

Fire Brigades Union

National Women's Committee

**National Women's Committee
Secretary Annual Report to AGM
15/12/05**

The Fire Brigades Union

National Women's Committee

National Women's Committee Secretary AGM Report

Contents / Index

1. The National Women's Committee	Page 3
2. National Women's Committee meetings	Page 4
3. Committees that the NWC sit on	Page 5
4. Conferences/events the NWC attended with speaking commitments	Page 6 ,7, 8 and 9
5. Other Conferences/Events/Meetings the NWC has attended	Page 9 and 10
6. International/affiliations and donations	page 10 and 11
7. Annual Women's School	Page 11 and 12
8. Other areas of work that the NWC has undertaken	Page 13 and 14

1. The National Women's Committee

National Representatives:

EC Member	Vicky Knight
National Women's Committee Chair	Dona Feltham
National Women's Committee Secretary	Kerry Baigent
National Women's Committee Vice-chair	Jo Winrow-Jones

Regional Representatives:

Region 1	Heather Lawrie
Region 2	Lynda Rowan
Region 3	Samantha Rye
Region 4	No rep
Region 5	Jo Winrow-Jones
Region 6	Staci Leach
Region 7	Helen Harrison
Region 8	Emma Gibby
Region 9	Emma Carr
Region 10	Sally Harper
Region 11	No Rep
Region 12	Julie Barton
Region 13	Gayle Banks

2. National Women's Committee Meetings

The National Women's Committee met on several occasions this year.

21 st , 22 nd 23 rd January	Women's discussion leaders	Wortley Hall
25 th February	Full business	Head Office
16 th March	Sub Education meeting	Region 13 office
29 th April	Annual Conference Delegation Meeting	Region 7 office
16 th June	Full business meeting	Head Office
17 th and 18 th August	Working Meeting	Wortley Hall
3 rd and 4 th October	Business and Working meeting	Wortley Hall
18 th October	Sub education meeting	Merseyside office
3 rd and 4 th November	Full Business and working meeting	Wortley Hall
15 th December	AGM	Head Office

The following dates have been booked for the National Womens Committee meetings for 2006:

23 rd February	Full Business	Head Office
15 th June	Full Business	Head Office
28 th September	Full Business	Head Office
14 th December	Full Business	Head Office

3. Committees that the NWC sit on

FBU Executive Council Sub Committees

EC Representation Appeals Committee	Vicky Knight
EC International Committee	Vicky Knight
Re-organisation sub committee	Vicky Knight
Substitute AIF Appeals committee	Vicky Knight

FBU committees

National Fairness at Work Committee	Kerry Baigent
National Fairness at Work Strategy Group	Kerry Baigent
National Education Committee	Dona Feltham
Regional Education Officers Meeting	Dona Feltham
National Health and Safety Committee	Sally Harper
Campaign Coordinators	Kerry Baigent
IRMP Coordinators	Kerry Baigent
Control Care campaign	Kerry Baigent
Final Appeals Committee	Dona Feltham

TUC Committees

TUC Women's Committee	Vicky Knight
-----------------------	--------------

Other Committees

ODPM Point of Entry Selection Tests strategy Group	Kerry Baigent
Charter for Women	Kerry Baigent
Practitioners Forum Equalities Task and finish group	Vicky Knight
Fairness and dignity negotiating committee	Vicky Knight

4. Conferences/events attended by NWC with speaking commitments

WTUC Scarborough 9th- 11th March 2005

Delegation:

Ruth Winters
Vicky Knight
Dona Feltham
Kerry Baigent
Sam Samuels
Patsy Griffiths
Staci Leach
Joanne Winrow-Jones
Sally Harper

The FBU motion on Regionalisation of controls and our emergency resolution on the Western Sahara were carried by Conference.

FBU Resolution:

Regionalisation of Emergency Fire Control Rooms

This Conference is aware of the Governments proposals to reduce the number of control rooms in England and Wales from 49 to 9 and in Scotland from 8 to 1. Conference firmly believes that these proposals form part of New Labours political agenda on regionalisation and is in no way based on improving the Service. Conference notes that this political policy on regionalisation was overwhelmingly rejected by the public in the North East referendum held in November 2004.

Should these proposals be implemented there will be job losses of 47% within Emergency Fire Control Rooms where women are the majority workforce.

This Conference believes that these proposals will have a negative impact on the highly efficient service provided by the Fire and Rescue Service throughout the UK and would result in an increased risk to both Fire fighters and the public.

Therefore this conference calls on the TUC and all affiliates to oppose the Governments proposals on the Regionalisation of Emergency Fire Controls by:

- Supporting the FBU's national campaign.
- Publicising the FBU campaign entitled ' Campaign Against Regionalisation'
- Lobbying Government, MP's and local councillors to oppose this initiative.

FBU Emergency Resolution

Western Sahara.

2006 is the 30 year anniversary of the illegal Moroccan occupation of Western Sahara, which this Conference has and will continue to condemn.

On the 16th January the Spanish newspaper El Pais reported that the King of Morocco stated in an interview that "The Territory was recovered in 1975 in a legal and peaceful way, neither myself nor the Moroccan people will ever agree to give up our sovereignty". This reinforced the fact that UN resolution 1514 (xv) calling for the self determination of Saharawi people has been selectively ignored for the financial gains of some, at the cost of the liberty and self determination of a nation of Saharawi people.

This Conference calls upon the TUC Women's Committee and all affiliates to:

- Lobby the UK Government to put Western Sahara on its agenda as head of G8 and take active steps to help revive the referendum process.
- Re-agenda the issue of Western Sahara by highlighting and raising awareness of the plight of the Saharawi people.
- To become involved and financially support the Sandblast project taking place in 2006.

The delegation spoke on a wide range of subjects and took part in several fringe meetings and held a joint fringe meeting with Thompsons on the Western Sahara

National Assembly of Women AGM 24th - 25th April

Delegation:

Janette Ferguson

Dona Feltham

Resolution

Women Working in a Male Dominated Workplace

Women working in male dominated workplaces are still suffering detrimental treatment at the hands of both their colleagues and their organisation.

Despite the National Fire Service's portrayal as an organisation with a commitment to equality, women are still experiencing disgusting and unacceptable behaviour and conditions. We believe their equality agenda to be a superficial exercise to gain ticks in boxes and does little to improve the working lives of the women members of the Fire Brigades Union.

Our main areas of concern are;

- Increased levels of Bullying and Harassment
- Poor Workplace Facilities
- Ill fitting uniform and Personal Protective Equipment
- Poor ergonomics of appliances and equipment
- Insufficient/Non existent childcare
- Health and Safety of Control staff due to understaffing
- Fear of positive discrimination
- Work life balance

This list is not exhaustive.

We call upon the NAW to use all their influence to highlight the plight of women in the Fire Service to assist in improving both their conditions and working environment.

This resolution was carried at the NAW AGM.

TUC 12th – 15th September – Brighton

Vicky Knight was part of the FBU delegation to the TUC and spoke on Western Sahara and tried to speak on general council seats.

Charter for Women Conference – Birmingham – 15th October 05

The Charter was launched to the movement at the Women's TUC conference in Liverpool in 2003 as a fringe meeting. Attendees were few at this initial meeting but the impact was massive, it was in fact the birth of a manifesto for women.

The hope was to inspire a new and inclusive socialist feminist theory and practice, to motivate a new generation of women activists and to re-vitalise the fight for women's liberation. The Charter was seen as a campaigning programme for women to unite around, bringing together and progressing in unity, the key demands for which women, in a wide variety of arenas are fighting for, often in isolation.

The Charter itself covers 3 key areas; Social Policy, the labour market and the labour movement, raising problematic points in many areas and absolute barriers to women's equality in others.

The charter hi-lights and challenges many common misconceptions and states:

"Women's oppression is consistently trivialised or denied by the mass media and the state and New Labour claims that they have made great progress in equalising opportunity for women, although the facts speak quite differently."

Sentiments expressed by FBU women on numerous occasions.

The initial meeting was small, however, the following and support the Charter has received to date has grown to astronomic proportions. What was a list of 3 unions supporting the movement has grown to 16 and the financial support received just about enabled the first conference to be held on Saturday 15th October 2005 in Birmingham's Black Country living museum.

Approximately 75 attendees, organisers, speakers and guests enabled the conference to be the fantastic success it was. With an agenda that is diverse and inclusive, covering issues ranging from pensions to domestic violence and race discrimination to TUC representation.

FBU President Ruth Winters addressed the conference, talking about Women in the labour and trade union movement alongside the President of the TUC, Gloria Mills.

The Charter has been adopted by the following organisations/trade unions: Amicus, ASLEF, AUT, CDNA, CWU, CYWU, FBU, NASUWT, NATFHE, NUJ, PCS(National women's forum), POA, TSSA, UNISON, NAW, SERTUC(Women's rights committee).

To read the charter in full, visit the NWC website.

Delegation:

Ruth Winters
Vicky Knight
Kerry Baigent
Dona Feltham
Val Salmon
Val Hampshire
Sue Offland
Helen Harrison
Sam Samuels
Janette Ferguson

WSTUC – Glasgow – 15th and 16th November 05

Delegates:

Linda Shanahan

Heather Lawrie
 Ruth Winters
 Julie Small
 Sam Samuels
 Janette Ferguson
 Observers:
 Vicky Knight
 Kerry Baigent

The FBU submitted one resolution and two emergency resolutions. All resolutions were carried by conference.

5. Other National Conferences/Events/Meetings attended by NWC

Media Skills course – Wortley Hall – 11th – 13th Jan	Dona Feltham and Helen Harrison
IRMP - 18th Jan	Kerry Baigent
Charter for Women meeting - 26th January	Kerry Baigent
FAW Strategy Group Meeting - 3rd February	Kerry Baigent
Education Methods – Rednall – 7th, 8th and 9th February	Sam Rye and Staci leach
Stop the War meeting – Liverpool 10th Feb	Vicky Knight
Charter for Women - 23rd February	Kerry Baigent and Vicky Knight
IRMP Seminar – Westminster 28th Feb	Vicky Knight
NJC Discipline and Grievance seminar – 14th March	Vicky Knight
Brigade/Regional officials seminar pensions - 7th March	Kerry Baigent
Convention of women – Paris – 17th March	Vicky Knight and Kerry Baigent
FAW School – Rednall – 5th - 7th April	Kerry Baigent
Women’s School – Wortley Hall – 8th – 10th April	All of NWC
Meeting with NWFS – Moreton – 16th May	Kerry Baigent, Vicky Knight, Dona Feltham and Ruth Winters
Recruitment and selection test meeting – Head Office – 25th May	Kerry Baigent, Dona Feltham and Vicky Knight
Charter for women meeting – London – 7th	Kerry Baigent Vicky Knight

June	
POEST Expert panel group – Moreton – 9th and 10th June	Kerry Baigent,
TUC equality briefing – Congress House – 9th June	Vicky Knight
Meeting with Physiological expert – Cambridge – 17th June	Kerry Baigent
Meeting with Australian researchers – London – 28th June	Kerry Baigent
Pride – London 2nd July	Dona Feltham,
Campaign co-ordinators – pensions/control – Head Office – 4th and 5th July	Kerry Baigent
Parliamentary Lobby – 6th July	Kerry Baigent
Tolpuddle – 15th – 17th July	Kerry Baigent and Vicky Knight
Rise – London – 16th July	Dona Feltham
South African Women’s day – 8th September	Dona Feltham
Campaign Coordinators pensions- Head Office – 10th October	Sally Harper
Abortion Rights Debate – House of Commons – 26th October	Vicky Knight, Dona Feltham, Kerry Baigent, Sue Offland and Val Salmon
UFF Memorial Walk	Dona Feltham, Sally Harper and Ruth Winters
Campaign coordinators control – 7th November	Kerry Baigent
Meeting on consultation document recruitment and progression 17th – 18th November	Kerry Baigent
29th and 30th November work on the inquiry submission	Vicky Knight, Dona Feltham and Kerry Baigent Region 13 office

6/7. International/affiliations and donations

6. International **Western Sahara**

Following last years work with Danielle on the campaign for the Saharawi people. The FBU Women’s Committee worked tirelessly on the campaign this year to help it gain momentum. This included raising awareness through an emergency resolution to the WTUC, holding a fringe meeting at WTUC conference, producing leaflets and flyers for this conference and using the remaining flyers to send out to all women via Siren. A Saharawi woman spoke at WTUC due to Vicky K raising it and gaining

support at the women's committee, we then organised for a woman to attend the NWC women's school and she came with Danielle who is co-ordinating the 'Sandblast' project. Due to the awareness that had been raised throughout the movement the Sandblast project is being supported by many Unions and has really started to pick up pace. Well done NWC and in particular Vicky and Ruth.

7. Affiliations and donations

- Abortion Rights
- Sylvia Pankhurst Memorial Statue
- National Assembly of Women
- The Charter for Women
- Justice for Colombia
- Cuba Solidarity
- Trade Union and the Woodcraft Folk
- Stewart Chamley memorial Fund
- Western Sahara Campaign

8. Women's Annual School

Wortley Hall Sheffield
 8th – 10th April
 Tutors: Lorene Fabian and Julie Weakes
 Students: 52
 Guests: Women representatives from RMT and ASLEF

The School programme was as follows:

Day 1	Topic	Location
14.00 – 14.30	Welcome and introductions	Ball Room
14.30 – 15.15	Introduction with regional reps	Ball Room
15.15– 16.15	FBU Structures stage 1 and stage 2	Ball Room and Library
16.15 –16.30	Tea Break	Bar and Lounge

16.30 – 17.30	Ruth Winters	Ball Room
17.30	End of day one	

Day 2	Topic	Location
09.30 – 12.00	Workshops	Various
12.00 – 13.00	Western Sahara	Ball Room
13.00 – 14.00	Lunch	Dining Room
14.00 – 15.00	B&EMM	Ball Room
15.00 – 17.30	Workshops	Various
17.30	End of day two	

Day 3	Topic	Location
09.30 – 09.40	School Photo	On steps outside lounge area
09.40 – 10.15	Gay and Lesbian National Committee	Ball Room
10.15 – 10.30	Tea Break	Bar and Lounge
10.30 – 11.15	Regionalisation of Controls campaign	Ball Room
11.15 – 13.00	Lets Get Organised!	Ball Room
13.00 – 13.30	School Debrief	Ball Room
13.30	Lunch and/or home	Dining Room

9. Other areas of work that the NWC have undertaken

New Reps

The Committee has got four new regional representatives, two of which are in regions that haven't been represented on the NWC for a long time: Heather Lawrie – region 1, Emma Gibby – region 8, Julie Barton – region 12 and Gayle Banks – region 13. The NWC will be focusing on gaining reps in the two remaining regions 4 and 11 in the early part of next year. I would like to thank Janette Ferguson for her hard work over the years, and welcome the new reps formally to the NWC.

Siren

We have produced one copy of Siren this year which can be found on our website.

Facilities Audit

The NWC has made good progress on the facilities audit and much work has been done in individual brigades. When all questionnaires nationally have been completed, a paper will be put together by the NWC sec in order to highlight the national picture.

POEST Report on physical testing

The NWC produced a report for the EC on the physical tests battery for recruitment and selection – Please see appendix 1

The Equalities Review – Call for Evidence

The NWC produced a paper for the FBU to include in its submission to this review – Please see appendix 2

Inquiry Submission

The NWC produced a paper to be included in the FBU submission. Each equality section submission was only allowed to be a couple of paragraphs – Please see appendix 3

Maternity Policy

Following the glossy production of the FBU model maternity policy and the changes made to the Grey book all Brigade Secretary's were given two copies, one for them and one to submit to management. This was the perfect time to enter into negotiations as most Brigade policies were out of date. Consequently many women's reps have given advice on draft policies and/or been involved in the negotiations. The global picture is a more positive one, with many policies inclusive of much of our recommendations. The only factor where there is no improvement is the contractual pay element, which we had hoped would at least reflect London's pay policy.

Support and advice to women members

Due to current equality issues taking a back seat within Brigades many women members are suffering at the hands of either their colleagues or the Fire Service as an institution. Due to the NWC organisation and its success's many women have come forward to NWC reps for support and advice, as a consequence the NWC have supported women members through Employment Tribunals, complaints procedures, grievances and discipline hearings. This has proven to be very draining in terms of how many ways a rep can split themselves, but is a key part of who we are and why we exist.

Regional and Brigade Women's Committee meetings

Even though much time has been taken up with direct representation and many reps struggling to get Trade Union leave, NWC reps have continued to organise successfully in their regions. Many meetings at both Brigade level and Regional level have taken place this year and NWC reps have tried to keep women members informed and interested in the FBU via newsletters and other methods of communication. As a consequence the NWC is a strong organised group of women Trade Unionists with a clear set of aims and objectives. This serves the Fire Brigades Union and its members well and will only continue to improve.

Thanks to all of the NWC for their hard work and commitment, without which the NWC would not be what it is today.

**Kerry Baigent
NWC Secretary**