

equality @ nuj

News from the NUJ Equality Council

FEB/MARCH 2005

E Q U A L P A Y

Are you getting your fair share?

...In the UK

WOMEN AND WORK COMMISSION

The Government has announced the formation of a new commission to tackle the gender pay gap and has called for unions to submit comments on the Commission's terms of reference. Latest official figures show that the gender pay gap seems to be getting worse. Female full timers now earn 19.8 per cent less than men working full time. Now that statisticians are including the huge salaries of male high earners, low paid women have fallen even further behind.

At a recent TUC Equal Opportunities Review Conference, Frances O'Grady, TUC Deputy General Secretary, welcomed the new commission but said that time was

now of the essence and women needed real commitments in party manifestos to make equal pay a reality. Frances said "This must start with a recognition that the voluntary approach to narrowing the pay gap is not working. Unions tell us all the time that when they tackle employers

IF YOU ARE A CHAPEL REP – GET TRAINED!

Contact Debbie Smith on debbies@nuj.org.uk to obtain information on equal pay courses. You can also press your employer to adopt a model agreement on equal pay (contact lenac@nuj.org.uk for a copy) and then ask for a voluntary equal pay review/audit. Leaflets on equal pay that can be pinned up on your notice board can also be obtained from Lena.

about conducting equal pay audits, most are simply not interested. Bringing an equal pay case can be a very daunting experience for women, especially in workplaces where there is no union to rely on for support. Until employers are forced to publish pay auditors of their workplaces, we won't have pay transparency. Without more honesty over pay at work, employers will continue to hide behind the British obsession of not talking about salaries, and continue to pay their male and female employees who do the same or similar jobs differently."

The NUJ will be making a submission to the Women and Work Commission on the problems our female members have when trying to obtain information on pay scales in their workplaces and how occupational segregation and organisational practice maintain the gender pay gap in our profession.

■ If you think you are being paid less for doing the same job as a male colleague contact the NUJ now and speak to your industrial organiser. If your employer refuses to agree to a voluntary pay audit the NUJ can help members submit an Equal Pay Questionnaire to obtain information from the employer. An employer has up to eight weeks in which to respond and if they refuse an Employment Tribunal "will be entitled to draw inferences from a deliberate refusal to answer or an evasive or equivocal reply".

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...In the Republic

NICOLA COLEMAN, ASSISTANT ORGANISER IN THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND WRITES:

Following a chapel pay survey it was noticed that a male assistant editor was getting paid substantially more than a female assistant editor. When this was discussed with the chapel it was collectively felt that the company were indeed discriminating against the female on the grounds of gender and age. This was raised at a meeting with the employer who denied the allegation of gender discrimination. The NUJ then followed procedures as advised by the Equality Authority

(Republic of Ireland) and submitted the claim in writing to the employer using the prescribed form. The issue is still in dispute and the NUJ has now referred the case to the Equality Tribunal where we are claiming Equal Pay for our female member. Recent CSO figures show that women in the Republic of Ireland are paid 82% of men's income. This statistic makes it well worthwhile to conduct chapel pay surveys to establish whether your employers are using discriminatory pay practices. The Equality Tribunal has an excellent website for any rep who needs more information – www.equalitytribunal.ie

Contact Nicola Coleman if you feel you are being discriminated against in the Republic of Ireland on nicolac@nuj.ie

Equal Pay Toolkits for Employers are available free from the EOC. Contact Katherine McPartlan on Katherine.mcpartlan@eoc.org.uk

Women and pensions – time for action

It is already clear that women fare badly under the current pension provision. The present system generates inequalities for women already retired and those approaching retirement age. Lower pay and shorter working lives combined with part-time working because of childbirth and childcare responsibilities make it much harder for women to build up pension entitlements.

The TUC's new report on pensions – Time for Action – warns that unless major pension reform takes place, young women are likely to have as little cash in their old age as their great grandmothers.

The report makes a number of suggestions for action:

● A compulsory system where employees and employers are all forced to pay into a pensions scheme would make a

huge difference to women with little or no pensions entitlement;

● The 25% rule that stops women with less than ten years of National Insurance contributions getting any state pension should be abolished;

● The Government should allow women to buy back more than the six years of National Insurance contributions they are currently limited to. Allowing further backdating would allow many women to fill the gaps in their contributions record and increase the level of their state pension;

■ More information on the report can be found at www.tuc.org.uk/pensions

■ If you need more information about pensions and how you can plan for retirement, go to www.worksmart.org.uk/pension

PAYLINE

Free Access to Payline Database

The NUJ's online pay and conditions database – in association with Labour Research Department – is a unique source of bargaining information. It holds details on almost 2,500 agreements covering pay, hours, holidays and other conditions of employment such as maternity arrangements, London Weighting and paternity leave, plus short comments on key trends in individual settlements.

■ To get started: 1. Contact the NUJ at davida@nuj.org.uk for your username and password. 2. Go to LRD PayLine www.lrd.org.uk/database/lrdpay or visit lrd.org.uk and click on PayLine link and log on.

Women's Aid appeal

Women's Aid celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2004. In 1974 the first national domestic violence body – the National Women's Aid Federation was formed to campaign for new laws and services, to raise public awareness and to ensure that survivors' voices were heard. Since 1974 Women's Aid has brought the issue of domestic violence out from behind closed doors. Whilst services have developed and become more profes-

sional, the ethos and vision of Women's Aid has not changed for even today not all women and children have a safe and secure home. Tens of thousands of women and children seek shelter in Women's Aid refuges every year.

Women's Aid needs to raise £1.5 million by the end of 2005. If your branch or chapel would like to make a donation please contact e.smithson@womensaid.org.uk

The Dyn Project Y Cynllun Dyn

The Dyn project is a new pilot safety planning and advocacy service for male victims of domestic abuse within Cardiff.

For men who have experienced domestic abuse, the Dyn Project can provide a range of services including immediate safety measures, access to support services, provide advice on collection of evidence and a forum for men who have experienced domestic abuse.

The project has been open from 4 January and is open from 10am – 4pm on Monday to Wednesdays and 5pm – 9pm on Thursdays.

For those outside Cardiff who have experienced domestic abuse, the All Wales Domestic Abuse

Helpline 0808 8010 800 can refer male callers (including gay and bisexual men) to a specific service for men.

Phone/ffon: 029 2022 6622; Email/Ebost: dynproject@safer.cardiff.freeuk.com

■ For further information on domestic violence see also:

- Domestic Violence and the Workplace – A guide for Negotiators published by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. Website: www.ictu.ie
- Refuge – a national charity for women and children: www.refuge.org.uk
- DVIP Domestic Violence Intervention Project: info@dvip.org

Domestic violence

Look out for the latest publication from the NUJ Equality Council on domestic violence in the workplace.

As we go to print it is in its final publication stage and should be printed shortly. The leaflet will give NUJ reps vital information on how to deal with this issue within the workplace, a model workplace

policy and information on how to help colleagues who are victims of domestic abuse.

■ If you are suffering from domestic abuse and need urgent help call the Women's Aid 24-hour helpline – 0845 702 3468. Scottish Women's Aid can be called on 0131 475 2372 and Welsh Women's Aid on 02920 390874.

Disability

The TUC has announced the publication of a new guide to dyslexia in the workplace. Dyslexia affects nearly three million workers and is often considered to be the hidden disability. The guide is primarily aimed at representatives and officers, to enable them to understand how to assist members and the employer to deal with dyslexia by making a reasonable adjustment as required under the DDA. Copies of the booklet can be ordered from the TUC website: www.tuc.org.uk/publications

Diary Dates

9-11 March 2005

TUC Women's Conference, Scarborough

7-10 April 2005

NUJ Annual Conference, Scarborough

15-17 April 2005

TUC Black Workers Conference, Southport

25-26 May 2005

TUC Disability Conference, Congress House, London

30 June – 1 July 2005

LGBT Conference, Congress House, London

Look out for news about our Women's Conference to be held in Manchester in May or June

**If you would like to receive this newsletter in a different format, please contact Lena Calvert
Tel: 020 7278 7916
Email: lenac@nuj.org.uk**

L G B T N E W S

Launch of world trade union LGBT rights network

The TUC and the global trade union movement have created a network for LGBT campaigns to help trade unionists put pressure on the International Labour Organisations and the UN Commission on Human Rights to adopt positive policies on lesbian and gay equality.

The launch took place at the World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions in

Miyazaki, Japan in mid-December 2004. The Congress heard representatives from Canada, Italy, New Zealand and South Africa before adopting a resolution calling for national laws prohibiting discrimination against gay and lesbian workers and urged trade unions to "fight prejudice, bigotry and intolerance in the workplace, in society and in the trade unions." Details of the resolutions adopted can be found at www.icftu.org

Civil partnership

The Civil Partnership Act 2004 received Royal Assent on 18 November 2004 and the Government expects it to be brought into effect this year.

The Act creates a new legal relationship which a same-sex couple can form by signing a registration document. The Act provides such couples with parity of treatment

in a wide range of legal matters with married couples and also confers similar responsibilities. Provisions in the Act include:

- Equitable treatment for the purposes of life assurance
- Employment and pension benefits
- Recognition under intestacy rules

- Access to fatal accidents compensation
- Protection from domestic violence
- Recognition for immigration and nationality purposes
- A duty to provide reasonable maintenance for a civil partner and any children
- Assessment of partners for child support

Broken rainbow

New legislation now recognises that domestic violence occurs between same sex couples and an organisation called Broken Rainbow has been funded to offer a helpline and other services to LGBT people who find themselves in this situation. Broken Rainbow is working to establish community-led reporting and referral centres, hostels, self-help groups and regional LGBT domestic violence forums.

■ Helpline Number (survivors) 020 8539 9507, Email: mail@broken-rainbow.org.uk, Website: www.broken-rainbow.org.uk

2005 Pride Consortium appeal

The TUC is appealing to unions to sponsor the 2005 Pride parade in London. Unions that contribute will secure a place on the massive publicity that will accompany the two-week festival so this will be a big opportunity to promote unions to the LGBT communities and to encourage recruitment. The NUJ Equality Council will be making a small donation but if your branch or chapel would also like to contribute please send your cheques (made out to the NUJ) to Lena Calvert at Headland House and mark your envelope Pride 2005.

Blooming discrimination

New research findings by the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) show that around 30,000 working women are sacked, made redundant or leave their jobs due to pregnancy discrimination.

The research report reveals that:

- 45% of women who had worked while pregnant said they experienced some form of discrimination because of their pregnancy
- 21% said they lost out financially due to discrimination and
- 5% were put under pressure to hand in their notice when they announced their pregnancy.

Details of the discrimination include: denial of promotion, bonuses and training opportunities and changes in job descriptions, being left out of decisions and even verbal abuse.

Many employers are supportive of women during pregnancy and are aware of the benefits of a well-treated workforce. EOC Chair Julie Mellor said: "Although some employers knowingly flout the law, many businesses do face genuine challenges in managing pregnancy and simply don't know what their responsibilities are or what help is available to them. We need urgent action from the government to provide more information and support for pregnant employees and their employers."

The EOC is calling on the government to make two main changes to help employers and employees manage pregnancy at work more effectively;

- to provide a written statement of maternity rights and employer responsibilities to every pregnant woman, with a tear-off section for her to give to her employer; and
- to give employers a "right to request" employees to indicate their planned return date much earlier during maternity leave where possible.

Julie Melor added "Women should not be penalised simply for being pregnant. The impact on women, their partners and families and on the health of their baby can be disastrous."

If you are pregnant and having problems with your employer, contact the NUJ now and speak to your industrial organiser. It is specifically against the law to dismiss a woman or treat her less favourable for any reason connected to pregnancy, childbirth or maternity leave. A woman continues to be an employee throughout her maternity leave and if she is treated less favourably or dismissed during this period she can take the matter to an employment tribunal and claim sex discrimination and unfair dismissal.

■ The Maternity Alliance is an independent national charity which works to improve rights and services for all pregnant women, new mothers and their families. An information pack, containing the most popular six fact sheets is available from the Publications Department, www.maternityalliance.org.uk They also have an information line on 020 7588 8582.

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Black and ethnic minority women face exclusion everywhere

A Fawcett Society report that shows that black and minority ethnic (BME) women suffer exclusion at every level of society.

BME women are about 4% of the population but make up just 0.3 per cent of MPs and there are only two female BME MPs.

While their voices are not heard at the top, many BME women struggle with multiple discrimination on the grounds of their sex, race and/or religion.

The society's report highlights inequalities in education, health, employment and pay, financial

security, political involvement and treatment by the criminal justice system.

■ Black and Minority Ethnic Women in the UK; Fawcett Society; 16 February 2005. Copies can be ordered at the publications page of www.fawcettsociety.org.uk.

Bullying and harassment courses

The Equality Council seminar for European members on dealing with bullying and harassment will probably be held in September 2005.

It was hoped that this could be held earlier in the year but dates chosen clashed with bank holidays. Continental European Council members are working on the programme of the course so if you would like to attend please contact Lena Calvert on lenac@nuj.org.uk or ring 020 7278 7916.

We are also working on holding a North-East seminar. This will probably be held in May or early June – again if you are interested please contact Lena.

For those in the south of the country, the GFTU will be running a three-day course from 23rd to 25th September at the Moathouse Hotel, Bedford. Contact Debbie Smith at the NUJ for details.

Other GFTU courses 2005

Tackling Discrimination

Nottingham 22-24 April

Leadership Skills for Women

Eastbourne 13-15 May

Women in the Union

Sunderland 9-11 September

Women Moving On

Peterborough 25-27 November

Discrimination and the law

Oxford 2-4 December

Contact Debbie Smith for details. All GFTU courses are free to delegates. Accommodation, meals and all course fees are paid for by the GFTU Educational Trust. Numbers are always limited to about 15-18 delegates per course. www.gftu.org.uk