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EOC LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION

Blooming marvellous or hard labour?

Representatives of employers, trade unions, government and advice organisations met in early December to discuss Pregnant and Productive, the Equal Opportunities Commission's investigation into pregnancy discrimination in employment.

The EOC recently released results from a small survey which showed that 21% knew someone who had experienced problems at work because of their pregnancy. That figure rose to 33% amongst women aged 25-34.

Over the years, pregnancy and maternity discrimination has been the most common type of sex discrimination complaint made to the EOC helpline. Experiences of discrimination ranged from unpleasant remarks, unfounded criticism, being

given unsuitable work or even being sacked.

Jenny Watson, deputy chair of the EOC said: "This discrimination during pregnancy continues to happen despite a widespread understanding of pregnant women's employment rights. We urgently need to find out why."

The investigation will run until February 2005 when it intends to make formal recommendations to the government and will cover

- the extent and impact on women and families,
- the reasons for poor management of pregnant workers,
- the changes that need to happen
- a review of UK law and literature
- a survey of employers to assess knowledge of legal responsibilities
- interviews with employers

who have been found to discriminate

- a far-reaching survey of women to explore the incidence of pregnancy discrimination

If you have been treated unfairly because of your pregnancy the EOC wants to hear from you. Log on to www.eoc.org.uk/pregnancy and complete the form asking for details of your experience.

If you need urgent advice contact the NUJ straightaway to speak to an organiser in your region/ industrial sector – numbers are available on the NUJ website, www.nuj.org.uk or you can call 020 7278 7916 (NUJ switchboard).

■ The EOC has a new leaflet: Pregnancy and maternity at work – your rights, available by ringing the EOC helpline (0845 601 5901) or download from the EOC website.

The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has also launched a campaign to highlight discrimination suffered by women who become pregnant at work. Under Irish employment legislation a pregnant woman is fully protected from discrimination or harassment in the workplace but the everyday reality is that too often these workers are dismissed or discriminated against. The ICTU has a number of recommendations that they are pushing the Irish Government to implement. These include

- a public information campaign on the rights of pregnant workers
- the development of fast track procedures to deal with complaints
- a removal of statutory limits on levels of compensation and the introduction of a minimum level of compensation no less than one year's pay

If you have experienced similar discrimination the ICTU wants to hear from you – comments are being posted on their website. See www.ictu.ie/html/campaign/pregnancy

EQUAL PAY – NEW CODE, NEW CAMPAIGN

A new Code of Practice on Equal Pay aimed at employers was launched on 1 December 2003. It takes account of the changes to equal pay law introduced last year together with recent legal rulings.

The Code gives practical guidance and is admissible during proceedings under the Equal Pay Act 1970 or the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Although the Code is primarily for use by employers it is still useful for trade unionists and advisors. See EOC website for further information and to download Code: www.eoc.org.uk.

The EOC has also launched a new equal pay campaign – **It's time to get even** – and have produced a range of resources, including posters and beer mats, to provoke debate and raise the issue of equal pay.

Further details of the campaign available from eoc website or email equalpay@eoc.org.uk.

Gender Pay Gap – Ireland

Recent figures for average industrial hourly earnings in Ireland reveal a significant gender pay gap at national level with female average hourly earnings 28.4% below male earnings in June 2002. This means that over an average working life, a woman can lose income estimated at around €53,000. The gender gap increases by 1%-2% when pensions and other occupational benefits are included. The Irish Congress of Trade Unions has produced a pack for negotiators including advice on gender pay audits, job evaluations free of bias and gender proofing of existing agreements.

Close the Gap Campaign – Scotland

This is a partnership project which covers the whole of Scotland. The partners have secured 3 years of European funding to run an Equal Pay project which will encourage employers to carry out pay audits, enable unions to make equal pay a priority and empower women to challenge pay discrimination. Women in Scotland are likely to earn 19% less an hour than men doing a comparable job. For weekly wages the gap can rise to 35% and for women who are black, disabled or geographically isolated, the gap can become even greater. Eighty-five per cent of part-time workers in Scotland

are women and part-time workers are particularly affected by poor pay rates. The lower wage rates have a knock-on effect on children since women make up 90% of lone parent families. If you want to know more about this project please contact Evelyn Fraser, the Close the Gap Development Manager at efraser@stuc.org.uk or view www.stuc.org.uk/main/sub2

Useful Links

You may find the following sites useful:
www.thompsons.law.co.uk (on-line legal library)
www.nujtraining.org.uk
www.ilo.org (International Labour Organisation)
www.lrd.org.uk (Labour Research Department)
www.etuc.org (European Trade Union Confederation)
www.ifj.org (International Federation of Journalists)
www.stuc.org.uk (Scottish TUC)

RELIGION, BELIEF AND SEXUALITY

European directive ensures new rights

New laws on discrimination came into force in December 2003.

For the first time in Great Britain it will be unlawful to discriminate on the grounds of someone's religion, belief or sexual orientation.

Both sets of regulations will protect workers from direct and indirect discrimination and apply to all aspects of employment including recruitment, terms and conditions, promotions, transfers, dismissals and training.

However, the specific regulations on sexuality have been weakened by two exemptions, these include the exclusion

of pension benefits for unmarried partners and, ironically, exemption for employment by an organisation related to an organised religion.

The TUC is co-ordinating a legal challenge supported by seven trade unions on the basis that the European directive has not been correctly implemented.

An online guide to the new rights on sexuality can be found at www.workSMART.org.uk

Information on the Employment Equality (Religion or Belief) Regulations can be found at www.acas.org.uk

Disability Employment Rates – Link with Poverty

A new report released by the TUC says that by 2013 the Government needs to aim to help at least 60% of disabled people get back into work since this is one of the main reasons for family poverty. In order to achieve this much more

money needs to be spent on employment initiatives for disabled people – as is the case in other European countries.

The South East already has 60% of disabled adults in work and if other parts of Britain had as good a record, there would be

an extra 750,000 long-term disabled people in employment.

The TUC, though, rejects the argument that disabled people should be made to look for jobs as a condition of getting their benefits and argues that disabled people must be given adequate resources and training that allows them to compete for jobs on an equal basis.

Learning curve for new reps

A RECENT TUC learning reps survey found that more than one in three (59%) of new learning reps were women and one in four had never had a union role before. The percentage of learning reps from an

ethnic minority had also increased from 2% in 2000 to 6%.

The survey can be obtained from Jay Sreedharan at the TUC on 020 7467 1230 or email media@tuc.org.uk.

When psychopaths go to work

Helen Reed of the Equality Council was drawn to the title of this lecture by Dr Robert Hare of the University of British Columbia whilst visiting Cardiff University. What unfolded was a fascinating academic lecture which had real application and thought-provoking material for the workplace.

Helen is keen that members who have suffered bullying or who are still coping with bullying or harassment at their workplace should be able to discuss their experiences and gain empowerment from mutual support. If you would like to support Helen's initiative, join the NUJ's anti-bullying campaign, or tell Helen of your experiences, please email her at helenreed@virgin.net

Copies of the NUJ's booklet "NUJ Targets the Bullies" can be obtained from Tracy Trickett on 0207 843 3726 or at tracyt@nuj.org.uk

By Helen Reed

Dr Hare suggested that psychopaths are an estimated 1% of the general population and 15% of the prison population, although most are not in prison. He also suggested that it was down to opportunity whether the psychopath ended up in prison or in the workplace.

How to spot a psychopath in the workplace?

The prime motivation of the psychopath is self-interest, and even though they may only comprise 1% of the workplace, their impact is enormous and the damage they wreak is disproportionate to their numbers.

Cool under pressure, they have an adroit use of charm and charisma, they intimidate and control others. There is often an intrusion of space and the predatory 'stare'. They have a natural ability to lie and deceive, and have an impressive use of jargon. They are naturals at undermining and pushing the buttons of others.

The bully in the workplace

In the workplace they are clever at identifying useful 'pawns' and equally clever at setting up 'patrons' – important people whom they can manipulate and charm and who can protect and defend them when necessary. They also spread disinformation about themselves and others, i.e. they'll lie about their own education or ability, disparage rivals and create conflict among co-workers when it suits them.

The way to catch a psychopath?

Look for particular behaviour traits. You can catch a psychopath in an

obvious lie; they will act as if nothing has happened with no embarrassment, unlike a normal person.

Another classic symptom can be the ability to fly off the handle into extreme anger or rage, but they can change immediately as if nothing has happened, whereas most non-psychopaths would take quite a while for the emotion to settle down again and recover.

In Dr Hare's description he quotes "their real ability to experience ordinary emotions is a bit like the colour blind person understanding what is meant by the colour red."

If and when you ever 'catch out' the psychopath, they will always claim that they are the victim. This often happens in bullying cases.

The ultimate problem?

"Us!" said Dr Hare.

The majority of people and therefore workplaces are easy prey, because we still want to believe that people are inherently good. We don't 'really' want to believe that such people exist.

Dr Hare concluded with, "perhaps a new name would help us to stop these predators?"

An English colleague once suggested "instead of the name psychopath... What about substituting B-----d?"

Bullying Links

Useful information on bullying can be obtained at the following sites:
www.nujglasgow.org.uk
www.bullyonline.org
www.workSMART.org.uk/rights
www.hse.gov.uk (stress solutions discussion group)
www.antibullying.net
www.andreaadamstrust.org
www.tuc.org.uk
www.abc.tcd.ie (anti-bullying centre Trinity College, Dublin)
www.ictu.ie (Irish Congress of TU)

Just a domestic?

FOLLOWING publication of the Government consultation document Safety and Justice (June 2003), proposing amendments to legislation to support victims of domestic violence – adults and children – the TUC drew up a survey around the key areas. The results of this survey found that:

- 51% of respondents had experienced domestic violence
- 59% had children and 44% of children had witnessed the violence
- 46% said that domestic violence had affected their ability to do their job

- 66% had not told their employer and 79% had not told their union rep
- 17% said their employer had a domestic violence policy, 40% did not know
- 45% said their trade union had a campaign to highlight domestic violence

The TUC points out that the workplace may provide a safe haven for those who experience violence in the home, as well as being a place to access information via notice boards or colleagues.

For this reason, the TUC strongly believes that trade unions and employers

have a key role to play in supporting victims and survivors of domestic violence.

The TUC views its survey as an indicator of people's experiences of domestic violence and hopes that the results will encourage the government and employers' organisations to work in partnership with the TUC and trade unions in working to combat domestic violence.

Breaking the Silence on Domestic Violence: A guide for the workplace published by the TUC and available via TUC website – www.tuc.org.uk

A new pilot project which aims to help victims of domestic violence prosecute their abusers had been launched in South Wales. The initiative is being tested in Caerphilly and is part of the government's promise to overhaul laws relating to domestic violence and increase people's confidence in coming forward to report it. The project, if successful, will be extended to other parts of Wales and England. Solicitor General Harriet Harman said "There is no excuse for domestic violence, which each year sees 120 women and 30 men killed by their partner".

GET YOURSELF TRAINED

The following courses have been organised by the NUJ, further information from Debbie Smith on debbies@nuj.org.uk

Bullying and harassment course
London 17–18 March 2004

Negotiating skills
Glasgow – 3- 4 March 2004

The following courses have been organised by the GFTU, again contact Debbie for info

Trade unions, equality and society
Scotland – 5–7 March 2004

Discrimination and the law
North West England – 19–21 March

Key issues for Black and Asian members
West Midlands – 23-25 April

Women at work
West Midlands – 23-25 April 2004

Dealing with bullying, harassment and stress
South East England – 21-23 May

INTERNATIONAL IRAQI WOMEN'S RIGHTS COALITION

THE October meeting of the NUJ Equality Council welcomed Houzan Mahmoud from the Iraqi Women's Rights Coalition. Houzan spoke about the terrible problems confronting women in Iraq including rape and abduction and the way some groups had exploited the political vacuum, terrorizing women if they are not wearing a hijab and throwing acid on women's legs if they were not covered up. The

council decided to support the coalition with a small donation and recommended to the NEC that the union's motion to the TUC Women's conference highlight the position of women in Iraq. Further information about the campaign can be found at www.equalityiniraq.com and www.womenagainsviolence.org.uk or on the Middle East Centre for Women's Rights site at <http://mecws.cjb.net>.

DIARY DATES

10-12 March 2004
TUC Women's Conference, Eastbourne

25-28 March 2004
NUJ Annual Conference, Liverpool

17 April 2004
LRD Conference on Information and Consultation – preparing for new rights

NCVO Conference Centre, London N1
23-25 April 2004
TUC Black Workers Conference, Torquay

EOC says long way to go for sex equality

A report just published by the EOC – *Sex and power: who runs Britain?* shows that women are still under-represented in positions of influence. Only 9% of national newspaper editors are women and women make up just 7% of the senior judiciary and senior police officers.

Julie Mellor, Chair of the EOC said that the findings raised serious questions about the ability of the decision makers who run Britain to identify with the concerns of the general public.

Sex and power: who runs Britain (8 page document) is available from the EOC website from 5 January.

TUC workSMART

This TUC website aims to be a one-stop shop for everything to do with your working life. It gives easy-to-understand information on

- Rights at work
- Health at work – including stress at work
- Money – taxes & pensions

New information on the site includes claiming working tax credit and guidelines for teleworkers. An online unpaid overtime calculator also helps you see if you're losing out to the "long hours culture". www.worksmart.org.uk.