

★ **Democracy NOT bureaucracy**

★ **Reclaim the union for the members**

★ **Stop the witchhunt - Defend the 4**

Four branch officers, all members of the Socialist Party, continue to face the threat of expulsion as a result of a witch hunt began at last year's conference. The spark was supposedly a leaflet distributed at the conference which questioned why a third of branch motions were omitted from the conference agenda. (This year 50% of motions submitted are not being admitted!)

The leaflet asked "was it because the motions were controversial?"

The leaflet used the image of the 3 wise monkeys, an image popularised by Ghandi, to make a point that branches are not being listened to and debate curtailed. Following an announcement made at conference, where the president announced the guilt of all those involved before an investigation had even begun, 5 delegates received letters saying that they were accused of producing and distributing racially offensive material. While all those accused have obviously denied any racist intent, an immediate apology was made for any unintentional offence caused.

We believe the image on the leaflet has never been known to be used in a racial connotation, a view backed up by racial incident monitoring groups.

RAMU the Race Attacks Monitoring Unit have stated:-

"We all know the historical background of this cartoon , used for centuries from Buddha to Ghandi – RAMU monitors racist graffiti and literature can assure you that these cartoons are not racist."

Despite this, the investigation proceeded and disciplinary hearings against 4 of the delegates began on 14th May. These have now been adjourned and a new date is awaited for the hearing to recommence.

The witch hunt is now being seen as a political attack on union activists who have been effective in articulating the anger that exists amongst members on pay, pensions and single status. The national union has failed members on these issues.

The 4 facing expulsion from UNISON



Pictured with Hackney branch secretary Matthew Waterfall (second left):-

Suzanne Muna (Housing Corporation)

Brian Debus (Hackney)

Glenn Kelly (Bromley & NEC)

Onay Kasab (Greenwich)

*Unison
Conference
Fringe Meeting*

**STOP THE
WITCH HUNT
- DEFEND
THE 4
FIGHT FOR A
DEMOCRATIC
UNION**

**Tuesday 17th June
12.30**

**Bournemouth
International
Hotel, Priory Road**

Show your support for the 4 members answering disciplinary charges.

We can't let the union bureaucracy's attempts to undemocratically stamp out opposition go unchallenged.

The campaign to defend the 4 has won widespread support. Black members from the branches, especially those who were distributing the leaflets at last years conference, are appalled at the misuse of race to launch a political attack.

All 4 activists have a proud record of fighting racism and winning campaigns for their members. They are well-known conference delegates not afraid to fight for their own branch member's views against the union bureaucracy. It is this campaigning militancy that is being attacked ... and it is the right of every UNISON activist to speak out against the union's leadership if need be that must be defended.

Who decides what conference can debate?

National delegate conference is supposed to be our Parliament, where representatives from every branch get to determine the policy and rules of the union. Unfortunately despite the fact that the rules state that the conference "is the sovereign body of the union" we are increasingly banned from debating a whole series of issues.

Spurious reasons are given for banning certain debates – "the motion is in breach of rule" but you're not told which rule! Or "it is unlawful to debate your motion" but not told what law it would break, nor ever shown the "advice of the legal officer" (a paid official of the union). If branches dare complain and campaign against these restrictions they now face disciplinary action.

The threat of disciplinary action

Most of the disciplinary cases in the union are being initiated in the name of the National Executive Committee (NEC) and are heard by the NEC (they are prosecution, judge and jury - an employer's dream!). Despite this the NEC is never allowed to debate whether to bring a case against a member or not.

The power to bring a case is in reality in the hands of one NEC member (Chair of Development and Organisation committee) and one officer of the union the Orwellian named Head of Democratic Services. Once a decision is made they then hand pick the 3 NEC members who they want to hear a case against a member.

In other unions members have a right of appeal to their national conference against being banned from office or expelled, which is at least a check on the executive using its powers undemocratically. However this does not exist in UNISON, in fact the standing orders committee ruled such a proposed rule change out of order this year on the grounds that it was unlawful!!

Attacks on branches

Leeds branch is currently under regional control because it was alleged to have broken the rules of the union by organising and supporting a meeting of local public sector unions against the pay freeze last year!!

Over the last year or so there have also been attempts to ban branches from campaigning for or against a policy of the union, despite the fact that this right is protected under rule and conference policy.

Branches were told under the threat of disciplinary action that they could not campaign against the pensions deal in local government, health branches were told they could not do the same against last years pay deal.

Such is the level of control freakery, that an NEC member was recently told that he could not call a meeting after work, in a room paid for by him and invite people to attend to discuss the pay freeze, as it was against the rules of the union!

We will be letting ordinary UNISON members down if we don't stop the union bureaucracy from seeking to eradicate all opposition by any means they think they can get away with.

UNISON is supposedly a member-led union; if you agree with this position, then come to the meeting and join the campaign to reclaim the union for our members.



Rory Bremner

"On the face of it, Unison are about to make themselves look a laughing stock. They need to be very aware of the widespread ridicule this will attract to their union and its leaders, and think again before the papers get hold of this and make them look foolish and authoritarian. They don't need this distraction".



Mark Thomas

"I know Onay Kasab - Kas. I have had the privilege of working with him on the Ilisu Dam Campaign and on the issue of trade unionist deaths in Columbia. To accuse him of being racist is utter stupidity and madness ... those who brought this charge need to take a lie down in a quiet room, possibly with whale music playing and get a rest or they need to acknowledge their actions are motivated by other factors".