

## **Reply by Bernard Regan: more lies on JC**

An interesting notice appears on the website of The JC.com <http://www.thejc.com/articles/new-labour-movement-pro-peace%E2%80%99> under the title "New labour movement is 'pro-peace'" (30 April 2009).

The article states that:

"A new international trades union movement committed to work for peace between Israel and Palestine has been launched this week "to challenge the apologists for Hamas and Hizbollah in the labour movement".

Trade Unions Linking Israel and Palestine (Tulip) has been started by the Community union in Britain, the Australian Workers Union and the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union in America."

This suggests that there is a recognition by the pro-Israeli Government supporters in the trade union movement in Britain that the efforts of the Trade Union Friends of Israel (TUPI) have badly failed and that they are discredited by their intervention on the side of the Histadrut and the Israeli Government in support of the murderous Operation "Cast Lead" attack on Gaza.

Although the trade union conference "season" is only just underway it was noticeable that TUFI did not appear at the NUT Conference in early April and that little has been heard of them for some time. USDAW, the union for the shopworkers and not a union which has debated the issue of Palestine at its conference before has passed an important resolution which shows the sea change that has taken place. This is on the back of the STUC and NUT conference decisions.

Elsewhere the JC.Com website also makes reference to the STUC decision complaining that the boycott of Israeli goods would prevent the Jewish community in Scotland having access to kosher produce from Israel. In fact the STUC report specifically identified this issue and said that it did not wish the boycott actions to effect the religious observances of communities. In Para. 6.3 of the General Council Recommendations it said:

"The STUC recognises the place of Israeli goods, such as kosher products, in Jewish religious observance, and wishes to ensure that a consumer boycott is targeted so that it does not affect, as far as practicable, religious observance."

The JC.Com article completely fails to mention this of course. This is clearly an attempt to smear the boycott as anti-semitic not anti-Israeli Government.

The Australian Workers Union, named as one of the founders of TULIP, invited the Histadrut to their conference this year but Ofer Eini the Histadrut General Secretary was not able to attend. He did however address the conference by video and his speech can be seen at [http://www.awu.net.au/218\\_5.html](http://www.awu.net.au/218_5.html) He reiterates the same comments expressed by the Histadrut in January this year defending the attack on Gaza.

In responding to the speech the comments of Mr Paul Howes, the National Secretary of the AWU could not be more appropriate when he said presumably without the slightest hint of irony, "We admire The Histadrut's nation building traditions, which resonate with the history of our own union." The racist history of the British created state of Australia is well documented. The indigenous peoples of both Palestine and Australia were driven off their lands to serve the interests of imperialism and their colonists.

It would appear that one of the functions of the new group (TULIP) will be to oppose boycotts which again is interesting given that the AWU National Secretary Paul Howes is reported in The Courier-Mail on 3rd February 2009 ( <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,24999927-953,00.html>) as calling on the Australian Prime Minister to ban imported materials for big infrastructure projects. Apparently its OK for Australian union leaders to call for boycotts to defend their members jobs (in fact of course potentially at the cost of the jobs of workers in the countries from which the imports originate) but its not OK for Palestinians and their supporters to call for

a boycott to pressurise the Israeli Government and defend the lives of Palestinian workers and end the illegal occupation by the Israeli Government which has just carried out the most barbaric attack on the peoples of Gaza.

There are no public records of the three unions having decided to establish TULIP on their websites but it is clear from JC.Com that this is an attempt to revivify the flagging fortunes of those who support the Government of Israel by trying to wrap themselves in the mantle of trade unions to justify the policies of the Israeli Government. International solidarity means supporting the oppressed against the oppressor not acting as apologists for the occupying power.

The struggle to build the solidarity movement with the Palestinian people in the trade union movement in Britain and across the globe will not be without its challenges and there are more twists and turns to come.

Lets keep up the struggle.

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