

DEFEND THE FOUR

www.stopthewitchhunt.org.uk

Unison upholds the ban after political ruling by court

Once again the courts have shown their class prejudice in the Employment Tribunal ruling against the four Socialist Party members fighting the witch-hunt in Unison.

The four have been banned from holding office in Unison for three to five years. They took their case to an Employment Tribunal, arguing that they are being discriminated against by the Unison leadership on the basis of their “philosophical beliefs” (i.e. being members of the Socialist Party).

But, not satisfied with blocking the British Airways workers’ right to strike, a court has now effectively ruled that socialists and Marxists do not have the right to be protected in law from discrimination and harassment in the workplace or in a trade union.

Incredibly the judgment went on to say that the four’s beliefs in the right for housing for all and the right of workers to take unofficial strike action were views that were “repugnant in a democratic society”!

Emboldened by the backing of the Employment Tribunal, the following day the union leadership sent a letter to the four telling them that they have lost their internal appeal and will now face a mitigation hearing on 24 February.

Glenn Kelly (NEC member and branch secretary of Bromley Unison) and Onay Kasab (branch secretary of Greenwich Unison) have been banned for three years. Suzanne Muna (branch secretary

Protest outside of the four's Mitigation Hearing:
Wednesday 24th February, 8:30am
Hotel Russell, Russell Square WC1B 5BE
(Nearest Tube: Russell Square, Picadilly Line)

of Tenant Services Authority) has been banned for four years and Brian Debus (branch chair of Hackney Unison) for five years.

Stop the witch-hunt!

To fight “savage cuts” we need a fighting and democratic union

The campaign to defend the four calls for a mass response from workers and left trade union leaders to protest against this attack.

Members are incensed that just at a time when they are facing greater attacks, fighting and experienced branch leaders are being removed. In Greenwich £30 million of cuts are proposed; in Hackney huge cuts are looming. Yet the national leadership is prepared to wreck these branches to pursue their own political aims. The members of these branches are determined to fight on and to preserve their ability to defend jobs, conditions and services.

It is more urgent than ever that action is taken to halt the witch-hunt. All union members need to be aware that this will not stop at the four. This fight is about democracy in the trade union movement.

After the general election, all the main political parties promise massive, historic cuts in the public sector. Hundred of thousands will lose their jobs or be forced to take pay cuts, while services will go to the wall, unless a determined fight is launched by the trade unions. But the national leadership of Unison is unwilling or unable to fight, more determined to preserve its link with the big business Labour government than defend its members. Instead, they turn on socialists and activists who are prepared to fight.

Unison Black Members reject the witch-hunt

The four were accused of attacking “the integrity of the members of the Standing Orders Committee” for questioning the removal of key motions from the 2007 Unison conference agenda.

Disgracefully, they were also charged with giving “racist offence to members” because they used a leaflet with a cartoon of the three wise monkeys, despite the investigation accepting there was no racist intent.

To find four members who have always opposed and campaigned against

continued over...

racism of being racist themselves is outrageous. From the outset, the union leadership has been prepared to misuse the issue of racism.

“Unless Mr Kasab and his colleagues are punished, black Unison members can have no confidence in the union fighting racism.” These were the words of the Unison national officer who acted as the prosecution in the union’s case.

Yet, in the first week of the attacks, a black Unison member told us, “They are not going to use the colour of my skin for their own purposes.” It has been revealed that there are over 260 BNP members in the union and there has been no action taken.

At the 2010 annual national black members’ conference, Onay Kasab was the delegate from Greenwich. He spoke about his role in leading strike action in 1988 to drive a fascist out of

the union, and the role of Greenwich Unison in the campaign to close the BNP headquarters in Welling.

He received several ovations during the three minutes he was allowed to speak. Delegate after delegate approached Kasab after his speech, to congratulate him and to condemn the witch-hunt.

Political attack

For two and a half years the four have been through tortuous investigation and hearings, wasting tens of thousands of pounds of Unison members’ money. Five were originally investigated but only those who are Socialist Party members faced disciplinary hearings and bans from office, clearly revealing that this is an attack on Socialist Party members.

One Unison member wrote: “The actions of the union are undemocratic, threatening both personal and

civil liberty. In a child’s playground environment, the union would be identified as a bully.”

A former regional organiser for the union appeared as a witness for the four. He stated that he attended a two-day course where union officers Linda Perks and Chris Remington confirmed that “dealing with the problem of Trotskyite activists was indeed part of the course and what was expected of us”. Chris Remington was quoted as saying that the “Trots” had to be “castigated”.

The priority of every union should be to defend its members from job losses, reduced hours and worse conditions. However the Unison bureaucracy is instead narrowly focused on silencing any opposition to the Unison leadership, especially socialists with a track record of fighting for their members.

How you can help the campaign

- ▶ Send protests to: Dave Prentis, Unison HQ, 1 Mabledon Place, London WC1H 9AJ or e-mail: d.prentis@unison.co.uk Send copies to: Defend the Four Campaign, PO Box 858, London E11 1YG or e-mail: info@stopthewitchhunt.org.uk
- ▶ Come on the lobby outside the fours mitigation hearing on 24th February; venue to be announced; see www.stopthewitchhunt.org.uk for more details.
- ▶ Please send donations so that Defend the Four can produce more leaflets, book rooms for meetings and keep in touch with supporters. Cheques payable to: Stop the witch-hunt. Send to: Defend the Four Campaign, PO Box 858, London, E11 1YG.
- ▶ If you would like to receive e-mail updates on the campaign please send your e-mail address to: info@stopthewitchhunt.org.uk. Check out the website: www.stopthewitchhunt.org.uk

To fight savage cuts we need a fighting leadership



**End the witch-hunt:
Nominate Roger Bannister
for UNISON
General Secretary**

Nominate Roger Bannister for UNISON General Secretary

Whoever wins the general election, members of Unison, like all other public service workers, are in for a hard time. All three capitalist parties have declared their intention to make the working class pay for the financial crisis through attacks on jobs, pay, pensions and public services.

Roger Bannister, with over 33 years of trade union experience and activity, is standing for general secretary of Unison. If elected he will lead Unison members, along with other public sector workers to fight against these attacks.

Roger Bannister’s record

Result in 2005

Dave Prentis 184,769 (76%).

Roger Bannister 41,406 (17%).

Jon Rogers (United Left) candidate 18,306 (7.48%).

Turnout 16.6% (membership entitled to vote 1,476,488).

Result in 2000

Roger Bannister (CFDU candidate) 71,021 (31.65%).

Dave Prentis 125,584 (55.9%).

Malkiat Bilku (a London hospital striker) 27,785 (12.3%).

Turnout 16.5%.

Find out more at
rogerbannister-unison.blogspot.com