

Circular: 2015HOC0572MW

TO: ALL MEMBERS

23 October 2015

Dear Brother/Sister

RE: UNDERCOVER POLICING

FBU members will be aware that trade unions in the UK have long been under attack from employers and the state. The attempts to undermine unions have included spying on and infiltration of trade unions, the blacklisting and victimisation of trade unionists by employers and the police (often colluding with each other), as well as widespread bullying, stymying of promotions and other malpractices. Regrettably, there is some evidence of these practices hitting firefighters within our service. The FBU is campaigning along with others in the trade union movement to challenge this where we can.

In recent years, journalists have exposed the spying activities of police units, such as Special Branch, the Special Demonstration Squad and various special national extremism teams. They have found that these units have between 100 and 150 covert officers infiltrating campaign organisations including trade unions, and have compiled a list of nearly 9,000 political campaigners kept under surveillance. This has had some media exposure, because some well-known people, such as Doreen and Neville Lawrence were spied on while campaigning for justice for their son, Stephen Lawrence.

In March 2015, the Westminster government set up an inquiry into undercover policing led by Lord Pitchford. Pitchford has agreed to hear testimony from trade unionists. A number of unions including the FBU, Unite, Unison, UCATT, NUT, NUM and CWU have evidence that their members and officials have been spied upon.

Why is this an issue for the FBU?

FBU members and officials have been affected by these issues over many years:

- During the 1980s, the FBU's General Secretary, Ken Cameron was spied on by Special Branch. The FBU is aware of 215-page file referring to Ken and other trade unionists in relation to the Wapping print dispute.

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- At the meeting in the House of Commons on 12 March 2015 it was revealed on behalf of a former undercover police officer that he had spied on members and officials of various unions in the 1990s. This included the FBU.
- During the FBU's pay dispute in 2002-03, it is alleged that secret service, police and others gathered information, including by potentially illegal means.

What is the FBU doing about it?

FBU Head Office has taken a number of steps to begin to tackle these issues. The union submitted a resolution to the TUC in September this year raising our concerns, which was passed.

FBU applied for "core participant status" in the Pitchford inquiry. This enables us to contribute to the inquiry and allow our legal representatives to question witnesses. Lord Pitchford wrote to the union on 21 October 2015 confirming that our application has been successful. Members should be aware the FBU is one of only three unions awarded this status - the others are UCATT construction union and the NUM miners' union.

The FBU is gathering further evidence and asks members to familiarise themselves with these issues. FBU members can do a great deal about these abuses, particularly by organising at work and getting involved with our union. The union is asking members and officials, past and present, to submit evidence of any malpractice they are aware of that the union can utilise to press our case. If any member wishes to submit evidence, they should send it to my office and for my attention.

There are also some collective activities which members can get involved with, such as campaigning against the companies which blacklisted trade unionists (often with police collusion). This will be covered in a further circular.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

**MATT WRACK
GENERAL SECRETARY**

MW/sll