

FORD MOTOR COMPANY AND THE MacBRIDE CAMPAIGN

BACKGROUND

1. Over the past 5 years Ford has been a key target for the MacBride lobby in the US. Pressure to adopt the MacBride Principles has come through shareholder resolutions tabled by New York City Teachers Retirement System and the Interfaith Centre for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) and product boycotts organised by the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) and the Irish National Caucus (INC). Ford has resisted endorsement of the Principles.

2. The company took a strong public stance against the MacBride campaign in its initial stages and was one of only 2 US companies which provided spokespersons to oppose legislation at State Hearings (the other was General Motors). Their opposition made them the focus of much opprobrium from MacBride proponents who have consistently exploited the fact that Ford is the only US company to have been found guilty by the FEA of discrimination, following an incident in 1983 when some Catholic workers, but not some Protestants, were refused permission to go home early on St Patrick's Day. Fr MacManus, with whom the company has occasionally engaged in public debate, has been particularly outspoken in his criticism and has promoted a boycott of the company's products estimated to have cost Ford sales of some 2,000 cars in the US by March 1989 and to have produced by then between 4 and 5 thousand protest letters, which it is company policy to answer individually. Ford dealers in the US have also been inundated with correspondence and there are moves afoot to spread the boycott to Great Britain. Despite the company's efforts (see below) to cooperate with US fair employment activists it has consistently come under attack. While Ford has continued to work behind the scenes in opposing the MacBride Campaign it has not been prepared in recent years to attract flak by adopting a high profile on the issue.

1987 REPORT ON FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

3. In response to pressure in the US Ford agreed in 1987 to review employment practices and policies at its Northern Ireland plant and to make its

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findings available to Comptroller Goldin of New York City and to the AOH. As a result the 1987 shareholder resolutions were withdrawn. The 42 page report published in September 1987 showed that Catholic representation in the workforce (38.4%) compared favourably with Catholic representation in the general catchment area for the plant (37.2%) and with the overall NI population split. There was, however, serious under-representation at senior management and clerical levels (under 10%). Among skilled trades, Catholic representation was 26.4% compared with a Ford/FEA assessment of 25% of similarly qualified Catholics in the overall population.

4. The Report rejected the suggestion that the plant's location (edge of West Belfast) dictated that its workforce should be drawn essentially from that neighbourhood, as the company draws from a wide area in its search for the best people. The MacBride Principles were viewed as involving practical and legal problems and were rejected as the sole legitimate standard of fair employment. In their place the Report introduced an employment policy statement "which follows the spirit of the MacBride Principles, while avoiding legal and operational obstacles" (see TAB A). The company also undertook to make efforts to develop technical skills and enhance training standards locally (see brief from T&EA at TAB B) and encourage more high quality technical graduates from Northern Ireland by establishing a scholarship scheme for selected local school leavers - successful graduates to be offered employment by Ford Britain.
5. The Report also committed Ford to speed up plans to establish an Equal Opportunity Department at its UK Headquarters, to oversee the operation of company policy at all Ford Britain facilities. The attached (TAB C) article from Equal Opportunity Review outlines steps which that Department has taken.

DEVELOPMENTS SINCE THE 1987 REPORT

6. Ford hoped that their Fair Employment Principles for Northern Ireland might be the key to the way ahead and suggested that other US companies might

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develop their own sets of principles. However, on foot of the Report Ford was roundly criticised by Father McManus and in the Irish-American Press. The Report nevertheless does appear to have made some impact on the more moderate MacBride lobby. In 1988 shareholder resolutions from New York City, New York State and ICCR which required the company "to monitor its Northern Ireland code" attracted only 4.8% support. In 1989 the sponsors agreed to withdraw resolutions asking Ford to hire an independent monitor for its Northern Ireland operations, when the company agreed to a visit and report by Investor Responsibility Research Center (IRRC) staff. The IRRC Report was published in January 1990 (see 'Case Studies of Six American Companies'). No resolution was tabled in 1990.

1990 REPORT

7. The company has fulfilled its commitment to publish annual updates to the 1987 Report and a copy of its latest (October 1990) Report is attached at **TAB D**. This Report shows that employment at the plant stood at 716 in September 1990 compared with 800 in 1987. Catholics in senior management had increased to 23.1% and among skilled trades to 30.3%. Overall Catholic representation remained much the same at 39.5%.
8. The announcement by Ford in September 1989, that it had appointed Catholics to two top staff posts was claimed by Comptroller Goldin of New York City as "one of the most important victories of the MacBride campaign to date". Ford denied that the appointments had anything to do with the campaign. Mr Goldin's successor, Comptroller Holtzman, was not as favourably impressed during her recent visit to Ford as she was during her visit to Shorts. (See **TAB E**.)
9. An extract from the New York State Comptroller's October 1990 report is attached at **TAB F** and gives further evidence of Father McManus' persistent attempts to damage the company's status.

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10. A background note on the company provided by IDB is attached at TAB G.
11. Some examples of exchanges between Ford and MacBride proponents are attached at TAB H.
12. Press reports recently indicated (TAB J) that a Committee of MacBride supporters had been formed within the plant to liaise with trade unions and shareholders in the US, bypassing local management.

DED CONTACTS

13. The Department has maintained regular contact with:

Mr Bill Kelly, Manager, International Public Policy Division, The Ford Motor Company, Dearborn (Detroit);

Mr J W Hougham, Executive Director - Personnel, Ford Motor Company Ltd, Brentwood; and

Mr Ken J Baker, Manager, Education, Training and Equal Opportunities, Ford of Britain (also based at Brentwood) who has been replaced by Mr Ken Kannell.

FORD FAIR EMPLOYMENT PRINCIPLES FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

1. Increase, by reasonable and lawful means, the representation of individuals from under-represented religious groups in the work force, including managerial, supervisory, administrative, clerical and technical jobs.
2. Provide adequate security arrangements to protect employees at the work place. Prohibit intimidation and physical abuse at work. Make all reasonable efforts to ensure that applicants are not deterred from seeking employment for fear of their personal safety at work.
3. Prohibit the display of provocative religious or political emblems at work.
4. Advertise all job openings publicly, and make special efforts to attract applicants from under-represented religious groups.
5. Ensure that layoff, recall and termination procedures are free from religious criteria, and do not, in practice, select employees for reasons of their religious or political beliefs.
6. Prohibit job reservations, apprenticeship restrictions, and differential employment criteria which might discriminate on the grounds of religious or political belief.
7. Create, develop, and expand training programs which, on the basis of equality of opportunity, will prepare current employees for higher graded jobs as they become available.
8. So far as the law permits, establish procedures to identify, assess, and recruit employees who have potential for further advancement from under-represented religious groups.
9. Ensure that a member of Senior Management assigned responsibility for Equality of Opportunity in Northern Ireland, implements and monitors these principles. An annual report of compliance with these principles shall be made available.

September 1987

FORD SPONSORED DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME FOR YTP WORKSHOPS

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Programme was stimulated originally by pressure on the Ford Company in the United States by the McBride lobby. However, while concern on this particular issue has significantly eased within the Ford organisation, nevertheless Ford (UK), as part of its corporate responsibility programme, has been examining how, in conjunction with the Department of Economic Development, Training and Employment Agency, and other concerned employers, it could make a contribution to the Youth Training Programme (YTP) in Northern Ireland particularly in Belfast.
- 1.2 This examination focussed on two main areas:
 - developing training for new technology in YTP with particular reference to the Quest Information Technology Centre (ITEC) in Belfast;
 - enhancing the training standards of the Community Workshops generally in the Belfast area with particular reference to engineering and construction skills.
- 1.3 Annex 1 describes briefly the role of ITECs and Community Workshops in YTP.

2. DEVELOPING TRAINING IN NEW TECHNOLOGY

- 2.1 Ford (UK) has had detailed discussions with Quest ITEC on the nature of its current training. One focus of attention was the developing need to apply the new technologies to more traditional forms of industrial production and the need to provide training for young people in such applications. The net result of these discussions is that Ford have agreed to provide Quest ITEC with a Flexible Manufacturing System (FMS) to the value of £75,000. This system was installed in Quest in August 1989.

3. ENHANCING THE TRAINING STANDARDS OF THE COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS IN BELFAST

- 3.1 Originally Ford's intention was to develop programmes in Community Workshops in the Construction and Engineering industries using the experience gained in their own Workshop in Dagenham in training unemployed young people. Four Workshops from West Belfast were invited to take part in the project, that is, Lower Falls, Scala, Woodvale and Crumlin Road and after a visit to Dagenham on 23 and 24 May 1989 by representatives from each of them it was decided that the best way forward was to concentrate on the Motor Vehicle Repair Section. Subsequently a pilot Scheme was set up:
 - (a) to devise a manual which would enable trainees to progress to City and Guilds 3992;
 - (b) to decide what equipment Fords could provide to assist modules of training.

- 3.2 **Progress to date** : A manual has been devised with the assistance of a Chief Instructor from the Training Centre network and this manual will enable trainees to achieve City and Guilds 3992. Arrangements are being made to have this manual issued to all Community Workshops in Northern Ireland who have Motor Vehicle Repair Sections.

There have been some problems in the equipment being supplied by Fords, however this matter has been taken up by the local Ford representative Mr John Cooley, who has made strenuous efforts to resolve the difficulties and the last batch of equipment received in July of this year was a distinct improvement.

- 3.3 One Workshop, Lower Falls, closed down in April 1990 and consideration is being given by Fords to include another Workshop from the West Belfast area in this project.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS/ITECs IN YTP

1. Community Workshops provide work preparation for young persons for up to 104 weeks in a range of activities. Training and Work Experience are made meaningful by encouraging Workshops to produce goods and services which do not conflict with existing jobs.

2. ITECs are similar to Community Workshops, but specialise in giving training and work experience in the use of new technology to young people for up to 104 weeks. ITECs also have a role in increasing the awareness of information technology in the business community by allowing open access to facilities.

FEATURES

Equal opportunity at Ford Motor Company

The Ford Motor Company Ltd, which employs over 40,000 people, recently issued a joint statement on equal opportunity, developed with and agreed by staff and hourly-paid unions. In this article we look at the background to the company statement and at the practical steps Ford has taken, and is intending to take, to make equal opportunity a reality.

Ford first issued a formal policy on equal opportunity in 1970. Aimed solely at ethnic minorities, it covered, among other things, recruitment, placement and training. This was followed by a joint declaration on equality of opportunity agreed separately with the salaried trade unions in 1976 and unions representing hourly employees in 1980. Also in 1980 the company updated its equal opportunity policy. These declarations were replaced by a "joint statement on equal opportunity" (see EOR 23) agreed towards the end of last year by the company and all trade unions.

The joint statement declares opposition to discrimination at work on the grounds of race, religious beliefs, creed, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, marital or parental status, sex, non-job related handicaps or age. It commits the company to the elimination of discrimination on these grounds, including sexual harassment, to the active promotion of equal opportunity and to the provision of training for employees and trade union representatives in equal opportunity practices.

Equal opportunities department

The joint statement was agreed some eight months after Ford set up an equal opportunities department. The department, which is based at Warley in Essex, is headed by a senior manager, Ken Baker, whose seven years' experience as an area manager for trim and final assembly at Dagenham, responsible for a workforce of 2600, half of whom were ethnic minorities, gives the department credibility with line management. He sees the department's role as follows: "To develop and update the company equal opportunity policy and strategy, to

monitor, and advise management on progress and trends, to develop and assist in new initiatives to provide equal opportunities at work and to review opportunities within the community - ie to help education".

As there are only three people in the department, most of its work has to be achieved through others, eg assisting in the development of training courses with the training department, working with personnel and line managers. However, in the year since the department's inception the company has set up a number of new initiatives and consolidated old ones.

We look at the equal opportunity initiatives taken by the company in three areas: monitoring, recruitment and training, and highlight future initiatives. The equal opportunities department believes that the company's record on dealing with employees with disabilities or restrictions is already good (see box on p.12), so the department has focused its initiatives principally on equal opportunities affirmative actions for ethnic minorities and women, with emphasis on educational assistance.

Monitoring

Ford first began ethnic monitoring as far back as 1967 at its Dagenham plant. Figures showed that 34.7% of all job applicants for hourly-paid jobs were from ethnic minorities and 32.5% of these were hired.

In 1969, adopting the categories "coloured/white", Ford monitored all its hourly-paid ethnic minority employees. It found that 10% of its employees were "coloured". Individual plants varied from 34.4% "coloured" workers at Langley to 16.6% at Dagenham to none at all at Swansea. The "colour" of the em-

ployee was determined by the judgement of a personnel officer.

Ford changed its "coloured/white" categories to "white/non-white" in the mid-seventies, by which time records had been computerised. Towards the end of the seventies, when monitoring of its staff employees took place, Ford changed its categorisation again and adopted classification by ethnic origin. Shortly after, hourly-paid classifications were also changed to ethnic origin. Ford adopted seven ethnic origin classifications: UK/Irish, African, Asian, Caribbean, Oriental, other European, other countries.

These categories are still used today. However, in practice and with hindsight, John Hougham, Ford's executive personnel director says that "we could most probably have used fewer classifications, in that we find in the majority of our analyses that it is sufficient to group 2,3,4 and 5 together and similarly 1,6 and 7".

A question on ethnic origin was included on a pilot basis in application forms for graduate vacancies in 1978 and 1979. This system of self-classification proceeded without any adverse reactions and was extended to all salaried and hourly application forms. Any applicant who does not answer the ethnic origin question is classified by their interviewer.

Cost

John Hougham believes that the actual cost of monitoring has not been high and can be divided into four parts. "First the cost of setting up the system - the cost of deciding what information you want to keep and how you're going to keep it - the cost of changing forms and the cost of the computer program - that is if the number of employees is sufficiently large to warrant one; second, the cost of classifying existing employees; third, the cost of classifying and recording for new employees when they start; and fourth, the cost of analyses and the producing of reports."

The cost of recording the ethnic origins of over 10,000 new recruits and providing the computer statistics for all 70,000 employees was calculated in 1979 at around £1000 - "less than 10p per new starter and 1p per existing employee".

The position today

Over the last few years the company has also carried out detailed analyses in respect of women.

Latest figures show that of Ford's 44,000 employees, 12.5% come from ethnic minorities. Women comprise 3.2% of the hourly-paid and 11.8% of staff. Only in the last few years have women taken on full shift work at UK plants and this accounts for the very small, but increasing number of them amongst manual workers. But the figures above conceal wide variations, not only between plants but between types of job and grade.

The computerised information is updated annually for hourly-paid and staff and covers ethnic minority and women employees separately. The information can show the distribution of women and ethnic minorities by: plant, department, grade, age, years of service, sex/ethnic minority.

So, for instance, the percentage of ethnic minority women in one grade can be compared with the percentage in the next grade up, and so on. Recruitment patterns are also monitored to compare application and hiring ratios.

The equal opportunities department believes that, ideally, the overall ratio between say ethnic minorities and white employees should be reflected at each hourly and salary grade - including management. In fact, ethnic minority employees are concentrated far more in the lower grades, with the numbers tapering off as the skill level rises. Currently less than 3% are in the skilled grades although progress is being made slowly: the proportion of ethnic minority technical trainees (formally called apprentices) has risen from 1% in 1977 to 4.9% in 1988 which should eventually be reflected in skilled grades.

In the staff grades there are 26 women managers but women and ethnic minorities tend to be concentrated in the lower, clerical and secretarial grades - these again are ratios the company wants to change.

Recruitment

All recruitment advertising states clearly that Ford is an equal opportunities employer and this statement is now included in all internal job vacancies

Timetable of equal opportunities at Ford

1967 The company started equal opportunities monitoring at Dagenham for the hourly paid. These showed that 34.7% of all job applicants were from ethnic minorities: 32.5% of those hired. The records also demonstrated that turnover rates (monitored by nationality) were lower for ethnic minority workers, particularly West Indians, than for whites. Reports written at the time recommended more monitoring and also cultural training for supervisors.

May/June 1968 187 women sewing machinists struck in protest at their pay and grading at Halewood and Dagenham. Both sides met the Employment Secretary, Barbara Castle, who set up a court of inquiry to investigate the issue of grading and the alleged sex discrimination. As the women refused to return to work, this was delayed. At a further meeting with Barbara Castle, two days after she announced her intention to introduce an equal pay bill, persuaded the strikers back to work. The court of inquiry confirmed their old grading and cleared the company of sex discrimination in its job evaluation scheme, but the women received an increase in pay, taking them from 86% of the men's rate to 92%.

1969 Monitoring was extended to all plants for the hourly-paid and showed that "coloured employees" formed 10% of the workforce - from 34.4% at the Langley plant down to none at Swansea.

1970 Ford published its first race relations policy - covering recruitment, placement and training.

1971 The company formally introduced equal pay for women.

1972 Monitoring, previously compiled manually, was taken over partly by the computer through the payroll system.

1976 The company and staff unions published a joint declaration on equal opportunities. Also during the 1970s management and trade unions agreed on and introduced language training for those whose first language is not English, and seminars for managers and supervisors on the cultural background of ethnic minority employees.

1980 The company and hourly-paid unions published a joint statement on equal opportunities. Equal opportunities training was included in foremen's training programmes. The company updated its equal opportunity policy.

1982 A new course on unfair discrimination in selection was started. The Mechanised Employee Information System was launched, fully computerising the system of monitoring, providing information also on lateness and absence, medical records, etc.

1984/5 240 female sewing machinists renewed their claim for upgrading. After a seven-week strike they returned to work, accepting an NJNC proposal to set up a special arbitration panel. Both sides agreed to accept the ACAS panel's decision as binding. It found for the women, who were immediately upgraded.

1986 National level equal opportunities working party established including management, hourly and staff unions.

1987 "Supervising race relations at work" training seminar launched. Aimed towards management responsible for developing the strategy.

1988 February: the equal opportunities department was set up. September: pilot educational schemes introduced aimed towards improving the education of youngsters from east London. October: the company starts to assist Newham in developing a "Compact" - a partnership between youngsters, education and employers. November: company and unions representing staff and hourly-paid published tripartite joint policy statement on equal opportunities. December: the company introduced its first training seminar for women.

posted on notice boards. The company is also trying with general adverts as well as brochures to show female and ethnic minorities employees and it is gradually reviewing its external literature, including sales material, to portray an equal opportunities image.

In the last decade Ford has reduced its workforce in the UK by about 30,000. Apart from recruiting semi-skilled employees for vehicle production, the only two areas of regular recruitment are for technical trainees and graduates, both

mainly in the South East. The company has taken positive action in both areas

Apprentices

Ethnic minority candidates formed about 5% of the applications for apprentices and about 2% of the intake to the training centre at Dagenham. The equal opportunities department checked the recruitment test for cultural bias and found none. So the Technical Training Centre at Dagenham organised a ca

reers comence for about 70 people including teachers, parents and careers officers from the workforce catchment area, with part of the day devoted to discussion on equal opportunities, asking them if they would join the company if they were from an ethnic minority group. As a result of those discussions the training centre decided to concentrate on local schools, visiting them accompanied by ethnic minority and female apprentices, so the school children could talk to them directly.

The recruitment brochure was redesigned with women and ethnic minorities clearly represented and the department encouraged staff at the training centre to discuss equal opportunities and attend company courses. In addition, information sheets were sent to schools before the test sessions for trainees, describing the tests and giving practical examples.

These actions raised the percentage of ethnic minority applications from 5% to 15% in a single year but, says the equal opportunities manager, their tests revealed that only two-thirds of these were acceptable. This he believes is possibly due to low educational standards, particularly in maths and science, in the catchment area.

Only 5% from ethnic minorities finally took up apprenticeships, the others found other work or other training. But the company wanted to pursue the other 5% who had applied but not reached the right standard, so they set up a "bridging year" of education for youngsters in east London, between school and work, at Newham College. It includes 14 students, with 12 from ethnic minorities (primarily Asian) and two girls. They started in September 1988 and are paid a bursary for attendance. "It's a pilot course which we'll continue if it's successful. So far we're very pleased with how it's going, and the majority have already indicated a desire to join the Company Technical Trainee Scheme", says the equal opportunities manager.

Graduates

Latest figures show that Ford's graduate intake comprises 8% ethnic minorities and 29% women.

The company has been working on a scheme similar to that for the apprentices to encourage students to go to

university in the first place. Working with sixth form colleges and colleges in the Newham, Tower Hamlets and Redbridge areas and North East London Polytechnic, a pre-degree foundation course was developed to assist up to 13 students to achieve education standards for university or equivalent at a polytechnic. The company, schools and NELP were involved in the student selection process.

Four in fact received good enough A levels to reach a university or polytechnic on their own - but as they were nominated they will be sponsored by the company as undergraduates under a long-standing educational scheme which sponsors approximately 70 students each year. The other nine, seven of whom are from ethnic minorities, two of whom are women, are now attending the pre-degree course at the North East London Polytechnic. Ford again pays a bursary plus tuition fees, and the course should provide the knowledge and experience necessary to go on to higher education, where they would continue to be sponsored by the company. At the end of their degree course, in engineering or manufacturing, they might then join Ford's graduate programme, although there is no commitment required from either side.

The graduate brochure has also been revised with prominent pictures and case studies of female and minority graduates working in areas of the company, although the equal opportunities manager admits that most young women executives are still concentrated in personnel and finance.

Compact

Ford agreed to assist Newham in the development of its Compact - a partnership between youngsters, education and employers. The equal opportunities manager, Ken Baker, recognised that the Newham community had in excess of 20% of its population from ethnic minority groups. So he pioneered and strongly recommended the company involvement in this initiative. He saw the assistance in the schools, with programmes like work experience, shadowing and education sponsorship programmes, could greatly motivate and help teachers and youngsters within the community. He regards the Compact as

a natural extension to Ford's bridging course and pre-degree foundation schemes. Ford has a resource seconded to the Newham Compact; Baker has joined the steering committee and the manager of technical training is a member of the employers' group.

Training

The other main focus of the company is on training for existing employees. Much of this has developed over the last two decades, but one course started up only last December.

Women in management

When a Ford employee returned from an Elizabeth Pepperell course for advancing women in management she was so enthused with the course that the equal opportunities department arranged for other women within the company to attend a local course also for helping women in management. It did not work - partly because the course participants came from a variety of different companies and from different disciplines.

Following this, Ford ran a three-day pilot course, through consultants, for 14 participants. All rated it extremely highly and although some women and managers in the company had originally protested that there was no need for segregated courses, the participants believed strongly that this course should not be mixed.

Called "Personal effectiveness for women" it aims "to identify key themes of personal and professional development, to identify which skills, qualities and abilities participants already possess and see how these can be developed further, and to examine the importance of assertiveness, listening, negotiating, coaching and decision-making". The course also looks at ways of coping with conflict and pressure, time and resource management and helps participants prepare an action plan.

Originally for "middle-graded" women it may be extended to women in lower grades.

Language training

Ford was one of the pioneers of language training for immigrant employ-

ees of nationalities. It is still available for those employees, almost exclusively hourly-paid, for whom English is not their first language.

Race relations courses

"Race and equal opportunities" is a two-day workshop for supervisors, managers and shop stewards. It covers the importance of equal opportunities to the company, how racial prejudice and discrimination can arise, and the law. Intended to be very participative, each course encourages participants to plan positive steps to counter discrimination. "Improving race relations at work" is for more senior managers. It covers the same ground as the workshop and looks at strategy, in determining and implementing race relations issues.

Sex discrimination

When women became legally entitled to work nights in 1986 they began to join the hourly-paid workforce on the production line. Previously this had been an all-male preserve. One plant set up a course for line supervision called "Managing the difference - men and women working together" to cope with the change. Participants are encouraged to discuss their problems and are given specific actions they can take "to ensure that the transition takes place to the benefit of all employees".

The equal opportunities manager was himself a line manager in charge of trim and final assembly when women first started joining the shift rota. Although he and others expressed the usual worries about women having to travel alone at night, he found almost immediately that having women on shifts, even in small numbers, provided "a stabilising influence".

Discrimination - general

The company provided a course for those responsible for recruitment interviewing called "Avoiding discrimination in selection interviewing". This covers the law on discrimination on grounds of sex, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins during selection. Participants also examine the provisions for hiring the disabled and ex-offenders. They practise interview

Restricted employees

The Ford policy statement makes clear its opposition to discrimination against those with "non-job related" handicaps. The equal opportunities manager, Ken Baker, freely admits that Ford does not have its full quota of registered disabled workers: "But we did a sample survey of people who are working for the company but cannot do a regular job because of a disability or a restriction for more than a year - and that came out at over 5%".

Those people are frequently shop-floor workers who may have developed heart problems or back problems, and have been found less strenuous work away from the assembly line in, say, off-line operations. "We try to get people back to a regular job." Baker dislikes the idea of a quota and expresses his distaste towards organisations who may try to persuade employees with a disability or, as he prefers to call them, restricted employees, to register, just in order to fill a firm's quota.

He describes Ford as the equivalent of a town: with 44,000 employees it is the size of a small town in which the previously able-bodied move to less physically demanding work within their capabilities. Ford's company doctors and nurses recommend appropriate changes of work for certain people to their line managers and there are, says Baker, restricted operators employed at every single UK Ford site. In terms of recruitment, he says that all local jobcentres know that Ford will accept disabled or handicapped workers, provided that they can do the job on offer.

So far his department has concentrated more on increasing opportunities for ethnic minorities and women but he is conscious that soon he should examine how much help for disabled people exists within the company. "I know, for instance, that we have access for wheelchairs here at central office but we will review facilities like access elsewhere. I'm trying to pull together a monitoring system - by type of disability - although I'm not sure that it would fulfil the same function as our monitoring of, say, ethnic minorities." In addition, the company has seconded a manager to "Opportunities for the disabled". He is based in Brentwood and is assisting registered handicapped people to find employment. He has made contact with a number of employers within Essex, including the personnel managers at Ford locations within his area.

techniques with the help of videos.

A new aid the equal opportunities department is developing with the training department, to help promote equal opportunities and reach a wider audience than the training department can hope to cover, is an open learning pack.

Described as "a simple pencil and paper routine in a glossy presentation pack, for use at all levels down to first line supervision", the pack will include the law on discrimination plus case studies. The idea is for line management with training officer assistance to train groups of people themselves to demonstrate commitment to the equal opportunities policy. This is to be launched very soon.

The future

Ken Baker is cautiously optimistic and he recognises that progress will be slow in changing the imbalance within some grades because of the limited recruitment plans of the next few years; but the recent educational initiatives should help long term, particularly within the skilled workforce. "It's important that the hiring ratio gets closer to the appli-

cation ratio for technical trainees. And hopefully the pre-degree foundation course (we originally called it the zero year) will bear fruit. The aim is that we increase the numbers of those under-represented in the graduate programme and that this will spin off to show people that we care, that we are trying to do something. Sometimes car manufacturers do seem hard-nosed, people see the worst side - these programmes are demonstrating another side."

In the immediate future he is looking at the feasibility of introducing overall goals or targets and career breaks for women. Ford already provides maternity leave with automatic return to work as of right after 26 weeks' service rather than the statutory two years. Finally, he believes that no organisation or equal opportunities department should become complacent because undoubtedly the situation and opportunities both internally and externally will be subjected to continuous change. Quoting a previous personnel director at Ford, Bob Ramsey, he was in no doubt that "discrimination is bad for business".

This article was researched and written for EOR by Vicky Hibbert.