

Statement from National Committee 13.8.83

BEHIND THE WITCH-HUNT, THE UNIONS ARE UNDER ATTACK!

END BLACKLISTS!

The witch-hunt and victimisation of 14 people at BL Cowley for falsification of their application forms signifies an attack on the trade union movement. They were clearly sacked for political reasons; there was no complaint about their work. They are obviously blacklisted.

The Tory government has just started its second term of office, in which it is increasing its offensive against the working class, with rising unemployment, privatisation, cuts, and attacks on the unions.

It is getting the assistance of the right-wing majority of the TUC General Council, which wants to discuss with the Tories.

To get through their attacks, the Tories must deal with those who are opposed to them and to their stooges in the TUC. They will now use the hysteria around the Cowley situation to boost their attack on the unions, particularly at rank and file level and in industry - where the main opposition to the Tories will come from.

The press campaign is the start of this. Left-wingers come from outside the working class, they say. This campaign is designed to discredit all those, at all levels, who fight back, particularly those who try to change the leadership in the labour movement. Everybody who argues for militant policies becomes a suspicious person. Like rising unemployment, the campaign will be used to try to intimidate the shop floor.

The Daily Telegraph calls on other employers to follow the example, of BL - but carefully, and slowly.

"Many more industrial companies [could] be tempted to embark hastily and clumsily on the sort of exercise which BL, with long experience, has undertaken slowly and carefully. The outcome would be much inept 'witch-hunting', tangles on the shop-floor, and consequent trouble which would serve the Marxist purpose very well indeed".

The Telegraph argues against employers supposing that "what has allegedly been uncovered at Cowley could not possibly happen to them".

"Employers are not called on to get over-excited, only to be careful early on..."

The Tories no doubt will make sure the public sector leads the pack.

The role of the trade union bureaucracy in this will be clear. After all, the press is campaigning in their favour, against militants.

The employers started this campaign, and are drip-feeding the press to keep it going. But the trade union bureaucracy is also tied into it.

On the day after the sackings, the shop stewards at Cowley got a report from the joint inquiry of trade union officials and management that came out of the 'washing-up time' strike. This joint report talks about the "political" nature of some shop stewards. It talks about shop stewards not being aware of the kind of increases in productivity necessary.

During the 'washing-up time' strike, the bureaucracy stopped the Cowley Assembly Plant shop stewards putting their opinions to the mass meeting. This was a go-ahead for the current campaign. It was saying to the membership that the stewards should not be listened to.

Right-wingers in other unions will take up the same cry. Kate Losinska of the CPSA has already spoken on this.

There will be a drive to isolate political activists. And it will not only be in the trade unions.

The press is just beginning to connect the issue into the Labour Party.