

BLACKLISTS AND THE ECONOMIC LEAGUE

Draft statement produced prior to 'World in Action' programme. This was not intended for publication but rather for use in answering media enquiries.

Almost since the Economic League was formed in 1919 it has been alleged that it circulates a "black list" of people who should not be offered jobs because of their political opinions.

The League has over that period been supported by a large proportion of the major employers in all sectors of the economy and in all parts of the country. It is therefore quite remarkable that despite the persistence of these allegations over the whole of that period no single copy of this list has ever been produced.

The rather boring truth is, of course, that there is no list, black, white, pink or any other colour.

The League exists to promote support for personal freedom, free enterprise and democracy and to oppose those parties of the extreme right and left whose policies are incompatible with these.

It achieves this by means of publications on economic, industrial and social topics and through an industrial relations advisory service. It also monitors and publicises activities of revolutionary political groups. In particular it obtains the magazines, papers and leaflets which these groups produce. It also attends their public meetings.

The League has thus built up an extensive archive of current political material. It is regularly consulted by journalists, politicians and academics.

Politics and political parties are about and are made up of people and so obviously the League's archives do include the names of many individuals. These are however the people who have put themselves in the public eye. They are the people who have, for example, been elected to public positions within the parties, who have written articles or books, who have led demonstrations or who have spoken at public meetings. The League does not and could not have complete lists of all the rank and file members of all the extremist groups. Most such groups do not even themselves have lists of their supporters.

The League's information is naturally available to its supporters on request.

The League does not ever advise any firm for or against employing anyone. It is for them to make up their own mind in relation to the particular job and on the basis of all the facts, including any supplied by the League.

If, for example, someone has written articles urging workers not to waste their time supporting the trade unions but should rather attack their employers through a campaign of theft, arson and sabotage, it does not seem unreasonable for any employer to think carefully about offering that person a job.

Equally if a firm with a high proportion of immigrants in its workforce is taking on a personnel manager they are surely entitled to think twice about someone who spends his spare time writing and distributing racist leaflets for some neo-nazi group.

Allegations of sinister black lists will no doubt persist however because the extremists need the myth.

Every tinpot Trotskyist or would-be fascist who fails to get a job likes to convince himself and his friends that it is because he has been black listed. It feeds the Walter Mitty dreams in which many of these people live. The chances are that the League has never even heard of them.