

Is discrimination an official Government Policy?

Conference is concerned that discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, faith, gender and race is fast becoming an official government policy. Members of the government are attacking and undermining the hard fought progress that has been made on equalities at every opportunity.

On 21 February 2012 Eric Pickles declared that 'the multicultural society is dead' when announcing a new race relations strategy that would have an emphasis on the Union flag and Britain's Christian Heritage and diversity targets would be scrapped. This was a follow up to his statement on 2 September 2011 that equality monitoring should be scrapped as equality questionnaires are not necessary as the information is available in the census. People who have suffered discrimination are unlikely to agree with this especially as the census does not ask questions about whether people can access public services or employment.

On 20 February 2012 Employment Secretary Chris Grayling defended the governments work experience scheme where young unemployed people work for up to eight weeks for no pay. While he argues that the scheme is voluntary anyone who leaves the scheme will lose two weeks benefits. Young unemployed people are unlikely to see this as voluntary.

On 18 February 2012 Michael Gove the Education Secretary insisted that 'The education provisions of the Equality Act 2010 which prohibit discrimination against individuals based on their protected characteristics, including sexual orientation, do not extend to the content of the curriculum. Any materials used in sex and relationships education lessons will not be subject to the discrimination provisions of the act.' How will children who are suffering bullying and abuse because of their sexuality feel confident enough to report what is happening to them if their teachers are using homophobic texts in the classroom.

On 17 June 2011 Conservative MP Phillip Davies said disabled people, should work for less than the minimum wage. When asked why disabled people should work for less he replied 'that is just the real world we operate in' and 'someone with a disability will be less productive by definition.' Disabled people who work or want to work are unlikely to agree with this. Does he really believe people like Stephen Hawkins and Bill Gates are less productive?

We have fought prejudice, attitudes and institutional discrimination in the past but none of these were as tough as the fight we face now. This isn't about employers or service providers discriminating. This is about government implementing policies, regulations and legislation that not only enables employers and service providers to discriminate but actively encourages them to.

This conference calls on National Executive Council to work with Branches, Regions and Self Organised Groups to:

1. Collect evidence of government policies and statements that encourage discrimination against people from under-represented groups;
2. Use the evidence to highlight the governments attack on equalities in press and media campaigns;
3. Work with MPs, MEPs and Lords to highlight the threat to equalities and social cohesion as a result of government policies;
4. Campaign for the continuation in equality monitoring in employment, service provision and other relevant areas;
5. Work with community coalitions such as public service alliances to make sure public bodies meet their statutory requirements relating to equalities