

BRUTISH AIRWAYS

For fear of reprisal I must remain anonymous but I will speak out the truth about Brutish Airways.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I am unable to tell you my name for fear of reprisals from my company. I have been a British Airways Cabin Crew member for many many years. Please let me tell you what is happening in British Airways and why it matters to working people everywhere.

Last year, we had a ballot for Industrial Action, because, contrary to our negotiated agreements, BA were seeking unilaterally to impose changes to our terms and conditions.

And what have been the consequences? What have they done to us? How have they eroded our Trade Union rights? And what are they doing to destroy our Employment Protections?

They used the anti-Trade Union laws introduced by the Thatcher government (and **NOT** repealed during the 13 years of the Labour administration). The Court issued an injunction on our ballot for minor infractions, which made no material difference to the outcome, eg the failure by the Union to advise the members that there were 9 spoilt ballot papers, despite a massive YES vote for Industrial Action.

Ironically, no injunction was issued to challenge the outcome of the General Election, despite significant numbers being disenfranchised due to poor administration.

Mr Walsh used the time bought by the first injunction on the ballot before Christmas to great effect.

- Firstly, he trained an army of strike breakers, using managers (who had no choice), low-paid office workers, and, most shamefully of all, pilots, members of BALPA, a Trade Union which has steadfastly refused to condemn them.
- Secondly, he chartered aircraft from, for instance, 'workers' rights champion' Michael O'Leary of Ryanair.
- Thirdly, BA used its influence with certain elements of the press, particularly the Daily Mail and the Murdoch group, wilfully to misrepresent the real issues, branding us as 'militant' and 'dysfunctional,' because we chose to stand up for our rights. We know that Judith Simpson, Head of BA Corporate Communications, is 'very close' to Anji Hunter, who is married to Adam Boulton, political editor of Sky News. We also know that Mr Walsh lunches regularly with Paul Dacre, Editor of the Daily Mail. British Airways have cultivated a large proportion of the national media, with the exception, perhaps, of the Financial Times and the Guardian, which has made it almost impossible to get balanced reporting or pro-Union coverage.
- Fourthly, using an outside agency, the 'Asset Protection Group,' whose activities include surveillance of our representatives and crew, so reminiscent of the Stasi in East Germany.
- Finally, they have waged a systematic campaign of bullying and harassment against our members. Both our CEO and his eminence grise, Chairman Martin Broughton, have said 'We have had enough of BASSA.' Our Branch Secretary has been sacked, as have several members; reps suspended on manufactured charges, in order to make us unable to function effectively.

Our contractual rights are being undermined on a daily basis; BA refuses to adhere to our agreed Disciplinary Procedure by ignoring time-scales, holding kangaroo courts, meting out sanctions in absentia and denying our members Union representation. All those who took part in lawful Industrial Action have had their staff travel arrangements removed, making it difficult or impossible for large numbers of our commuting workforce to get to work.

As a result of this campaign of intimidation and abuse of power, our members are, on a daily basis, looking over their shoulders, frightened to speak out, and have been banned from discussing the dispute out of fear of disciplinary reprisals if they express an opinion, even on our private members Forum. BA are now actively seeking complaints from members of the public in order to suspend and discipline more crew.

Whatever happened to Freedom of Speech?

It became obvious early in this dispute that this was not about cost savings by a company in financial difficulty, but a cynical, ideological attempt by a company prepared to invest large sums of money to destroy our Trade Union and, if necessary, destroying the BA brand in the process. The figures speak for themselves - more crew have been disciplined, suspended and sacked in the last 12 months than in the previous 20 years together, including:

BASSA Branch Secretary - Sacked

BASSA Committee Member - Sacked

BASSA Treasurer - Suspended

BASSA Crew Representative - Suspended

BASSA Crew Representative - Charged with Gross Misconduct

In total, over 80 reps and crew sacked, suspended or disciplined for trivial offences or just doing their jobs as representatives.

Who will be next?

Where will it end?

I have been telling the true story of this dispute and will continue to do so until our dispute is resolved and our members and representatives receive justice.

Thank you.
BA cabin crew member.

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