



# THE SUNDAY TIMES

Sunday Times Business Section, April 15, 2007

## Yes minister, the staff need a makeover

AFTER years of being the popular face of Whitehall, it seems “Sir Humphrey” is about to be officially fired.

The government is set to adopt a radical new recruitment code that will change practices across all divisions of the civil service, and are designed to shake off the “male and pale” perception of Whitehall workers and boost diversity and equal opportunities.

A draft of the new code, dubbed the Best Practice Guide-lines for Recruitment, was delivered to the Cabinet Office last week and is expected to be approved and rolled out over the next few months.

It is hoped the shake-up, which was the brainchild of Tony Blair’s diversity guru, Waqar Azmi, and the cabinet secretary, Sir Gus O’Donnell, will make the civil service more attractive to a higher calibre of people, particularly from the City and business.

Six months ago, the Cabinet Office commissioned a review of how people are hired by the civil service and quangos. The aim was to discover whether the civil service was as white and male-dominated as the public perceived it to be, and to find out if recruitment practices were in line with the private sector.

Moloney Search, the London-based headhunter that specialises in finding executives for top companies, was hired to conduct the review and then formulate a new code.

As well as interviewing all the government headhunters, Moloney also collected information on hiring practices from Britain’s blue-chip companies, such as Royal Bank of Scotland and Shell.

A spokesperson for the government said: “Moloney has carried out a review for the civil service Diversity Champions’ Network to produce best-practice guidance on embedding diversity into our policies and practices for senior recruitment. They have conducted research in the public and private sector to inform this best practice.

“A final draft of this guidance is being consulted upon internally. This review was undertaken as one of the action points in the Civil Service Diversity 10-point plan which was developed in 2006.”

One headhunter who was interviewed as part of the research said: “We explained to Moloney that the common Whitehall practices were at least 10 years behind those in the

private sector. A chairman of a company will give a headhunter extraordinary time and resources to find a suitable executive.

“In the civil service, it is very old-fashioned: candidates are approached about a job but then made to fill in 20-page forms, make presentations on the position about which they know little and face committee-type interviews. It puts people off and doesn't encourage different types of people.”

Even so, Moloney's review found that the number of women and members of ethnic minorities working in Whitehall had increased considerably in recent years and in some areas outstripped the private sector. In this way, the spokesperson said the new code was about “building on what is already a very good story”.

Moloney Search, headed by Curly Moloney, specialises in headhunting graduates and high-calibre executives early in their careers. It tries to identify the leaders of tomorrow.