

News Release

Association of Teachers and Lecturers

Annual Conference • 21 - 24 March 2005 • Torquay



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For education correspondents / newsdesks

Government acts on racist website after meeting with ATL

At their annual Conference in Torquay today, members of the Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) will congratulate the firm stand taken by the Association in opposing the Redwatch internet site.

Redwatch is an extreme-right website that publishes the names, photographs, addresses and telephone numbers of individuals and organisations involved in any form of anti-racist activity.

ATL general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted, met Home Secretary Charles Clarke earlier this month to press the Association's continuing concerns about Redwatch. Dr Bousted said:

“Mr Clarke has agreed to investigate Redwatch's activities to see what legal recourse there is to counter the pernicious activities of this site.”

ATL believes racism and fascism are incompatible with the cause of education, and is therefore implacably opposed to the Redwatch website. Teachers and others who are seen to promote society's core democratic values are particularly vulnerable to the far right. Details of ATL members – including those of general secretary, Dr Mary Bousted – have been posted on the site.

Redwatch activities are of particular concern to ATL members, as the far right targets the schools and colleges in which they work, both by distributing its literature to impressionable young people and by seeking election to school governing bodies.

ATL member, Helen Brook, a young teacher from Cambridge, who will be leading the debate at conference, describes an incident where a teacher's car was set on fire because it became known that she had dealt with a racist incident in her class.

“If you stand up to them they will feature your details and photograph on the site,” said Ms Brook. “But no matter how great the threat you have to stand up and be counted.

“We teach children to do the right thing and to be good citizens. We also give them strategies to deal with bullying, and we should lead by example. This is England – a tolerant and civilized society that respects difference and diversity. We are not going to tolerate racist bigots – as teachers or as members of the wider community.”

ATL proposed a motion at the TUC Congress last autumn calling upon the General Council to press the Home Secretary and other relevant authorities to close down the Redwatch internet site. Also during this event ATL hosted a fringe meeting, which debated how best to protect public sector workers from attacks on the internet.

Ends

Notes to Editors

1. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers’ Annual Conference is taking place at the Riviera International Conference Centre, in Torquay, from Monday 21 March to Thursday 24 March 2005.
2. The ATL Annual Conference will be broadcast live on the internet at: www.atl.org.uk
3. The Association of Teachers and Lecturers (ATL) is an independent, registered trade union and professional association, representing approximately 160,000 teachers, lecturers and support staff in maintained and independent schools, sixth form, tertiary and further education colleges in the United Kingdom.
4. ATL exists to protect and improve the status of teachers, lecturers and other professionals involved in delivering education to further their legitimate professional interests.
5. ATL is affiliated to the Trades Union Congress (TUC). It is unaffiliated to any political party and seeks to work constructively with all the main political parties.
6. ATL members receive a regular magazine (*Report*) reflecting ATL policy and other issues affecting the education sector. If you would like to receive a copy of this please call 020 7782 1589.
7. Further information and all press releases are available on ATL’s website: www.atl.org.uk