slips, confusion over who is their actual employer, and if they are being ripped off so is the government through lack of tax and national insurance contributions.

Many are denied sick pay and holidays and if they complain they are sacked. Some employers use 'hot beds', shared sleeping accommodation, workers have been found living in sheds and lorries.

Other EU countries are opening up their borders to migrant workers from Eastern Europe and in Ireland the unions have a 21 year agreement with the government that includes tightening up the minimum wage, better agency workers rights and better workers rights. Ireland's workforce has doubled and union membership levels are twice that in the UK.

Debate was then opened up and discussions took place over equality structures in different unions and in 'green' reps. The regional TUC have some funding from the RDA to promote environmental work and are going to appoint a regional worker to assist unions in the region. Like union learning reps green reps will help to get more people involved and spread the workload.

The TUC have a number of documents that provide information, including 'Organising & Representing Migrant Workers', 'Safety & Migrant Workers', and 'Who makes up the South West? Information on the ethnic make up of the region, far right groups, asylum seekers and migrant workers. All are available from the TUC.



There are 77 countries in the world today where it is a criminal offence to be gay. These countries punish women, men and children because of their sexuality and in seven countries the punishment is death.

International Day Against Homophobia (IDAHO) on 17th May provides a platform for everyone to make a powerful statement to demand improvements for the quality of life for LGBT people both overseas and here in the UK. It can be used to raise awareness of homophobic issues that are negatively impacting on people's lives and to showcase success stories where a positive change has been achieved.

The well being of LGBT people is seriously affected by homophobic discrimination and IDAHO provides an opportunity to raise the profile of the issues faced or how these are being tackled.



The one thing that unites every person on the planet is our humanity but LGBT discrimination stills exist in many forms. Being LGBT isn't the only defining factor for this group of individuals as many are defined and pigeon-holed because of their gender, race, ethnicity, disability or age as well as their sexuality.

All forms of discrimination must be fought by all parties to ensure a cohesive and supportive society where all differences are as highly regarded as all similarities. Go to: www.idaho.org.uk/ for more information.

The only campaign in the South West organised so far is in Bournemouth with the 'Homophobia Sucks! Campaign' where volunteers, working with the police, will be in Bournemouth town centre on May 17th from 10am till 5pm handing out lollypops with 'HOMOPHOBIA SUCKS' on them and of course joining in with the minutes noise at the designated time set.

For more details on this contact Over The rainbow, 27 St Michaels road, Bournemouth, BH2 5DP. Call 01202257478 or E-mail: otrbourneymouth@yahoo.co.uk