

Office bullying: two different ways of treating a grievance

[At the request of the London *Evening Standard* the following letter was written by FB about a news item which appeared on the front page of the paper on 30 November. It described a case being brought by Meena Sagoo before an employment tribunal. FB's letter was published on 1 December 2006.]

I have sympathy for Meena Sagoo in her travails with a City bank. Every Indian I have met has been distinguished for courtesy and politeness. It is rough on her to come up against some typical City leg-pulling, jesting and name-calling. It's a rude place, the City of London - always has been.

My mind runs back to 1940. I was seventeen, and working in a City bank while waiting to be old enough to join the RAF for pilot training. I was ragged unmercifully by slightly older bank clerks. In those days it wasn't racial of course, but it hurt just the same.

I was thought to be somewhat snooty and standoffish, so they named me the Patroon after a character in a Hollywood film of the period. At another time I discovered they were calling me Pepé le Moko. When I asked why they said he was an obscure French criminal, while I was an obscure English criminal!

I took my woes to my old Headmaster, who had got me the Bank job. 'There, there' he soothed. 'You must learn not to let it worry you. Let it be like water off a duck's back'. I tried following his advice, and it worked.

So Ms Sagoo's case will be heard over 15 days in February. That seems an awful waste of a lot of people's time, and a lot of unnecessary worry for Ms Sagoo. More than £100,000 in compensation seems a bit out of proportion too.